Isern has wandered everywhere on what he calls the ‘post-rural’ plains of North Dakota. His unapologetic respect for plains life, from six-man football to the Christmas Eve candle festival at Canaan. Reminds us that we live a storied – not a storybook – landscape. Isern is no plains Pollyanna, but he refuses to fixate on the cliché of rural decline. Pacing Dakota will make you want to fire up the car, crane the windows down, and amble off the beaten past to where authenticity, integrity, and ethnicity continue to shape the North Dakota character.