BOOK REVIEWS

Circles of Tradition: Folk Arts in Minnesota.
(St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press for the University of Minnesota Art Museum, 1989. Illustrations. xii, 162 p. $18.95.)

THIS is a celebration of the unusual richness and amazing diversity of one state’s cultural heritage. The catalog of a traveling exhibition organized and presented by the University of Minnesota Art Museum, it offers an extensive sampling of folk art forms from many of the state’s ethnic, regional, occupational, and religious communities. Ojibway drums and Norwegian rosemaling, Latvian mittens and Hmong story cloths, Ukrainian Easter eggs and Jewish ketubahs, painted farm scenes and model lumber camps—all take their places of honor within the exhibition and catalog. This fascinating selection of artifacts proclaims the dedication and skill, the commitment and creativity of the folk artists who made them. It also attests to the important role that traditional art forms have long played in shaping and sharing the meaning of life in Minnesota.

Circles of Tradition is based upon four years of field research conducted by folklorist Willard B. Moore. Between 1984 and 1988, Moore traveled some 15,000 miles and personally visited 81 of Minnesota’s 87 counties. He interviewed hundreds of living folk artists and documented works in museum and private collections by many earlier traditional artists and craftspersons. The names of those surveyed are arranged according to their art forms near the end of the catalog. Their works, mainly contemporary with a few historical precedents, fill the rest of the volume.

While the 109 examples of Minnesota folk art included in the book are most impressive, it is the theoretical framework that Moore has devised for their interpretation that distinguishes this statewide folk art exhibition and catalog from the dozen or so that have come before. Rather than following the lead of previous exhibitions, which used such criteria as artistic medium and community of origin as organizational principles, Moore has developed a model that combines context of creation and degree of integration within the community as criteria for distinguishing and defining folk art.

Moore’s model takes the basic form of three concentric circles, each of which designates a differing relationship between the folk artist and tradition. The innermost circle is that of Integrated Traditions. Here artists are bound most closely by tradition; they and the things they make are intrinsically interwoven with life in their communities. The middle circle in Moore’s model is reserved for Perceived Traditions. Artists placed in this category “perceive that they are preserving traditions of earlier generations or other places.” They also use their creations to establish their personal identities and to forge links to groups with which they wish to be identified. The outermost circle in the proposed model is designated Celebrated Traditions. In this realm, artists celebrate the “idea” of tradition, creating art works that fit popular and commercial notions of what folk art should be. Within the circle of Integrated Traditions, it is the meaning of the object that is most important. Within the circle of Perceived Traditions, it is the function. And within the circle of Celebrated Traditions, it is the form.

Moore’s theoretical model is an important contribution to the continuing debate over the nature and definition of folk art because it encourages both a broader view of the field and a more focused consideration of the individual artist and his or her work. Grounded firmly in Moore’s field research, this behavioral approach argues for the expansion of the range of objects folklorists and other academics have lately designated as folk art. It includes not only the creations of “revivalists” within the circle of Perceived Traditions, but also works of academically trained artists emulating folk models in the circle of Celebrated Traditions. Yet it is not the broadening of the boundaries of folk art that is most noteworthy; rather, it is the systematic nature of the expansion and its clear demonstration of the relationships between all new additions and the existing core of folk art forms that is illuminating.

The theoretical model of Circles of Tradition is also valuable in leading students of folk art back to a case-by-case consideration of individual folk artists, what they create, and why. To this end, Moore subdivides his three concentric circles into four quadrants, each of which represents a “context of creation,” an impulse leading Minnesota folk artists to create. These contexts include Work, Play, and Survival in a Northern Land; Spiritual Community; Adjustment to Change; and Continuity and Variation. While each of these contexts suggests a possible source of inspiration for any given Minnesota folk artist, the four contextual quadrants as a group also remind us that every single case is different and must be examined independently.

