
Hjalmar Petersen was governor of Minnesota from August 30, 1936, to January 4, 1937, succeeding from the lieutenant-governorship on the death of Floyd B. Olson. His four months as governor were without great note ("more like a running skirmish than a term of office") and are worth little more than a footnote in state history.

But the sweep of his long career, spanning five decades, is richly deserving of Steven Keillor's sprightly biography. It provides a kaleidoscopic view of state politics from pre-World War I to the Vietnam War, with arresting vignettes of life in the pioneer Danish communities, of journalism on the Minnesota frontier, and of an intense ideological confrontation at a critical moment in the state's history.

Making excellent use of colorful anecdotes, Keillor recounts Petersen's life in rich detail—his arrival as an infant from Denmark; his growing up in the Danish communities of Tyler (in Lincoln County) and Askov (in Pine County); his first political foray supporting the dry side in the local liquor struggle; his founding in 1914 of the Askov American in a community of 125 skeptical souls; his election to the state legislature on his third try; his rise to statewide prominence as a major figure in passage of the state income tax in 1933; his choice as Olson's running mate in 1934; his determined struggles to win the governorship; and his leadership in the isolationist cause before the United States entered the Second World War.

It is a continuously fascinating story, told with graceful detachment and balanced attention to Petersen's complex personality. He comes off as ambitious, self-righteous, petty, irascible, stubbornly honest, and driven to public service with a passionate attachment to the values of rural life—an attachment that made him a prototype of what Keillor calls the "politics of provincial independence"—a politics that sought to serve local interests as against broader statewide or national concerns, a politics in which one was at home with one's own kind and suspicious of the larger world.

This was the seedbed of Petersen's isolationism, his anti-Communism, his strong opposition to the use of political patronage, and, very likely, his inability to reach out to have others help him give structure to his political life. It was perhaps the seedbed, too, of an insensitivity to human and civil rights that allowed him to use campaign appeals with anti-Semitic and ethnic undertones.

Petersen is, of course, best remembered for his rivalry with Elmer A. Benson over the governorship. It began in 1936 when they competed to succeed Floyd Olson, who was then headed for the United States Senate. Operating in his customary lone-wolf style, Petersen was no match for the party kingmakers who maneuvered Benson to the Farmer-Labor Association endorsement, sidetracking Petersen to the Railroad and Warehouse Commission (now the Public Service Commission), a move he would forever regret having allowed to happen.

In 1938 Petersen challenged Benson's re-election in the Farmer-Labor primary. It was a historic encounter between two small-town Minnesotans of Scandinavian background, each extreme in his own way. Petersen reflecting the radicalism of the isolationist right; Benson the radicalism of the socialist-oriented left; Petersen regarding the far left as a freedom-threatening Communist conspiracy; Benson viewing the isolationist right as incipiently fascist and as harboring the worst elements of a destructive capitalism. Their confrontation was a microcosm of pre-World War II liberal/radical politics and worth an even deeper probing. The fratricidal clash alienated great numbers of voters, helping to elect Republican Harold E. Stassen and hastening the demise of the Farmer-Labor party, which in 1944 merged with the Democrats to become the DFL.

Petersen ran for governor three more times, in 1940 and 1942 as the Farmer-Labor nominee against Stassen, whom he disliked with about the same intensity as he did Benson, and in 1946 against Luther Youngdahl in the Republican primary, having withdrawn from the DFL because his old left-wing enemies were at that moment in control of the party.

In his later years the former governor mellowed, due in good measure, Keillor believes, to the influence of his wife, Medora Grandprey Petersen. She did not share her husband's isolationist views but stood by him loyally through the years of political turbulence. She and Evelyn Metzger, Petersen's daughter from his first marriage (to Rigmor Wosgaard, who died in 1930) guided him to the progressive midstream. Before he died in 1968, Petersen had come to support the idea of world government and had returned, Kellor tells us, through the mediation of Hubert H. Humphrey, to a place in the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party.

A major dimension of Hjalmar Petersen's life was his career as country editor. Operating in one of the smallest towns in the state, he built the Askov American into an organ of statewide influence. Keillor's account of the paper's role—how it served as Petersen's trumpet and his haven from the political wars—reminds us of the time when the front rank of Minnesota's political leaders included many impressive journalist-politicians, a genre which regrettably has all but disappeared.

Readers who remember the politics of the 1930s and 1940s...
will find Keillor's work wonderfully informative, and those interested in pioneer history will especially appreciate his vivid re-creation of life in the communities founded by Danish immigrants and of the early days of frontier journalism. It is all recaptured with solid documentation and told in an engaging style.

Reviewed by ARTHUR E. NAFTALIN, professor emeritus in the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, mayor of Minneapolis from 1961 to 1969, and state commissioner of administration during the 1950s.


(Normay: University of Oklahoma Press for the Newberry Library, 1987. 224 p. $75.00.)

THIS VOLUME has been long and eagerly awaited by those concerned with Great Lakes and Upper Midwest Indian history. It represents one of those monumental efforts for which historians are eternally grateful. Even though the result of such an undertaking may (perhaps inevitably does) fall short in some respects, it provides a base line and reference point for later research. The Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History has some flaws, but in pointing them out, one needs to stress the difficulty of the task that was undertaken and the enormous value of the work as a whole.

In 36 maps the book shows the changing patterns of culture, occupancy, migration, and warfare that affected nearly two dozen tribal groups throughout the Great Lakes area during the period from European contact to 1870. Accompanying text explains the maps and briefly explores the surrounding events and conditions, illustrated by 81 reproductions of drawings, paintings, and engravings. One need not ask why this has not been done before. The long, tangled story and the scattered, fragmentary, sometimes conflicting nature of source materials are reason enough.

