
THE EDITOR'S PAGE

SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT in 1915, *Minnesota History* has created an enviable place for itself among the nation's scholarly historical quarterlies. Now beginning its 42nd volume, the magazine constitutes a veritable encyclopedia of information on Minnesota's past.

Over the years under the five editors who have guided it, the quarterly's purpose has remained steadfast — to provide readable, reliable information on the myriad facets of Minnesota's heritage. In fulfilling this purpose, the magazine has worn numerous dresses, changing them from time to time to take advantage of advances in printing technology.

With this volume, *Minnesota History* makes the first substantial change in its format in 18 years and thus reaches another stage in its long evolution. Alan Ominsky of the society's staff has redesigned its pages to provide additional space, enhanced readability, and improved paper. The process by which the magazine is printed has been shifted from letterpress to offset in line with prevailing trends.

Some of the changes, as well as the many recognizable similarities to the older format, reflect the thoughtful replies by readers to the questionnaires we sent out last fall. So far 912 readers (20.5%) have returned questionnaires — an excellent response which we found most encouraging. The replies, often extending to letters, demonstrate that the magazine has many loyal, alert, and enthusiastic followers, for which we are very grateful.

The tabulated results showed an overwhelming vote of confidence in the quarterly's traditional "smorgasbord" policy of presenting articles on varied subjects and historical periods. A total of 711 readers wished the magazine to publish scholarly and popular material "in present proportion." Only 23 persons wanted it to be more scholarly, and only 6 wished it to publish solely popular articles. We see no reason why good articles cannot serve both audiences. In its new format, *Minnesota History* will continue its efforts to fulfill the basic purposes for which it was founded.

In the matter of illustrations, 510 persons held that the number should be about the same, while 356 voted for more. Only 16 wanted fewer pictures. We feel that the revised format will enable us to run about the same number of illustrations as we have in the past, but that it will enable us to present them more effectively. We believe that pictures are documents in themselves which add greatly to understanding.

The vote was much closer on the question of color illustrations — 481 "yes" and 373 "no." Many readers commented perceptively on the scarcity of important historical illustrations in color. As in the past, we shall continue to use full color when we feel that it truly enhances the material. We have also, as you will see, added some color where we think it will increase clarity of presentation or brighten the appearance of pages.

Many readers took the time to give us stimulating suggestions concerning topics they would like to see covered. We have carefully noted these ideas, and we shall, as we can, carry them out. As many of you know, however, *Minnesota History* does not pay for contributions, and authors have a way of pursuing the topics which interest *them*. Thus the editor is often in the position of trying unsuccessfully to persuade authors to tackle suggested subjects.

For the most part, readers showed no clear-cut preferences among historical periods or subject categories. Biographies received 380 votes, Indians 379, exploration 365, folklore 334, fur trade 270, economic and social history 175, politics 173, and agriculture 121. A sizable number of responses indicated strong interests in archaeology, historic sites, and the contents of the society's vast collections. A partial answer has been supplied in the new feature "MHS Collections," which will acquaint readers with samples of the institution's holdings. The first effort in this issue calls attention to some items associated with Alexander Ramsey, whose house is among the society's historic sites. A major article by the assistant editor brings readers up to date on the Burbank-Livingston-Griggs House. Reprints (with additional pictures) will be available as a separate booklet.

A second new feature, this "Editor's Page," will deal more informally with many topics which do not lend themselves to extended treatment. In future issues the page will not always be written by the editor, and you will be reading about some of the exciting developments in the society and on the national and local historical scene.

We wish you to know also that we have taken to heart the criticisms we received. Some readers expressed dissatisfaction over indexes to the magazine. An index is published for each volume, but you do not receive it automatically. If you want the index, you must order it. Many also inquired about a consolidated index. We know all too well how badly this tool is needed, and preliminary work has begun. This very expensive project, however, must await necessary funding.

One change has no relation to the questionnaire. Postal regulations forced us to drop the magazine's wrapper in favor of a back-cover address arrangement.

Publications, like people, endeavor to keep abreast of the times. We hope that our new format will provide the larger magazine our readers desire, while preserving the traditions for which *Minnesota History* is known and respected. We also hope that members who told us they liked the quarterly as it was will still recognize an old friend but one now easier to read and more varied in content. Like our predecessors, we will keep trying to make it the best historical quarterly we can. We thank you for your suggestions, your encouragement, and your loyal support.

Kenneth Carley, Editor



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