

tures, such as that of the Minneapolis mill explosion of 1878, pictures as a rule supply incontrovertible evidence and sometimes information not found elsewhere. A street scene in Minneapolis, for example, the approximate date of which was known, shows a certain firm name on a prominent sign in the foreground. The street address is readable. Yet a search through the Minneapolis directories failed to show the particular partnership that is recorded in this picture, whereas three or four other combinations of one name with others, at the same address, were found. The photographer evidently has preserved for posterity a firm name which existed for only a few months. A certain large building looms up prominently in the background of views looking across the Falls of St. Anthony in the seventies, but no old resident has been able to identify it.

Since many prints, all originals, can be made from a single negative, photographs lack the uniqueness of longhand manuscripts, but visual evidence is often far more convincing than written statements and pictures convey a genuine feeling of contact with the past that can be obtained in no other way. An historical society, and particularly an historical museum, should let no opportunity slip to acquire pictures and photographic negatives that can be identified for its area, for such material will be invaluable to the historian of the future.

WILLOUGHBY M. BABCOCK

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ST. PAUL

ALMANACS AS HISTORICAL SOURCES

One type of publication that does not come readily to the mind of the average person as an historical source, but that is similar to newspapers and periodicals in that it records contemporary history, is the almanac. Its vogue in America began with Franklin's *Poor Richard* and has continued to this day. In fact, some almanacs have been published con-

tinuously for over a century. One of these is Robert B. Thomas' *Farmer's Almanac*, the first issue of which appeared in 1793. George Lyman Kittredge in his *Old Farmer and His Almanack* (Boston, 1904) describes this publication as a mine of information for the study of New England history. The Northwest is even richer than the East in this kind of source material because of its heterogeneous population, composed of people who subscribe to almanacs of many different types. The publications mentioned in the ensuing paragraphs have been selected principally from the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. Though the list is by no means exhaustive, it will serve to call attention to the character of historical material—sometimes of unexpected richness and variety—that may be found in these publications.

In searching for source material about the immigrant inhabitants of Minnesota and neighboring states, one soon discovers how scant it is for the nationalities that have not settled in the region in large numbers. Here the foreign language almanacs are invaluable. A few years ago the Minnesota Historical Society succeeded in securing, by means of advertising in a Bohemian farm paper published in Omaha, twenty-eight issues of the Czech almanac, *Amerikán, národní kalendář*, which is published at Chicago by August Geringer. This almanac was first issued in 1878, and one of its regular features is a series of autobiographical reminiscences of Czech-American pioneers. Some of them are records of personal interviews with the earliest arrivals in particular Czech-American communities. Since many of these accounts were written years after the events recorded took place, they were likely to suffer in authenticity; still in many instances they afford the chief extant sources of information for a given community. The autobiographical articles have been written by men and women in various professions and social strata and so they give a representative cross section of Czech-American life in a given period.

A series of sketches by and about Antonín Jurka, who was a public school teacher in St. Paul from 1870 to 1897 and who took a prominent part in the cultural life of the St. Paul Czechs, appears in the issues of *Amerikán* for 1907, 1915, and 1918. Some of the earlier issues contain brief descriptions of selected Bohemian settlements in the United States, most of which are located in the Northwest. Two Czech religious almanacs, *Katolík*, published at Chicago by the Czech Benedictines, and *Sion*, issued at Pittsburgh by the *Křesťanský listy*, have been published since 1895 and 1901 respectively. They abound in Czech-American biographical sketches and accounts of pioneer life.

Particularly valuable for the missionary history of the Northwest is the Slovenian *Koledar Ave Maria*, published at Chicago by the Slovenian Franciscan fathers of Lemont, Illinois. Issues for several years past contain many articles on the missionary labors of Bishop Frederic Baraga among the Indians. The work of his less famous fellow countryman, Father Francis Pierz, is noted also. In addition there are brief sketches, copiously illustrated, of Slovenian Catholic parishes in the United States.

Material for the study of the Germans in Minnesota is not hard to find, because they have published many newspapers and because, as a consequence of their large numbers and their influence in the development of the state, much has been written by and about them. Among the popular German almanacs may be mentioned the *Wanderer Kalender*, issued at St. Paul by the Wanderer Printing Company, and the *Evangelischer Kalender*, published at St. Louis by the Eden Publishing House. A list of the historical articles in the issue of the latter publication for 1933 is given to indicate the variety of subjects touched upon: "Wie Amerika einem Fremdling zur Heimat geworden ist," "Oregon, eine Geschichte aus dem fernen Westen unsers Landes," "Christliches Lebensbild," "Dr. Hermann Dalton," "Die Besiedlung von Hebron, N. Dak.," and "Synodale Plauderei."

Each issue includes an illustrated necrology of German Evangelical pastors and their wives, a clerical register, lists of widows of pastors, teachers, deaconesses, and a register of churches.