This very multiplicity of sources would have made annotation doubly valuable. Unfortunately, too little is provided. The pages of text accompanying each map conclude with a list of principal sources, but only whole works are cited, and there is no indication of which ones support particular statements, areas, or kinds of information. Thus a reader seeking to trace what appears to be a minor error will face frustration. One such puzzling example is the assignment of the name "Ainse" to the Ojibway settlement at present-day Vineyard beside Mille Lacs Lake (Maps 20 and 28). Louis-Joseph Ainse traded in the Minnesota area during the 1750s and fathered at least one Dakota daughter, but there is no record among either Minnesota historians or Ojibway people that he bequeathed his name to the village at Mille Lacs.

Another of the book's flaws is in the definition of the Great Lakes region. As shown on Map 2, the northern Ohio and Upper Mississippi valleys were properly included. They are parts of an interlocking regional story. But the northern shore of Lake Superior from Sault Ste. Marie to Thunder Bay was inexplicably cut off. The logical boundary there is in both historical and geographical terms is the height of land running north of Lake Nipigon.

In justification the editors say: "The scattered population living along the northern rim of Lake Superior northwest of Michipicoten was remote from the warfare and population changes of the lower lake region"—a statement that makes no sense whatever. It overlooks the 17-year residence (1650-67) of Christianized Nipissing Indians on the shores of Lake Nipigon. Like Ottawa and Huron bands, they had fled westward from the Iroquois. The statement also ignores the early trading activity near Nipigon, where posts were established by the French and where Ojibway people acted as middlemen in trade with the Cree and Assiniboine. Migration from this area accounted for part of the Ojibway population that entered northern Minnesota and helped to make possible French penetration of the border lakes. Later, of course, the north shore of Lake Superior was the principal route used by the great fur brigades between Sault Ste. Marie and Grand Portage. In short, this area was tied as closely as any other to the patterns of trade, warfare, and migration that swirled around the Great Lakes.

Despite such criticisms, one must return to the fact that the book contains an immense amount of specific information and will be an invaluable reference. The generous page size (9" by 12") allows for expansive maps. They are supplemented by numerous tables, lists, and chronologies of events. The pictures are well selected and meticulously identified. There is an extensive index that includes the maps as well as the text.

Some readers may find that the brown ink used throughout the book makes for difficult reading, and the sepia tones in which all pictures are reproduced do little to bring out crisp detail. The over-all effect, however, contrasts handsomely with the maps, in which blue water tends to predominate and where brown is used to suggest topography.

Whether planned that way or not, the appearance of the Atlas in 1987 makes a notable contribution to the bicentennial of the Northwest Territory.

Reviewed by RHODA R. OILMAN, senior research fellow at the MHS and co-author of The Red River Trails (1979) and The Ojibwe: A History Resource Unit (1973).

Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840. By Paul C. Thistle.

(Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1986. 136 p. Cloth. $17.50.)

THIS STUDY is an exemplary piece of ethnographical scholarship: lucidly written, persuasively argued, and provocative in its implications. To a field already crowded with talented and knowledgeable practitioners, Thistle brings a confident grasp of both document and theory rare among junior scholars. Although only 136 pages long, this revision of a master's thesis written at the University of Manitoba both summarizes and eclipses much of the standard fur trade liter-
ature of the last several decades. It has the makings of a
minor classic.

I use the term "minor" only to suggest that the strengths of
Thistle's analysis derive in part from the narrowness of his
focus. The book is not, as one might wish, a full-fledged
ethnohistorical and ethnographic portrait of the little-studied
Western Woods Cree. Nor does it detail, except cursorily, the
social, political, and intellectual dimensions of Indian-white
trade relations. Its emphasis is rather upon native economic
behavior and the larger question of native subordination to
and dependence upon European trading partners. This is of
course question enough, one which has engaged scholars
from E. E. Rich to Charles Bishop and Arthur Ray to, more
recently, Toby Morantz and Mary Black Rogers.

Thistle's conclusion that the Western Woods Cree main-
tained a significant degree of independence after nearly two
centuries of fur trade involvement is not altogether novel.
The intensity and tenor of fur trade relations varied enor-
mously, as did the native response to mercantilist pressures.
Bishop's and Ray's earlier scheme of contact stages suggested
that the mutually beneficial and relatively equal power rela-
tions characteristic of the so-called "indirect" and even "com-
petitive" fur trade eras did not fully give way to exploitation
and dependency until the establishment of monopoly condi-
tions. However, Thistle's evidence, mustered from the Hud-
son's Bay Company's post accounts at Cumberland House
and The Pas up to 1840, demonstrates that even after the 1821
HBC-North West Company merger, the Western Woods Cree
continued to resist trader domination and to control their
own labor.

In the face of epidemic disease and increasing ecological
stress after 1780, the Western Woods Cree still followed the
"principle of least effort," or "the Zen road to affluence." In-
explicably failing to respond to market forces, they spurned
inducements to increase their commercial trapping produc-
tivity, sporadically withdrawing their vital services as trapp-
ers, haulers, provisioners, and guides "when it suited their
purposes." Moreover, despite dwindling control in the two
decades following the merger, the Cree, by their recalcu-
lance and "lack of interest," managed to counter HBC at-
ttempts to abandon the practices of sending traders to hunters'
camps to collect furs and sharing food in lean times, to refuse
credit to migratory hunters, and to reduce the trade in alco-
hol and luxury goods. What the exasperated HBC personnel
looked upon as "laziness" was, according to Thistle, a philosophy
aimed at maintaining symbiosis.

But what of the post-1840 era? If, as Thistle argues, the
Cree had not become "inextricably enmeshed" in or "totally
dependent" on the fur trade by that date, the HBC had none-
thless made considerable inroads on their ability to sustain a
traditional subsistence economy or to exercise both freedom
of movement and choice of futures. Thistle does not claim
that 1840 was a watershed; thus, the study's end date seems
oddly arbitrary. The modern history of the Western Woods
Cree is deserving of equally careful treatment, a task that one
hopes Thistle will undertake.

