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Review of *Upstream Metropolis: An Urban Biography of Omaha and Council Bluffs* By Lawrence H. Larsen, Barbara J. Cottrell, Harl A. Dalstrom, and Kay Calame Dalstrom.

Heather Fryer
Creighton University

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Upstream Metropolis: An Urban Biography of Omaha and Council Bluffs. By Lawrence H. Larsen, Barbara J. Cottrell, Harl A. Dalstrom, and Kay Calamé Dalstrom. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. xiii + 507 pp. Photographs, map, bibliographical references, index. \$19.95 paper.

Upstream Metropolis is an “urban biography” of the “Omaha-Council Bluffs NE-IA Metropolitan Statistical Area,” the nation’s sixtieth most populous urban center in 2005. The life-story approach draws from an impressive array of local primary and secondary sources to bring depth, complexity, and an updated chronology to the literature on Omaha’s development.

Omaha-Council Bluff’s childhood, familiar to many readers, was marked by rapid growth as railroad money, meatpacking plants, and a multiethnic laboring population made their way to the improvised settlements in the 1830s-40s. As with most youngsters, the settlements showed glimmers of potential eclipsed by a need for discipline and socialization; rowdiness, licentiousness, and street justice thrived alongside business and industry in unregulated space.

The towns’ stormy adolescence in the mid-nineteenth century saw internal conflict between a desire to emulate established Eastern cities while achieving their full powers of self-sufficiency and self-invention. Along with schools, cultural institutions, and attempts at effective city government came an identity crisis over what, exactly, a “Midwestern city” should be. This turbulence, augmented by the economic and social pressures of the 1890s, fueled a rebelliousness that manifested itself in a stand against economic interference from Washington and an attraction to Populist politics.

Omaha came into its own as a gateway city at the close of the nineteenth century, still determined to remain independent from Washington in its young adulthood. The New Deal deferred the dream of self-sufficiency, and the influx of defense dollars during World War II, followed by the location of the Strategic Air

Command at Offutt AFB, dashed it utterly. The late twentieth century found Omaha-Council Bluffs coming to terms with permanent ties to Washington and using them to improve the quality of life for a diverse—and increasingly divided—population. Despite its continued pursuit of distinctiveness, Omaha was part of the national urban crises of the 1960s and 1970s. The final, and most novel, chapter traces the legacies of the era as Omaha enters its golden years, putting current development issues into a useful context.

Upstream Metropolis effectively trains its focus on the Omaha area, yet leaves unanswered many potentially useful questions about the broader context of Midwest urbanization. Although the authors treat Omaha and Council Bluffs as a single organism, *Upstream Metropolis* seems more a collective biography of two Plains settlements that grew up together but ultimately lived separate lives. These minor criticisms aside, scholars will find *Upstream Metropolis* a valuable resource, as will natives and newcomers to “the Metropolitan Statistical Area.”

HEATHER FRYER
Department of History
Creighton University