The way in which such an examination should be conducted is beautifully demonstrated by the six scholarly essays featured in this book. Following Moore’s introduction to the theoretical model, essays by scholars from several disciplines probe the nature of Norwegian-American material culture in Minnesota. Ojibway dance drums, Mexican-American corridos, Latvian mittens, and more ephemeral forms of folk art including fish displays and lawn ornament arrangements. Marion Nelson’s discussion of Norwegian-American folk arts reviews the particulars of process and production within this group in the past and proposes a provocative redefinition of the term for the future. Colleen Sheehy’s consideration of pink flamingos and giant mosquitoes reminds us of the simi-
lar impulses that motivate some folk artists to create with wood or fabric and others to create by manipulating mass-produced objects. Thomas Vennum, Jr.'s analysis of the historical development of Ojibway dance drum decoration provides valuable insight into the nature and workings of tradition as it relates to this integral cultural form. Johannes Riedel's portrayal of corrido artist Nicolas Castillo and M. Catherine Dalv's presentation of a Latvianitten maker, Anna Mizens, demonstrate admirably how the specific circumstances of individual lives directly influence the creation of folk art.

In her foreword to Circles of Tradition, Lyndel King, director of the University of Minnesota Art Museum, indicates that the exhibition and catalog are intended as a "tribute to the wonderful creativity of the people of Minnesota." This they are, without any doubt. But both the exhibition and its accompanying book are much more. They are an important step in the direction of reconsidering and redefining folk art in all its various manifestations.

Reviewed by Robert T. Teske, director of the Cedarburg Cultural Center in Cedarburg, Wisconsin. In 1987, while associate curator of exhibitions at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, he curated the traveling exhibition From Hardanger to Harleys: A Survey of Wisconsin Folk Art.

The Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and Mountain West, 1865-1915.
By Ferenc Morton Szasz.
(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988. 288 p. $27.50.)

DESPITE the epic proportions of literature on the post-Civil War American West, long-standing gaps remain that need to be addressed. Given this abundance of historical narrative, it is nothing short of amazing that the role of Protestant clergymen on the Great Plains has remained relatively untouched. To be sure, it is not virgin subject matter, but, heretofore, historians (with the exception of "giants" like William Warren Sweet, Clifford M. Druzy, and Colin B. Goodykoontz) have been content to confine their studies to denominational history. Thus we have histories of the Episcopalians in Nebraska, Methodists in Utah, and Baptists in New Mexico—to cite only three—but Ferenc Morton Szasz is the first to provide us with a synthesis of the efforts of the Protestant clergy between 1865 and 1915.

The first date is understandable since it marks the great surge of settlement into the trans-Mississippi West, but the second is a bit baffling until Szasz explains that by 1915, with ever-growing numbers of automobiles, the era of the itinerant minister and the rural church came to an end. That year not only saw the demise of the peripatetic clergyman but also witnessed the finale of the rural church as a social focus for the community.

For half a century the Protestant clergy, many of whom were convinced that as bearers of the national cultural tradition they held the fate of the republic in their hands, went west to rescue the land from dangers both real and imagined. Szasz's task is one of great dimensions. To provide both emphasis and manageability, he confines the core of his study to those he calls "mainline" churches: Methodists and Baptists (both northern and southern); Presbyterians (chiefly northern); Congregationalists; and Episcopalians. The 1850 census ranked the five churches second through sixth in total number (Catholics were first, Lutherans a close seventh).

Across the vastness of the Great Plains, where there was "no Sunday west of Junction City and no God west of Salina," the clergymen baptized, married, buried, and preached a basic Arminian gospel of Christianity. In between they served as librarians, became social workers, established parochial schools and colleges, provided lectures on a variety of topics, and practiced frontier medicine on demand. But fighting prostitution, gambling, and demon rum became their stock-in-trade in a land where "sin...had become a business like shoes and real estate." Nor did these clergymen skirt the strongholds of the opposition where "mesmerism [was] there to delude, [and] Popery...to ensnare" the population. Into the heart of Mormonism to debate (in the tabernacle, no less) the tenets of Christianity and into the Southwest to confront the "black robes," the Protestant clergy carried their message of divine redemption.

The emphasis in this volume is on the work of the Protestant clergy among whites. But Szasz reminds us (as F. Paul Prucha and Henry Fritz have written) that Ulysses S. Grant's Peace Policy served only to unload the whole Indian problem onto the American churches. The coincidental goals of the Protestant clergy and the American president to make the American Indians civilized in habits, English speaking, and Christian meshed perfectly and established the framework for Indian-white relations for the next three generations. Methodologically, Grant's plan was implemented by assigning Indian groups to the "mainline" churches for conversion.