Indian-European Trade Relations is the second volume in
the new Manitoba Studies in Native History published by the
University of Manitoba Press. Attractively produced and en-
hanced by maps, bibliography, and index, it reflects the high
editorial standard established by the press in the first volume.
This is a series to watch.

Reviewed by Jacqueline Peterson, associate professor of
history, at Washington State University, Pullman.

The Political Career of Floyd B. Olson. By George H.
p. Paper, $10.95.)

UPON rereading George H. Mayer's biography of Floyd B.
Olson, one is impressed again by Mayer's ability to recapture
the feel and flavor of Olson's personality and of his times.
Numerous interviews of and correspondence with Olson's
friends and associates enabled Mayer, who wrote only 15
years after Olson's death, to achieve an immediacy and a
vividness that would be impossible to duplicate today.
George B. Leonard's story of his trip with Olson, ostensibly
to attend a State Bar Association meeting in Duluth, is only
the best of many good anecdotes that entertainingly delineate
Olson's character.

Mayer also provided a detailed analysis of Olson's handling
of the famous 1934 truck drivers' strike in Minneapolis—in
fact, he supplied expert analyses of many key events in
Olson's career: the 1924 campaign, the patronage struggles
within the Farmer-Labor party, the 1934 Farmer-Labor
party platform. As a political scientist, Mayer was strongest
in his examination of the mechanics, the "nuts and bolts," of
politics and government. As a form of historical writing, bi-
ography tends to personalize political history and overem-
phasize the subject's role; however, Mayer largely avoided
those pitfalls, simply because it would be difficult to overem-
phasize Olson's role in the successes of Minnesota's Farmer-
Labor party.

In his introduction to this Borealis reprint edition, former
Minnesota Historical Society director Russell W. Fridley cor-
correctly points to three shortcomings: Mayer's failure to investi-
gate reports of Olson's alcoholism and womanizing, to ana-
lyze the Farmer-Labor party's relationship to the national
third-party movement, and to probe the party's ties to the
Popular Front and the Communist party. To his credit, Mayer
admitted to "deficiencies stemming from the lack of perspec-
tive and the absence of sources which the passage of time may
coax from their hiding places." With the availability of new
sources and recent scholarship on the New Deal period, some
enterprising historian should attempt a new Olson biogra-
phy—one that would fill the gaps that Fridley notes.

A new Olson biography could only supplement, not re-
place, Mayer's book. The historian whose research is largely
confined to collections of personal papers and newspaper ac-
counts is only too aware of the inherent limitations of those
sources, especially, as Mayer noted, "in an age prone to make
unrecorded decisions in personal interviews or over tele-
phones." Many of Mayer's sources are truly irreplaceable.

One characteristic that will bother the historian, though
not the general reader, is Mayer's occasional failure to docu-
ment adequately his sources for long passages of description

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of events or persons. It is impossible to know who or what is the source for some of these statements. Thus, the historian cannot assess the evidence, verify the statements, or use the accompanying interpretation. Mayer gave only two sources for his lengthy and detailed description of Olson's appointment of Elmer Benson to the United States Senate in December, 1935, and he appears to have taken too literally Olson's reported remarks in the presence (apparently) of those two sources. It seems highly improbable that Olson seriously considered appointing 77-year-old Sylvanus A. Stockwell, or that long-time friends such as A. I. Harris deliberately hatched a conspiracy to force Olson to appoint Benson. An interpretation that falls short of a conspiracy theory would also fit the evidence Mayer uncovered.

More noticeable to the general reader will be Mayer's tendency to portray Olson in a favorable light and his Republican opponents as "obstructionists" and "a little clique of determined and resourceful leaders." In addition to a second Olson biography, we need a scholarly history of the Republican party in Minnesota—one that will produce rounded portraits of those Republican leaders whom we historians of the DFL and Farmer-Labor parties tend to portray only as stick men who refused to get out of the way.

While these specific points on the canvas can be criticized, one can only admire Mayer's complete portrait of Olson. Mayer succeeded in explaining the major questions surrounding the man: why he was able to captivate people, why he followed a seemingly opportunistic political path, why his health deteriorated so quickly, and why the Farmer-Labor party was ill-prepared to survive his untimely death. Mayer accomplished all this in clear, readable prose, with a strong narrative and with excellent political analysis. His book is well worth reading, or rereading, in this Borealis edition.

Reviewed by STEVEN J. KEILLOR, whose book, Hjalmar Petersen of Minnesota: The Politics of Provincial Independence, was published by the MHS Press this spring. He is completing work on a master's degree in American history at the University of Minnesota.

By August Meier and Elliott Rudwick.
(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986. 380 p. Cloth, $34.95; paper, $15.95.)

THE DECADE of the 1970s witnessed resurgent interest in the history of African-Americans. Stimulated in part by the demands of black nationalists for a more accurate assessment of the black experience in America and in part by a more general renaissance in black literary and artistic expression, the study became a fertile area for new and exciting research. Both black and white historians, as well as publishers and universities, rushed to fill the perceived insatiable demands for courses and printed matter in the subject area.

Many of these historians were not black, and many were products of northern or northeastern politically liberal working-class families. Others came from southern conservative families where they had to overcome ingrained patterns of racial prejudice. Most were influenced by the student activism of the 1960s. Initially trained in American history, few set out to develop a specialty in the black experience. Black historians, although they figured prominently in the field and were often in the vanguard for reinterpretation, were and continue to be relatively few.

Meier and Rudwick, two well-respected and influential historians, have produced a serious work evaluating the field of black history from 1915 to the ostensible decline of black nationalist activism in the 1980s. The authors interviewed approximately 175 historians who have formal training and have published in the discipline. They also researched the personal papers of 18 deceased historians. The authors' intent was to provide an assessment of the sociopolitical milieu in which these historians received their training in order to understand the unique perspectives that each brought to his or her writing. Specifically, Rudwick and Meier were concerned about the relationship between personal values and ideology as it affected the development of important monographs. They probed the nature of professional interactions between scholars writing in any given period to discern any influences that might have shaped the course of historical interpretation.

