

Book Reviews for *Light on the Prairie*

“Plain has an enviable gift for storytelling.”

--M. Melissa Wolfe, *Great Plains Quarterly* ★

“Nancy Plain adds to the story of pioneer perseverance with her beautifully illustrated examination of Solomon Butcher, the self-described ‘pioneer photographer of the Nebraska prairie’—*Light on the Prairie* serves as a model of how a book for young readers can educate as well as delight.”

--Kate Elliott, *The Annals of Iowa* ★

“Nancy Plain tells of Solomon Butcher’s quest in *Light on the Prairie: Solomon D. Butcher, Photographer of Nebraska’s Pioneer Days*, a biography written for young adult readers, but one that will appeal strongly to adults. Two-time Spur Award winning writer, Plain is eloquent, detailed, precise, and evocative in her descriptions of Butcher’s life.

Though styled as a biography, this book is much, much more. It is a celebration of the imagery of one man’s photographic eye, and it is a history of Nebraska and to a broader extent a telling of the history of the homestead era, westward expansion, and the difficulties the nation—particularly Nebraska—faced in the last quarter of the 19th century from the struggle over slave and free statehood, to financial depression, the coining of free silver and the rise of the Populist movement.

Plain has again taken a subject, explored it deeply, and expressed the nuances of the story in a way that both educates and entertains. Published by the University of Nebraska Press/Bison Books, this is a book that belongs in every Nebraska school, and the homes of anyone who wants to understand our western homestead legacy and Great Plains history better.”

--Candy Moulton, *The Fence Post* ★

NANCY PLAIN

AWARD - WINNING NONFICTION FOR YOUNG READERS

“One thing we hear a lot is ‘What was the West really like?’ Between the heroic version served up by TV and the movies, the revisionist versions currently popular among certain academics, and the wishful projections on Cowboys and Indians from our youth, we lose sight of the fact that the West was settled by men and women who were pretty much like most of us....That is the inescapable conclusion one must draw from Nancy Plain’s wonderful reprisal of Solomon D. Butcher’s photographs of pioneer Nebraska....He took over 3000 photographs, and Nancy Plain has winnowed that amazing total down to just 62 which capture a fleeting era of Western history....To add to the priceless collection of images, Nancy Plain has added text that is every bit as outstanding as the pictures....This is truly a book that needs to be on every serious Western writer’s desk, as well as in the classroom and school library.”

--Charles E. Williams, Executive Director, Will Rogers Medallion Award Committee



“The images in this collection are stunning. Farmers posed in front of sod houses, tracklayers working on the Union Pacific Railroad, corn harvesting, and even the sadness of a family gathered around a lonely grave, all iconic views reflecting the irrepressible spirit of the Nebraska pioneers who made this inhospitable region their home.”

--Larry Cox, *Tucson Citizen*



“Nancy Plain’s *Light on the Prairie*...places Butcher’s work in its historical and sociological context, and provides a well-chosen sampling of his photographs.”

--Benjamin Schwartz, *Atlantic*



“Superbly reproducing sixty-two of Butcher’s iconic photographs depicting life and times in frontier Nebraska, *Light on the Prairie* features an informed and informative commentary, making it a very highly recommended and unique addition to personal, community, and academic library American History and American Photography reference collections and supplemental reading lists.”

--James A. Cox, *Midwest Book Review*