No history of the clergy would be complete without acknowledging the contribution of the minister's wife, and Szasz appropriately recognizes her accomplishments. While her husband "rode circuit," the wife carried on the auxiliary work of the church. One lonely woman commented that in 60 years of marriage she had been alone at least half of that time. While her husband was absent she had been busy with the Ladies Aid, the church bazaar, and the Women's Guild.

Szasz's history has a mournful ending. It was clear by 1915 that the Great Plains had not been saved for the Protestant cause. The rapid turnover of clergy and parishioners had made the work almost impossible. The crusade against vice did not make headway until after 1915 when the Progressives took up the battle. The Hispanics and the Mormons had held their ground. Religious diversity had taken its toll, and denominational pluralism weakened the clergy's efforts. Perhaps more than any other factor, it was the conflict between the desire of the West's population to reduce social restrictions and the clergy's efforts to increase social controls that were incompatible.

Szasz mentions several times that sponsoring Eastern missionary churches and societies poured thousand of dollars into the West. We need to know more about the relationship between these organizations and their charges. Given the distance and communication difficulties beyond the Missis-
sippi, how close were the ties between clergy and headquar-
ters? We also need to learn more about the relations between
parent organizations and the schools and colleges that they
spawned. There remains a haunting question: Were all Prot-
estant clergy models of Christian propriety? Were there no
Elmer Gantys or Jimmy Swaggarts?

This is a delightfully written, thoroughly researched, and
carefully organized study. It belongs in the library of every
historian of the American West.

Reviewed by Roy Hoover, associate professor of history at
University of Minnesota, Duluth. His study of the Presbyte-
rian missionary Edmund F. Ely appeared in the Fall, 1985,
issue of this journal.

New Directions in American Indian History.
Edited by Colin G. Calloway.
Cloth, $29.50.)

FEW PEOPLES of the world have been written about more
than American Indians. The torrent of books, articles, and
essays that began with the first European visitors to the New
World continues to this day. The D’Arcy McNickle Center for
the History of the American Indian, in fact, claims that 500
new titles appear each year. As a result, even keeping abreast
of titles relating to one’s special interest is a challenge for even
the most enthusiastic scholar. That is why collections of bibli-
ographical essays such as this one are so useful and necessary.

To help scholars cope with this publishing avalanche, the
D’Arcy McNickle Center is preparing bibliographical tools in
two series. One series will consist of indexed bibliographical
lists organized topically; the other, which New Directions in
American Indian History inaugurates, will consist of essays
that are intended to “review recent trends in historical scholar-
ship and point to areas where further research is to be
done.” Volumes in each series will be published at six-year
intervals; a new volume in one or the other series will appear
every three years. It is an ambitious project, but if this vol-
ume is an indication of the overall quality, the series will be a
worthy one.

New Directions consists of nine essays, three of which are
written by Indian scholars. The essays are grouped in two
sections. Section one, consisting of six essays, is entitled “New
Directions” and focuses on quantitative studies, metis history,
Southern Plains history, legal history, 20th-century history,
and women’s history; section two, “Emerging Trends,” fea-
tures essays on linguistics, economics, and religious history.
The time span for each section varies, but generally the books
discussed were published after 1980. Thus, this volume is seen
as a continuation of the Center’s Scholars and the Indian
Experience: Critical Reviews of Recent Writings in the Social

Except for a few typos and other minor glitches, New
Directions reflects careful editing and meticulous attention to
detail. The major flaw is that the authors attempt to do too
much. Indeed, some 700 or so titles are mentioned, although
the bulk of them receive little more than a word or two of
comment. Almost all of the titles included are favorably com-
mented upon. Although space is obviously at a premium, there
is some duplication. This is perhaps inevitable because of
the topical arrangement. Ironically, the Hodge Handbook
of Indians North of Mexico, published by the Smithsonian in
1906, is cited but not the new edition, which the Smithsonian
has been publishing intermittently over the past 15 years and
which is intended to replace Hodge. Its omission is puzzling,
to say the least, since its up-to-date, topical essays incorpo-
rate the same “new directions” in American Indian history
and ethnography the essayists so heartily endorse.