The first four chapters of the book's five are brilliantly written and reasonably balanced in their discussion of the evolution of the field. The first details the background and professional life of Carter G. Woodson, the black Harvard-trained historian who institutionalized the research and study of American blacks through founding of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and the Journal of Negro History. The essay explores his relationship with W. E. B. Du Bois, another Harvard-trained scholar and giant in American intellectual thought, as well as a number of other black historians to whom he served as a mentor. The second and third essays analyze the backgrounds of two generations of historians between the years 1915-60 and 1960-80. The fourth essay is a bit of a departure: it is an exploration of a subarea of black history, the historiography of slavery. (In the late 1960s the issue of slavery and its effect upon the development of African-American culture and community life became the focal point of debates among black and white scholars.) In this chapter the two authors seek to assess the nature of scholarly interaction and its impact, if any, on the development of new and important interpretations of slavery.

The fifth essay, entitled "On the Dilemmas of Scholarship in Afro-American History," has the potential of rekindling an unresolved controversy: the phenomenon of white domination in the field of black historiography and its concomitant influence over interpretation. Black nationalists in the 1970s argued that black scholars, because of their proximity to and understanding of the cultural experience, ought to be its principal interpreters and teachers. This argument was consistent with the ideological perspective that the recording, writing, and teaching of history was a powerful political tool.

Rudwick and Meier, on the other hand, were among that group of white liberal historians publishing in the 1960s and 1970s who argued that the writing of history ought to be devoid of ideological interpretation; the facts speak for themselves, and those facts can be taught by any trained historian, black or white. Although their scholarship supports the need
for a reinterpretation of the black experience, the authors' fifth essay reads as if these assertions have been borne out. They claim that the black nationalist perspective has declined everywhere, with the exception of surviving black studies departments. As a testament to the significant role of white historians, Meier and Rudwick point out that the new generation of professional black historians (trained by white historians) is accepted into the mainstream of the profession and enjoys productive scholarly careers. As a group they are largely nonideological in their perspective and are much more inclined to eschew race as a factor in their analyses of black American experience and to look to other factors such as social class for new interpretive insights. The authors also state parenthetically that those black historians espousing a nationalist perspective in the 1970s have not produced significant works.

The authors admit that this field of historiography will continue to attract more white researchers than black. They also lament the fact that most of the award-winning monographs in the field are being written by white scholars, for which they offer several explanations: the demography of graduate school enrollment, for example, suggests that fewer blacks are being attracted or recruited to the field of history. Additionally, many black Ph.D.'s in history who were trained in the 1970s have been recruited for administrative positions in higher education.

This is a provocative work. The authors have been thorough and diligent in their research. Their writing style suggests a maturing of thought and familiarity with their materials. This reviewer takes exception to their research and general interpretation in two areas. In selecting historians to be interviewed or assessed in terms of their contributions to the field, the authors ignored past and contemporary "popular" historians—persons who may not have had formal training but whose published works and lectures have inspired generations of "credentialed" historians. Although one could take issue with their research and interpretations, popular historians have raised pertinent issues that present-day historians continue to ponder. Many of these popular historians embrace a somewhat nationalist perspective.

This reviewer also takes issue with the authors' interpretation of the "dilemma" in the fifth essay and their bias against the contributions of a black nationalist perspective. The final argument over the efficacy of an ideological perspective or position in the interpretation of the black experience has not been written. The point of view from which every historian writes involves a value system, whether it is expressly articulated or subtly implied. Had the nationalists not provided challenges to widely accepted historical interpretations, the field of black history might still have been ignored by the profession's mainstream in spite of the brilliant efforts of our most accomplished black historians.

Of those black Ph.D.'s in history who were trained in the 1970s and who are no longer productive scholars in the field, some are nationalists who have taken their ideological perspective and training into higher education administration. It is apparent now that the most important chapters in the black experience in America are yet to be written. Improving access to education and opportunities for self-actualization for blacks in this democratic society may weigh more heavily in the future than involved scholarly arguments over the past. This statement is not intended to diminish the importance of scholarly investigation or to suggest who should be allowed to teach or write. But if black historians are to be trained and engaged in this process, black talent must be found and nurtured, lest the field always be represented by others. This is a nationalist, and concomitantly, an ideological position.

Reviewed by DAVID V. TAYLOR, former black studies chairperson at the State University of New York-New Paltz, who is associate vice chancellor for academic affairs in the Minnesota State University System.

**Prairie Smoke.** By Melvin R. Gilmore. Introduction by Roger L. Welsch.


MELVIN GILMORE was an early ethnobotanist whose interest in the American prairie and the native people who lived there involved him in many years of research and led to his becoming a rather prolific writer. Perhaps he is best known for his investigation into the uses of plants by various Plains Indian groups. However, being an experienced ethnographer as well as a skilled botanist, Gilmore collected much other cultural information that he used in various ways in his writing. **Prairie Smoke,** originally published in the 1920s, is a particularly interesting work that may garner new appreciation from present-day readers. This reprint edition is improved by the addition of an index and a bibliography of Gilmore's work. Also of note is an exceptionally perceptive introduction by folklorist Roger Welsch.

At first glance, **Prairie Smoke** appears to be simply a collection of essays and stories about Plains Indian culture, attractively subtitled and told in an interesting fashion to appeal to the casual or young reader. And indeed it is that, but a second reading and examination of Gilmore's purpose for writing the book reveals a great deal more. It is evident that Gilmore was ahead of his time in understanding the grave consequences of destroying vast natural prairies for agriculture and other purposes. Interestingly, in **Prairie Smoke** he may have sought to affect public thinking in this regard.

