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## A South Dakota Country School Experience

Paul Theobald  
*Buena Vista University*

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*A South Dakota Country School Experience*, by William E. Lass. Mankato: Minnesota Heritage Publishing, 2014. viii, 79 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes. \$8.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Paul Theobald is dean of the School of Education at Buena Vista University. He is the author of *Call School: Rural Education in the Midwest to 1918* (1995) and *Education Now: How Re-thinking America's Past Can Change Its Future* (2009).

William Lass has produced an autobiographical account of his country school experiences in Union County, South Dakota, a county that borders the state of Iowa north of Sioux City. The reader is introduced to the Lass family and neighbors who sent children to District School #46 in Union County, more commonly referred to as Emmett School. As an accomplished historian, Lass is able to put his country school experiences into the larger context of rural life amid the Great Depression and, subsequently, World War II. In the process, he covers a remarkable range of topics, from area wildlife to fluctuating rural demographics. He is at his best, however, in his meticulous description of students, their teachers, and the school subjects that engaged them both.

This very readable little book demonstrates the significance of local history for more broad-sweeping historical narratives. While there is much here of value to professional historians, there is much, too, for the general public interested in the country school experience. Unresolved debates crop up in this account of schooling in a small South Dakota township. For instance, was the rote nature of recitation pedagogy a sign of how backward rural schools were, as some have insisted, or was it in fact a proven approach to instructing a range of students with widely varied ages, interests, and abilities? Lass touches on issues of this sort while also describing the everyday episodes at school or on the schoolyard that keep the account vivid, sometimes humorous, and always interesting.

*Prairie Forge: The Extraordinary Story of the Nebraska Scrap Metal Drive of World War II*, by James J. Kimble. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. xv, 217 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Lisa Payne Ossian is a history instructor at Des Moines Area Community College. She is the author of *The Home Fronts of Iowa, 1939-1945* (2009) and *The Forgotten Generation: American Children and World War II* (2011).

About 15 years ago, when I presented my research on Iowa scrap metal drives to an open audience at the Missouri Valley History Conference in Omaha, the panel chair's critique of my paper cited contemporary research suggesting that little of World War II's donated scrap had been