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Busy in the Cause: Iowa, the Free-State Struggle in the West, and the Prelude to the Civil War by Lowell J. Soike
(review)

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Lowell J. Soike, *Busy in the Cause: Iowa, the Free-State Struggle in the West, and the Prelude to the Civil War*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. 306 pp. \$30.00.

Busy in the Cause explores Iowa's contributions to the events in territorial Kansas, as well as the effects of the free state and proslavery struggle in that territory, on Iowa. In addition, there is considerable discussion of Missouri's role. The book is less a history of free soil sentiments or politics in Iowa than a very specialized discussion of the connection between Bleeding Kansas and the states to its east.

As Soike notes, Congress created Kansas Territory because of pressure from Iowans and Missourians. Lack of civil government impeded settlement west of those states. However, when the Kansas-Nebraska Act went before Congress in early 1854, proslavery politicians, especially David Atchison of Missouri, initially opposed it. Because the proposed territories would be north of the Missouri Compromise Line, slavery would be forbidden. The bill's author, Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, replaced the Missouri Compromise prohibition with popular sovereignty, which allowed the settlers of the territories to vote on whether to have slavery. It was expected that Nebraska Territory, west of Iowa, would be settled by free soil residents and that Kansas Territory, west of Missouri, would be settled by proslavery residents. There were no serious efforts to make Nebraska a slave territory, but antislavery New Englanders pronounced a crusade to save Kansas for freedom and formed emigrant aid companies to send antislavery settlers to the territory. Demographically, however, the New Englanders were insignificant. Large number of midwesterners also came to the territory in search of good farms. Soike points out that Iowa alone of the midwestern states sent as many immigrants as the total from all the New England states. Initially indifferent to the slavery issue, the midwesterners were radicalized on behalf of free soil when Missourians crossed into Kansas in large numbers and secured the proslavery party's control of the territorial legislature through fraud. By the summer of 1856, the situation had deteriorated into full guerrilla warfare between free soil and proslavery bands in Kansas Territory.

At the beginning of the book, Soike mentions that Iowa was a firmly Democratic state until the political realignment triggered by the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The state then became firmly Republican for the rest of the century. But the bulk of the book talks more about individual Iowans'

roles in the territorial struggle than about broader trends in the state. The first election in Kansas Territory was in November 1854 for a delegate to Congress. Iowa settler John A. Wakefield was the free soil candidate. The Missourians pioneered the methods they would use more famously in the spring to gain control of the territorial legislature: they organized companies to cross the river and vote in the territory. The proslavery candidate for territorial delegate, John W. Whitfield, easily won. It was later estimated that half his voters were not territorial residents, but came from Missouri. Along with other leaders of the free state cause in Kansas, Wakefield was indicted for treason in 1856. He fled the territory and suffered arson, which destroyed his home and barn. Missourians tarred and feathered another Iowan, minister Pardee Butler, who had proclaimed his free soil sentiments in Atchison, Kansas, a notoriously proslavery settlement, and offended proslavery newspaper editor Robert S. Kelley. The mob's treatment of Butler convinced many northerners that proslavery men did not allow free speech on the slavery issue.

Soike also devotes much attention to free state guerrillas who originally came from Iowa. These include Charles E. Lenhart, who led a band of twenty men during Bleeding Kansas and later died while serving in the Union army. Not only did a number of Iowans fight in Kansas's civil war; some became followers of abolitionist guerrilla John Brown. Brown's men lived for periods of time in Iowa while training for the ill-fated Harpers Ferry expedition. Two of the Iowans died in the raid, while another was captured and later executed.

To a lesser degree, Soike discusses Iowa's contribution to the free soil cause in Kansas. The natural route for emigrants into Kansas Territory was to take a steamboat down the Missouri River. Proslavery mobs, however, began to harass free soil settlers traveling the river route through Missouri. Free soil parties turned to the less convenient land route through Iowa, which became known as Lane's Trail when an armed party led by free state leader James H. Lane used it in late summer 1856. The railroad only went as far west as Iowa City, leaving settlers long weeks of travel across the prairies under the scorching summer sun.

Finally, Soike elucidates how the struggle in Kansas left its imprint on Iowa. Iowa abolitionists perceived that a route that could bring free soil settlers into Kansas could also bring fugitive slaves out. Conductors such as Ira D. Blanchard of Civil Bend, Iowa, pioneered Underground Railroad routes through the state. John Brown and his men escorted a party of

slaves they had forcefully liberated in Missouri (one slaveowner was killed) through Iowa en route to Canada. Although even many antislavery Iowans disapproved of using force to free slaves, younger Iowans took up the cause of violent abolitionism, sometimes with disastrous results. Northern settler William Clarke Quantrill betrayed a party of men intending to liberate slaves from the Missouri farm of Morgan Walker. Quantrill alerted the Walker family, and three Iowans were killed.

Soike's clearly written narrative illuminates the intersection between free soilism in Iowa and turmoil in Bleeding Kansas. Readers interested in free soil politics and racial attitudes in Iowa will want to consult Robert R. Dykstra's *Bright Radical Star: Black Freedom and White Supremacy on the Hawkeye Frontier* (1993). Still, Soike has filled a niche in elaborating Iowa's role in the territorial struggle.

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Michael Schumacher, *November's Fury: The Deadly Great Lakes Hurricane of 1913*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. 216 pp. \$24.95, cloth. \$16.95, paper.

Those of us who live along the Great Lakes have weathered many a storm. However, we have often been heard to say, "Well, at least we don't have hurricanes." While technically that is correct, on November 7, 1913, the storm that hit the Great Lakes could hardly be seen as anything but a hurricane. This "perfect storm," a collision of three separate storm systems, had a devastating effect on the region and, in particular, the dozens of merchant sailing vessels that were on the lakes during this storm.

Michael Schumacher's new book, *November's Fury: the Deadly Great Lakes Hurricane of 1913*, breathlessly spins a magnificent tale of the dozens of merchant ships caught up the storm. It calls to mind Sebastian Junger's novel, *The Perfect Storm*, about the great nor'easter of 1991. Schumacher takes the reader through not only the anatomy of the storm, but also the lives and ships it affected on each of the Great Lakes. The book sheds light on the acts of heroism, narrow escapes, and the inevitable tragedies that would follow in its wake.

Over four days, the storm wrought havoc on the Lakes, either sinking,