Early in the volume, in the section titled "Mother Earth," Gilmore compared the attitude of "People of European race resident in America" with the attitude of Plains Indians; he concluded that the lack of "friendly feeling" for native plants and animals on the part of the former had resulted in the "destruction of these things in a ruthless manner." By contrast, he claimed, "Indians, the native Americans, have friendly sentiments, even feelings of reverence, toward the forms of life native to America." What sentiments the resident Europeans did have, Gilmore noted, were for plants and animals in the "old Home Land" in Europe, attachments that he believed were kept alive by stories and songs. The destruction he witnessed could not be prevented even by law, Gilmore felt, unless positive sentiments for native prairie life could be awakened in the American public.
It is little wonder, then, that Gilmore collected stories and songs from the Plains Indian societies whose orientation to nature he admired and wove this material along with interesting comments of his own into a little volume he hoped might have popular appeal, perhaps creating in readers 'friendly feelings' toward their own natural land.

Some of Gilmore's hopes and aims are shared in the preface to Prairie Smoke: "It is with the purpose of calling attention to some of the many fascinating, interesting things which we have all about us on the prairies and plains and in our own neighborhood, that this volume is produced." Elsewhere he wrote that he hoped the volume might bring about at least a slight realization of "what the Prairie was before it was swept by the destructive Fires of Change.'

In a master's thesis about Melvin Gilmore, David Erickson noted that while an instructor of college biology, Gilmore was nicknamed "Nature's Advocate." Certainly he was that and certainly he was a strong advocate of American Indian culture. The result in Prairie Smoke is not only a volume of carefully collected native American stories presented in enjoyable fashion, but a glimpse of a man who, at a time when such concepts were little understood, perceived the principles of ecology and the truths of environmental stewardship and attempted to affect popular beliefs and attitudes through literature.

Reviewed by KATHLEEN YOUNG. Chief Naturalist at Fontanelle Forest Nature Center, Bellevue, Nebraska. A folklorist and naturalist, she is completing a book on edible wild plants.


ALTHOUGH American history, especially that of the frontier experience, has been infused with the ideology of optimism and success, failures did occur with great frequency. Due to the vagaries of weather, mismanagement, or plain bad luck, many settlers lost their savings or their homes and moved on to try again in another locale. In this book James M. Marshall hopes to focus attention on the disposessed homesteaders (a term he applies to farmers in general) in American history, a group he claims has been woefully neglected by historians. Marshall, a professor of English at the University of Rhode Island, approaches his subject much tier experience, has been infused with the ideology of optimism and success, failures did occur with great frequency. Due to the vagaries of weather, mismanagement, or plain bad luck, many settlers lost their savings or their homes and moved on to try again in another locale. In this book James M. Marshall hopes to focus attention on the disposessed homesteaders (a term he applies to farmers in general) in American history, a group he claims has been woefully neglected by historians. Marshall, a professor of English at the University of Rhode Island, approaches his subject much differently from the way a historian would. The result is a book that will be troubling to historians, who will find the basic idea a good one but the methodology suspect.

Marshall has a personal interest in his subject. His maternal great-grandfather, Omar Morse, lost three farms—one in Wisconsin and two in southeastern Minnesota—and he wrote about his experiences in an autobiography finished two years before his death in 1901 at the age of 77. This autobiography and some letters Morse wrote to a son are the centerpiece of the book. Marshall includes the entire autobiography early in the volume; the edited letters are in an appendix. Land Fever also includes chapters on the meaning of the dispossession of the Morse family and on dispossession as a theme in American literature and folklore. Professor Marshall postulates a counter myth that he calls the myth of "the unweeded garden." He asserts repeatedly that historians have failed to understand dispossession as an issue in frontier history. To him the cause of dispossession is clear: government indifference and massive corruption by speculators in land that drove up land values and interest rates and resulted in foreclosure.

Marshall rejects the work of such scholars as Allan Bogue who do not see speculators as a malignant force, but the author's own evidence for wholesale dispossession of frontier farmers rests only on the experiences of his great-grandfather. Land Fever thus raises the valid point that dispossession and failure haunted the farmer's frontier and caused great suffering, but Marshall's willingness to universalize and condemn on the basis of a single case is not sound.

Historians will be troubled by the methodology in this book for several other reasons. For example, Morse calls the doctors treating his terminally ill wife "a set of regular money suckers." In a footnote to this passage Marshall informs us that this statement corrects "the heroic stereotype of the country doctor." This kind of reasoning occurs throughout the book. The author also makes assumptions that could easily have other explanations. Morse never really explains in any specific way why he could not stay afloat on his farms. There are hints, however, as in 1861, when his wife was "sick and almost helpless," two children were ill at harvest time, and he could not get help "at any price." But Marshall concludes from sketchy evidence that it was land speculators and usury that drove Morse from farm to farm. Yet Morse had a wife who was chronically ill for 17 years of their 28-year marriage. During that time she would not have been a partner on the farm, and most successful farms were those with a hard-working couple dividing the labor. Also, Delia Morse's medicine and doctor bills were apparently large and were a factor in the family's inability to get ahead. These circumstances appear to have had a far more direct relationship to Morse's misfortunes than the conspiracies of devious speculators.

A final problem results from Marshall's presentation. The writing itself is convoluted and abstruse, the style is combative. Marshall eects straw men and knocks them down again and again. Omar Morse was not the only person ever to speak honestly about frontier difficulties, and historians have not engaged in any kind of conspiracy to label those who failed on the frontier as lazy ne'er-do-wells. But Marshall's assumption that they have sets the tone of the narrative.

Land Fever has some redeeming features. The Morse narrative and letters are excellent, and Marshall's literary analysis of authors like Hamlin Garland and Frank Norris is informative. His identification of a myth of the unweeded garden is evocative. One error mars the final chapter. The Cherokee Strip is located in Oklahoma, not the Dakotas.

