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978-0-521-64092-3 - Provincial Lives: Middle-class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West

Timothy R. Mahoney

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## Provincial Lives

### Middle-class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West

*Provincial Lives* tells the story of the development of a regional middle class in the antebellum Middle West. It traces the efforts of waves of Americans to transfer their social structures, behavior, and values to the West and construct a distinctive regional middle-class culture on the urban frontier. Intertwining local, regional, and national history, as well as social, immigration, gender, and urban history, the author examines how a succession of settlers from “good” society – farmers and entrepreneurs, followed by capitalists, professionals, and “genteel” men and women from the urban East – interacted with, accommodated, and compromised with those already there to construct a middle-class society and culture. The author explores key phases in regional social development through a series of remarkably rich portraits of antebellum local and regional social life. A New England family who organized a regional support system stretching between St. Louis and the upper Mississippi river valley between 1810 and 1840; the men who established order among the predominantly male society of the urban frontier by creating a male subculture in Keokuk, Iowa, in the 1840s; the “gentlemen” and “genteel” women who struggled to introduce and cultivate the culture of gentility in towns across the region; and the lawyers and urban boosters who formed regional business, professional, and social networks in the 1850s each contributed to this story of regional social development. *Provincial Lives* explores social change through the lived experience of the actors themselves as they employed their understandings of self, gender, class, and culture to construct social order and contribute to the development of a western urban middle class while still remaining members of a national society and playing a role in shaping the emergence of middle-class culture across the United States.

Timothy R. Mahoney received his doctorate in history from the University of Chicago. He has won the Throne-Aldrich Award of the State Historical Society of Iowa and has received the Beveridge Grant of the American Historical Association, the National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, and the Mayers Fellowship of the Huntington Library. He is currently an Associate Professor of History at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

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