



Hinterland Dreams: The Political Economy of a Midwestern City (American Business, Politics, and Society)

Eric J. Morser

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In the 1840s, La Crosse, Wisconsin, was barely more than a trading post nestled on the banks of the Mississippi River. But by 1900 the sleepy frontier town had become a thriving city. *Hinterland Dreams* tracks the growth of this community and shows that government institutions and policies were as important as landscapes and urban boosters in determining the small Midwestern city's success. The businessmen and -women of La Crosse worked hard to attract government support during the nineteenth century. Federal, state, and municipal officials passed laws, issued rulings, provided resources, vested aldermen with financial and regulatory power, and created a lasting legal foundation that transformed the city and its economy. As historian Eric J. Morser demonstrates, the development of La Crosse and other small cities linked rural people to the wider world and provided large cities like Chicago with the lumber and other raw materials needed to grow even larger. He emphasizes the role of these municipalities, as well as their relationship to all levels of government, in the life of an industrializing nation.

Punctuated with intriguing portraits of La Crosse's early citizens, *Hinterland Dreams* suggests a new way to understand the Midwest's urban past, one that has its roots in the small but vibrant cities that dotted the landscape. By mapping the richly textured political economy of La Crosse before 1900, the book highlights how the American state provided hinterland Midwesterners with potent tools to build cities and help define their region's history in profound and lasting ways.

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