Reviewed by PAULA M. NELSON, assistant professor of history at Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa, who is the author of After the West Was Won: Homesteaders and Townbuilders in Western South Dakota, 1900-1917 (1986). She is at work on another volume of South Dakota history, The Prairie Winnows Out Its Own, the story of the depression years in the west river country.
STUDENTS of the North American fur trade will want to note Christopher L. Miller's and George R. Hamell's "A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade," in the September, 1986, issue of the Journal of American History. After analyzing historical, archaeological, ethnographic, and psychological materials from the Woodland region of the proto- and early historic periods, the authors refute hypotheses that picture Indians only as pragmatic trading partners, "rational," economic beings in the European sense," whose main interest was in utilitarian objects. (Such theories, the authors acknowledge, may have arisen from an aversion to earlier stereotypes of Indians as naive primitives who gladly traded their kingdoms for a handful of "costume jewelry.")

Citing archaeological studies that show that the impact of early European utilitarian trade goods on the Indians' practical subsistence was negligible, the article seeks to explain the importance to native peoples of what earlier historians (and, indeed, traders) considered baubles and trinkets. Miller and Hamell propose that these items were enthusiastically accepted, at least initially, because the Indians "did not perceive European copper or glass as something new." Rather, they saw these objects as similar to their own ritual objects made from native copper, stone, and shell. They were "powerful cultural metaphors that helped [Indians] to incorporate new items and their bearers into their cognitive world." In form, color, and putative origin, those objects and the people associated with them were like objects and creatures that were well known to have great mythic and ceremonial significance and were accepted accordingly.

SAUNA enthusiasts will enjoy perusing The Sauna in Central New York by Melissa Ladenheim (Ithaca, New York, Dewitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, 1986, 25 p., $5.95 plus $1.50 shipping and handling and 7% sales tax for New York residents). Billed as a photographic essay on the sauna's symbolic associations with Finnishness rather than as a study of saunas as architecture, the slender volume is long on interesting pictures and short on text. Photographs, not all of which are dated, go back to 1915, although the majority cluster in the 1930s and the contemporary era. These pictures document Finns at work and at home as well as sauna interiors and exteriors. Direct quotations of Finns from the area enliven the brief textual entries.

FUR TRADE enthusiasts and archaeology aficionados alike will welcome the Royal Ontario Museum publication, The History of James Bay 1610-1666: A Study in Historical Archaeology (Toronto, ROM Archaeology Monograph series No. 10, 1986, $25.00). The author, the late W. A. Kenyon, began his research in 1950 at Fort Albany to ascertain whether excavation of the site would provide a "representative sample of the artifacts that the newly formed Hudson's Bay Company had carried to the James Bay posts during its formative years." Further excavations were made on Charlton Island, which yielded artifacts much the same as at Fort Albany. The handsomely illustrated, 152-page volume, which contains in addition to textual material 173 plates, 70 figures, and 9 tables, is available from the Royal Ontario Museum's Publication Services, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto M5S 2C6.

MEMBERS of Minnesota's two bottle-collecting clubs, First Antique Bottle Club and the North Star Historical Bottle Collector's Association, have labored for more than a decade to assemble the information in The Bottles, Breweriana And Advertising Jugs of Minnesota 1850-1910 (Vol. 1), edited and coauthored by Ron Feldaus (Minneapolis, North Star HBCA, 1986, 133 p., cloth, $13.95. paper, $9.95, price guide, $1.95). Photographs of all outstanding Minnesota bottles, related collectibles, and breweriana as well as drawings of all known bottles with embossed marks from the Twin Cities up to 1910 are present; machine-made bottles after 1910 are excluded. The volume also includes dating guides that list all known addresses for Minnesota breweries and bottling companies and the years they were at a given address between 1856 and 1910.

Including beer bottles from the dozens of breweries and bottling firms once scattered over Minnesota, soda and soft-drink bottles, and food, household, and miscellaneous bottles, this volume is well organized and consistent in its approach. Biographical sketches of many brewers, bits of history, and discussion of bottles and allied items round out this useful book. Since the entries are alphabetical by firm name in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the rest of Minnesota, the volume makes a contribution to local history. An excellent index guides the user to the information. While specific sources are rarely noted, this volume nevertheless makes a quantum leap forward in the documentation of one fascinating aspect of our material culture. It may be ordered from North Star HBCA, 3308 32nd Ave. So., Minneapolis 55406. Volume 2, dealing with bitters, medicines, druggists, and liquor bottles, is scheduled to be available in March, 1987.

Alan R. Woolworth

WAITRESSES, COOKS, and other hotel employees provide the dialogue for a small book about a venerable Minnesota hotel. If Walls Could Talk: A Story of the Old St. James, by Patrice Avon Marvin and Nicholas Curchin Vrooman (Red Wing, Red Wing Hotel Corporation, 1984, 88 p., paper, $5.00) is, in a sense, an oral history scrapbook. Segments of interviews are interwoven to show day-to-day hotel life "from the Victorian to the space age," as seen by employees.

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BACK in print, thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press, is anthropologist Felix M. Keesing’s monograph, The Menomini Indians of Wisconsin. A Study of Three Centuries of Cultural Contact and Change (Madison, 1987, 261 p., cloth, $30.00; paper, $11.95). First published in 1939 by the American Philosophical Society, the book was intended as “primarily an experiment in methods of studying the all too little known and documented processes of culture change or . . . ‘acculturation.’ ” Keesing included in his work ethnological and historical data covering the period from 1634 to 1929.

This reprint edition includes an excellent new introduction by Robert E. Bieder that examines the place of both Keesing and his work with the Menomini in the development of anthropological theory and methods. As Bieder notes, Keesing conceived this project during the transitional years in anthropological thinking; he was “afloat in the exciting currents of years in anthropological thinking; he was ‘afloat in the exciting currents of territorial times to its current status as part of the United States Army’s ‘Total-Force Concept.’” The authors take care to relate the guard’s development to the special context of North Dakota history as well as to the nation’s domestic and military history. Citizens As Soldiers may be ordered from the institute at North Dakota State University, Fargo 58105.