The issues of *Eifelkalender*, published by the Eifelverein at Bonn, Germany, for 1932 and 1934 contain articles by Joseph Scheben in which he traces the settlement of natives of the Eifel district in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas under the titles, "Aus Amerika-Briefen eines Eifeler Auswanderers" and "Eifeler Amerika-Auswanderung im 19. Jahrhundert."

It is only natural that many Scandinavian almanacs should be published in the Northwest, because the region has an extensive Scandinavian population. The Danes seem to be particularly prolific in this field. Among the almanacs published by this group are: *Dansk almanak*, issued at Blair, Nebraska, by the Danish Lutheran Publishing House, which includes biographical sketches of Danish-Americans in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois, and a Danish Lutheran church directory; *Julegranen*, published at Cedar Falls, Iowa, by P. J. Falkenberg, a Christmas annual which prints some historical articles; *American-Danish Yearbook: Aarbog for danskfødte Amerikanere i U. S. A.*, issued in New York by Hugo Ryberg, which includes the names of Danish consuls in the United States, a necrology of Danish-Americans, and lists of Danish societies, churches, and lodges in the United States; and *Andersen's almanak og dansk-amerikansk aarbog*, which lists Danish settlements in the United States and gives the population of each.

Of particular interest in the Northwest is the Icelandic *Almanak: safn til landnámssögu Islendinga í Vesturheimi og fleira*, published by Ólafur S. Thorgeirsson of Winnipeg. It contains numerous biographies of settlers in the Icelandic colonies of Canada and the northwestern section of the United States. The Minnesota Historical Society has a

complete file of this almanac from 1895 to date. Among other Scandinavian almanacs may be mentioned *Skandinavens almanak-kalender*, issued at Chicago by the John Anderson Publishing Company, which includes a list of Norwegian-American associations and gives complete information about them; *Svenska Amerikanarens almanack*, published at Chicago by *Svenska amerikanaren*; and *Svenska tribunen-nyheter almanack*, published at Chicago by *Svenska tribunen-nyheter*, which includes statistics about the people of Swedish birth and descent in the states of Illinois, Minnesota, New York, and California.

Among the church annuals that are published for various religious bodies is an unusually large number of Lutheran almanacs. *Folke-kalender*, the organ of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, is published by the Augsburg Publishing House at Minneapolis; it was formerly published by the Lutheran Publishing House of Decorah, Iowa, under the title, *Evangelisk-luthersk folke-kalender*. This annual contains sketches of important figures in the Lutheran church, as well as various directories of officials, pastors, and institutions. An English edition entitled the *Lutheran Almanac* appears also. The *Lutheran Yearbook and Almanac* of the Lutheran Book Concern of Columbus, Ohio, contains information about the American Lutheran church; the *Northwestern Lutheran Annual* issued at Milwaukee by the Northwestern Publishing House, about the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and other states; and the *Year Book of the United Lutheran Church in America*, published by the United Lutheran Publishing House at Philadelphia, for its own church body. There is also the *Amerikanischer kalender für Deutsche Lutheraner*, the organ of the Missouri Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran church of North America, published by the Concordia Publishing House at St. Louis. This contains statistics of its own denomination and of various minor Evangelical Lutheran bodies, such as the Slovak Synod of America, the

Free Church of Poland, and the Free Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, and lists of Negro pastors and teachers.

Of wider scope is the *Lutheran World Almanac and Encyclopedia*, which is issued irregularly at intervals of two or three years by the National Lutheran Council of New York. Seven volumes have appeared since 1921. This almanac lists various branches of the Lutheran Church in the United States and Canada and their allied organizations. The last four issues contain sections called "Historical Essays and Digests," with valuable information on many phases of Lutheran history. Some other features are a necrology of Lutheran ministers; lists of missionaries, professors, editors, heads of institutions, officers of synods, deaconesses, and parochial school teachers; a clerical directory; and detailed and comparative statistics on Lutheran institutions.

A sketch of this kind would be incomplete without calling attention to the many excellent newspaper almanacs which are so well known that it is unnecessary to enumerate the type of information they contain. The *World Almanac* and the *Tribune Almanac and Political Register*, a continuation of the *Whig Almanac, and Politician's Register*, both of New York, and the *Chicago Daily News Almanac and Yearbook* are all minutely indexed and helpful for their documentary materials and for their tabulated information on questions of general interest. Other yearbooks of a somewhat similar nature are the *American Almanac and Treasury of Facts, Statistical, Financial, and Political*, published at New York and Washington from 1878 to 1889 under the editorship of Ainsworth R. Spofford, librarian of Congress; the *American Whitaker Almanac and Encyclopedia* of New York; and the *Canadian Almanac and Miscellaneous Directory*, issued at Toronto. Although these contain material of a general nature, much may be gleaned from them that is of interest for the history of the Northwest.

ESTHER JERABEK



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, or email articles, however, for individual use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#).