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Review of Blossoms of the Prairie: The History of the Danish Lutheran Churches in Nebraska

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Blossoms of the Prairie: The History of the Danish Lutheran Churches in Nebraska. By Jean M. Matteson and Edith H. Matteson. Lincoln, Nebraska: Blossoms of the Prairie, 1988. Photographs, tables, map, appendices, bibliography, index. viii + 247 pp. \$33.95.

Blossoms of the Prairie is grassroots history at its best. The volume fairly exudes energy, enthusiasm, dedication, and untold hours of painstaking work. It is a harvest of information gleaned from both Danish and English sources.

The first portion of the book provides a helpful background with chapters on the Danish immigration to Nebraska, the Lutheran traditions the migrants brought along, and the religious life of the settlers. The authors also touch on the Americanization of the churches and the xenophobia in Nebraska and Iowa during World War I.

The second and major portion of the book presents each congregation, county by county, with information about its founders, the clergymen, its buildings, religious controversies, and incidents in its history. Photographs augment the study as well as an extensive index, lists of source materials, and a map of Nebraska showing the locations of the congregations.

The authors, so immersed in the topic, could well have been more analytical or interpretative. A comparison, for example, of the number of Danes in each county with the membership in the Danish churches may have contributed to an understanding of the conditions which led to the small percentage of Danes affiliating with Danish churches. Nevertheless, this narrative study will find an appreciative audience not only from Nebraskans of the Danish Lutheran tradition but also from researchers and scholars in quick search of a reference.

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