FIVE YEARS after the Dakota war of 1862, Fort Totten was established on the shore of Devils Lake in Dakota Territory. Its history during the next hundred years is told in Fort Totten: Military Post and Indian School, 1867–1967 (Bismarck, State Historical Society of North Dakota, 1986, 67 p., paper, $3.50 plus $1.00 postage and handling), edited by Larry Remle. Three essays, by J. Michael McCormack, Wilbert H. Ahern, and Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr., describe and comment on military days at the fort and its use as a center for an Indian reservation and for successive schools. The function of these schools changed dramatically as the government’s ideas about Indian education changed, leading ultimately in 1959 to the last school’s relocation just east of the original property. The educational role of Fort Totten continues, however, as it is now an interpretive center.

Historical facts stand on their own in the essays, but footnotes and a selective bibliography supply significant secondary as well as primary sources. There are numerous photographs of people and places, and the visitor on the scene will welcome a clear diagram, which locates and dates buildings past and present.

SOLDIERS WEST: Biographies from the Military Frontier, edited by Paul Andrew Hutton (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1987, xii, 276 p., cloth, $9.95), illustrates the diverse roles of the military during the conquest of the trans-Mississippi West (1865–1900). Historians with special knowledge of key military figures describe their careers as explorers, writers, and scientists, as well as leaders in combat. The introduction by Robert M. Utley, who also contributed one of the biographies, points out some of the effects of the frontier on America’s military tradition: what was learned—and what might have been learned but was not.

Footnotes for each essay, four small maps, and a straightforward, simple index of proper names are provided.

MERRILL E. JARCHOW, whose work has often appeared in this journal, is the author of Like Father, Like Son: The Gilfillan Story (St. Paul, Ramsey County Historical Society, 1986, x, 74 p., $5.00, plus $1.30 handling fee). The early chapters examine the career of Charles D. Gilfillan, lawyer, legislator, politician, and founder of the St. Paul waterworks who turned to “stock raising on a vast scale” in northern Redwood County during the last decade of his life. The stock farms were taken over by Gilfillan’s son, Charles O., in 1902, and Jarchow traces his career and his family’s philanthropy through both world wars and the Great Depression. Although it lacks an index, the book is annotated and contains a good number of handsome illustrations.

NORWEGIAN ROOTS of Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker, the president of Bethany Lutheran College from 1930 to 1950, are evident throughout a book commemorating the centennial of his birth. Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker, 1864–1959 (Mankato, Bethany Lutheran College, 1984, x, 190 p., cloth, $12.95; paper, $7.95), edited by Peter T. Harstad, includes a biography, essays on Ylvisaker as scholar, clergyman, and educator, and a sampling of his writings—all reflecting his Norwegian heritage as well as his contributions to church and school in Minnesota.
THE PUBLICATION of Georg Sverdrup: Educator, Theologian, Churchman by James S. Hamre (Northfield, Norwegian-American Historical Assn., 1988, 218 p., $15.00) inaugurates a new biographical series for NAHA. This study portrays a prominent Norwegian American whose "firm conviction of a living Christianity within a free-church framework and independent congregations... placed [him] in a minority within an ethnic minority." Sverdrup was prominent in the Norwegian Lutheran Free Church, and he served as a professor and president at Augsburg Seminary (later college). Handsomely designed and well indexed, this volume is available from the Norwegian-American Historical Association, Northfield 55057.

OLD CEMETERIES are familiar to genealogists and students of local history, but not all attract admirers of carefully placed and well-tended plants and trees. One that does is Mound Grove Memorial Park, in Evansville. A Green Hill Close By, by Jane Price McKinnon (Alexandria, Evansville Historical and Research Center and Douglas County Historical Society, 1986, x, 55 p., paper, $5.30) is the history of the cemetery, which was established in 1873, and of its care by several generations. The informal narrative is supported by notes and bibliography, and the author has included the planting plan, lists of plants, and bylaws of the volunteer group that administers the cemetery.

WHEN Minnesota's major 20th-century steel works (United States Steel's Morgan Park works in Duluth) began shutting down two decades ago, few appreciated that this was a precursor of dark days ahead for the entire region. Now we realize that we witnessed the beginning of a profound transformation of our national economy.

In a handsomely designed and heavily illustrated book, From Fire to Rust, Thomas E. Leary and Elizabeth C. Sholes provide a case-study of deindustrialization in American steel. The industrial historian and the professor of labor relations join forces to trace the rise and demise of business, technology, and work at the Lackawanna Steel Plant in Buffalo, N.Y., between 1899 and 1983, an operation largely contemporaneous with the Morgan Park works. Their book addresses the staggering challenges of historic preservation that arise when an enormous modern industrial plant shuts down. With support from the Historic American Engineering Record, structures were systematically recorded in 1985 and 1986; business records were studied; and historical photographs collected. Most important, the authors never forgot that they were preserving the vestiges of a way of life, not merely evidence of rusting ruins. They collected a rich trove of oral history from recent Lackawanna workers.

Happily for business historians, students of technology, and those interested in workers' lives, Leary and Sholes have woven together these materials into a clear and engaging narrative. Their book was published by the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, where Leary is curator. Generous support from the New York State Council on the Arts makes the 133-page paperback book, published in 1987, available for $14.95. The book may be ordered from the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, 25 Nottingham Court, Buffalo, N.Y. 14216.