New Directions is especially valuable as a tool for direct-
ing graduate students interested in finding a fresh topic for a
master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation. The field of linguis-
tics, which certainly cries for scholarly attention, is probably
too specialized for most students, but there are other areas—
women’s history, for example—that also beg for attention. So
little work has been done on this topic that the author had to
include titles published 20 and 30 years earlier to write a
balanced essay.

New Directions in American Indian History deserves a
place in every college and university library. The breadth and
depth of the scholarship it records reflect the strength and
vitality of American Indian studies today and indicate how
far the field has come since its revitalization following the
publication of Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee.

Reviewed by HERMAN J. VIOLA, director of quincentenary
programs for the Museum of Natural History at the Smithso-
nion Institution, and the author of Diplomats in Buckskin
(1981). He is currently writing a study of North American
Indians in the 500 years since Columbus.

The Shaman: Patterns of Religious Healing Among the
Ojibway Indians.
By John A. Grim.
Cloth, $19.95; paper, $8.95.)

IN The Shaman John A. Grim has provided a valuable and
informative addition to the growing ethnography on Anishinabe people. In his ethnographic approach, however,
lies both the strength and the weakness of this work. Indeed,
as Grim makes the point, ethnography is a difficult task in
the absence of adequate ethnology. In the final analysis, this
book may be more valuable as ethnology than ethnography.
There is always a sense of artificiality when examining paral-
el experiences or material artifacts with superficial similari-
ties but with little else in common except those comparisons
of sympathetic magic common to all subsistence cultures.

Grim’s thesis that the roots of Ojibway shamanism reveal
some truths about a common Asian identity dating back be-
fore the Bering Strait migration is simply too grand to prove.
Furthermore, it may be controversial for native people who
believe North America to be their original birthplace.
Whether or not this can be proven in empirical terms, it

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remains an important issue in the development of a modern Indian political consciousness. Finally, this thesis tends to be irrelevant to the genesis of the Ojibway, who as a people migrated not from the Bering Sea, but rather were led by the sacred Megis shell from their ancestral home on the shores of the Atlantic to the interior of North America.

The material on Siberian shamanism in Chapter 2 and the attempt to place Ojibway shamanism in the context of traditional religious typology in Chapter 9 are interesting but in some ways seem marginal to the rest of the study. Where Grim does his best work is in his description of Ojibway cosmology and the development of the Midewiwin as a religion, as opposed to older forms of shamanic activity (i.e., conjuring). By setting the Mide Society squarely within the context of colonial history, he provides welcome insight into Ojibway responses to the incursion of Europeans into their territories. He provides us with a picture of a society that is neither utopian nor fragile, but rather resilient and tough in the face of contact. His work is mindful of the research of Oscar Lewis and David G. Mandelbaum on Blackfoot society, in which white contact and technology provide the basis for cultural florescence, at least in the early period. The kinds of social and cultural pressures brought to bear on Ojibway society led to a revival of traditional shamanic forms at the same time as it led to codification and coalescence of the power of the Mide Society. This is an invaluable perspective, which will add greatly to our understanding of other recent works like Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman’s “The Orders of the Dreamed”: George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibway Religion and Myth, 1823.

As far as this goes, however, the book is far too subservient to modern political realities. As is the case with too many books on the Ojibway, it tends to focus on Minnesota and Wisconsin while ignoring the experience of Anishinabe in northern Ontario and elsewhere. In this, it not only fails to acknowledge, except in a token fashion, the pioneering work of anthropologists Edward S. Rogers, Irving Hallowell, Ruth Landes, et al., but also fails to deal with the interface between the spiritual and the economic. While there are great problems with the work of Calvin Martin, his emphasis on the application of cosmology to economic behavior represents a great leap forward in historiography. Grim’s work needs to be informed by this perspective. The development of Ojibway cosmology is perhaps more influenced by the structures of informal empire—for example, the fur trade—than it is by the imposition of alien political structures. This work would be far better if Grim were to remove the material on Siberia and include more history.

Despite all of this, this study is an important addition to the literature. It is detailed in its treatment of Mide ceremonies and perceptive in its treatment of Ojibway cosmology. It is written in an interesting style and has an impressive bibliography. It is a welcome contender in a field in which, surprisingly, there is very little known, and it offers outstanding testimony to cultural persistence among the Anishinabe.