Nicholas Westbrook

THE THIRD volume of The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1987, x, 544 p., $46), edited by Gary E. Moulton, covers the period from August 25, 1804, to April 6, 1805. Geographically it takes the expedition from the junction of the Vermillion and Missouri rivers in southeastern South Dakota up the Missouri to its junction with the Knife River in west-central North Dakota. The material presented in this volume is primarily from Clark, and it provides an excellent view of the expedition's progress through the northern plains where the flora and fauna were largely unknown to observers in the United States. It brought the expedition into direct contact with the northern Indian tribes along the Missouri River: Yankton, Teton Sioux, Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa. Clark's comments and the editorial notes provide superb information on this first relationship between representatives of the U.S. government and these western peoples. At the Mandan villages the expedition also encountered traders from the Cheyenne, Assiniboine, and Cree tribes as well as fur traders from the Hudson's Bay and North West companies. The events at the Fort Mandan wintering included diplomatic sociability with Mandan chiefs, surviving an extremely cold winter, and making the acquaintance of Sacagawea and her husband Toussaint Charbonneau, who would become guides to the expedition from this point on. An important and interesting section of the volume is the "Fort Mandan Miscellany," which gathers many fragments of geographical, ethnological, and biological material. This volume continues the high editorial and publishing quality exhibited in the previous volume of text (see review in the Spring, 1987, issue of this magazine).

John Parker

THE SPIRIT OF BRECK: A Journey (Minneapolis, Breck School, 1986, 180 p., paper, $4.95) commemorates the centennial of Breck School (located since 1981 in the Minneapolis suburb of Golden Valley). Written by Dan Cohen and designed and edited by Ellen B. Green, the book tells the story of Breck from its early days as a "general preparatory and normal school" near the village of Wilder, for the "sons and daughters of farmers," to its present position as a strong private day school, drawing its students from a wide variety of backgrounds in a metropolitan area.

The school, named for the Reverend James Lloyd Breck, a close friend and fellow missionary of Bishop Henry B. Whipple, was for many years Episcopal-oriented but now describes itself as ecumenical. Its history is told informally and is generously illustrated with good photographs of people and places. Acknowledgements include a list of persons interviewed as well as of primary and published sources that were consulted, providing a selective bibliography for students of private education.

Patricia O. Smylie

THE James Jerome Hill Reference Library in St. Paul has opened the papers of Louis Warren Hill (1872-1948), son of Great Northern Railway founder James J. Hill. The collection (over 600 linear feet), concerned primarily with the period spanning the 1890s to the late 1940s, includes correspondence, financial records, pamphlets, maps, and photographs; they document Hill's career as president and board chairman of the Great Northern Railway and the First National Bank of St. Paul, as well as his significant role in the development of Glacier National Park and dealings with the Blackfeet Indians. Also documented are Louis W. Hill's interests in Oregon and California real estate, Arizona copper mining, Minnesota iron mining, and oil development in Montana, Oklahoma, and Kansas. The papers contain material relating to his involvement with the Good Roads Movement and the early years of the Minnesota Highway Commission, agriculture, philanthropy and art patronage, and motion pictures. Finally, the collection includes extensive materials documenting the Hill family's varied business and social activities in St. Paul, the Upper Midwest, Pacific Northwest, and elsewhere, as well as those of his parents, James J. and Mary T. Hill, whose papers also are held in the Hill Reference Library.

THREE PAPERS presented at an Iowa City conference sponsored by the Center for the Study of the Recent History of the United States appear in Changing Patterns in American Federal-State Relations During The 1950's, The 1960's, & The 1970's, edited by Lawrence E. Gelfand and Robert Neymeyer (Iowa City, The University of Iowa, 1985, x, 82 p., $9.95). Against a backdrop of growing federal influence in relations with state and local governments, political scientists Dell S. Wright, Michael D. Beagan, and Martha Derthick analyze critical movements shaping new intergovernmental patterns. Among them are federal initiatives in areas once the province of the states and localities, the influence of federal funding in expanding the central government's role, and, conversely, the increased reliance on programs executed by the states and localities for achieving national policy goals.

The publication includes comments by former state governors—Warren Hearnes (Missouri), Robert Ray (Iowa), and Milton Schapp (Pennsylvania).

THE SIGNIFICANCE of medium-sized cities in the American political system from 1962 to 1977 is described and analyzed in Cities of the Prairie Revisited: The Closing of the Metropolitan Frontier (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press. 1958, xiv, 285 p., $25), by Daniel J. Elazar, with Rozann Rothman, Stephen L. Schechter, Maren Allan Stein, and Joseph Zikmund, II. This study amplifies and updates the research in Cities of the Prairie: The Metropolitan Frontier and American Politics, also by Elazar (reviewed in Minnesota History, Spring, 1971), covering the years from 1946 to 1961.

AMERICA'S Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups That Built America (Washington, D.C., Preservation Press, 1987, 196 p., $9.95), edited by Dell Upton, includes short descriptive articles on the building traditions of over 22 ethnic groups that helped shape the national landscape. This collection should be especially useful to anyone beginning to study American vernacular architecture. It takes a chronological, historic-geographic approach and does not really try, nor is it meant to, raise or resolve any new issues in the field.

This book has several positive features, including a well-written introduction that courageously offers a definition of ethnicity—a nearly impossible concept to define. Especially to the editor's credit is the inclusion of several articles on various Indian housing traditions, Asian antecedents, and Hawaiian building traditions as well as the more commonly researched European ones. Over 350 photographs and drawings help document building contributions.

A "Further Reading" section includes many now-famous and some obscure, but necessary, articles and books on vernacular and folk architecture; the list of "Information Sources" is a valuable guide to general and specific data about many ethnic groups. An index is also included.

The four-by-ten-inch size is unusual, ostensibly to allow the book to fit easily into an auto glove compartment. Any serious fieldworker would need much more than this collection, but it is a great place to start.

James C. Moss


CARE WITH PRAYER: The History of St. Mary's Hospital & Rehabilitation Center, 1887-1987 (Minneapolis, The Hospital, 1987, x, 110 p., $14.95 plus $3.00 postage and handling) is a warm, informal, and detailed story told by St. Mary's historian and archivist, Sister Ann Thomasine Sampson, CSJ. Her use of hospital publications, public records, scrapbooks, and interviews illuminate basic facts with social history. Numerous photographs of persons associated with the hospital through the years have been provided as well as lists of nuns serving there and of physicians, chaplains, and auxiliary presidents.