Reviewed by ALAN R. BOBIWASH, a lecturer at Trent University and a Mississagi Anishinabe from Ontario, who is completing his D.Phil. His thesis examines the changing economic and social relations among Cree, Chipewyan, and métis in northern Saskatchewan in the late 19th century.
tional attention as one of the state’s “proudest theatrical achievements.”

And, of course, Whiting deals extensively—and well—with the Guthrie Theater. Admittedly proud of having been involved, along with several others, in bringing the Guthrie to Minneapolis in 1963, he gives a discerning account of the famed theater’s ups and downs during its 25 years.

The book offers much pleasurable reading, but it is low in analysis and character sketches in a number of places. It probably is most valuable as a reference work where one can look up, say, the Penumbra Theatre Company in the index and soon have at least some of the wanted information. Television newscaster Dave Moore, who has a theatrical background, has written a fine foreword, and the publisher has produced an attractive book, with many illustrations in color as well as black and white.

Reviewed by Kenneth Carley, former editor of this magazine, who has a long-standing interest in the history of music and theater in Minnesota.

The Quartzite Border: Surveying and Marking the North Dakota-South Dakota Boundary, 1891-1892.
By Gordon L. Iseminger.
(Sioux Falls: The Center for Western Studies, Augustana College, 1988. 123 p. $10.95.)

THE SURVEYING and marking of the North Dakota-South Dakota boundary has been briefly considered in several regional histories and in such works as Franklin K. Van Zandt’s Boundaries of the United States and the Several States, but this is the first comprehensive treatment of the subject. Iseminger’s interest in the quartzite border was piqued in 1979 when he was first shown one of the quartzite monuments that were installed at half-mile intervals between 1891 and 1892 to mark the North Dakota-South Dakota boundary. Subsequently, he hiked over the entire 360 1/2 miles to locate and photograph extant monuments. He supplemented this field work with interviews of area residents and research in a variety of published and unpublished sources, including manuscripts of the original survey in the National Archives.

In order to place the boundary in its proper historical context, Iseminger concisely describes the politicking that led to the division of Dakota Territory into two states. Although many territorial leaders thought the 46th degree of latitude was the logical dividing line, the legislation creating the two Dakotas separated them along the 7th standard parallel. This survey line, which ran somewhat south of the 46th latitude, was stipulated because it formed the southern boundary of North Dakota’s southernmost tier of counties. Thus, its use precluded any contention over reducing their size.

When the Dakotas were admitted into the Union on November 2, 1889, there was no provision for the surveying and marking of their boundary. This fact was not lost on Richard F. Pettigrew, one of the two men selected to represent South Dakota in the United States Senate. Pettigrew, of Sioux Falls, after persuading some reluctant colleagues that the federal government had the responsibility to survey and mark the boundary, shepherded a bill authorizing the work for a sum not to exceed $25,000 through Congress. Even before the bill became law on September 25, 1890, Pettigrew suggested that the boundary be marked with quartzite monuments, which conveniently could be fashioned at quarries in his hometown.

Quartzite, a very hard metamorphic rock found in the Sioux Falls area and parts of southwestern Minnesota, seemingly provided the necessary attributes for boundary monuments—great weight, strength, and durability. Pettigrew’s influence was demonstrated by the decision of the General Land Office to mark the boundary with 720 stone monuments quarried and inscribed at Sioux Falls.

Although the senator showed an uncommon interest in the entire project of surveying and marking the boundary, he was made to realize that some matters were beyond his control. Pettigrew, who combined zeal for his hometown and state with cronyism, openly resented the awarding of the surveying and marking contract to veteran surveyor Charles H. Bates. During the project, Pettigrew questioned Bates’s integrity in obtaining the contract even though Bates had outstanding qualifications and had won the contract through competitive bidding.

In addition to his good analysis of Pettigrew’s shenanigans, Iseminger nicely portrays the nature of bureaucratic decision-making within the Interior Department and General Land Office. The land office advertised for the work in March, 1891, awarded the contract to Bates in July, and then managed to dally so long on contract technicalities that Bates and his party did not commence until September 19.

In about six weeks Bates managed to survey and monument the 190-mile line from the Minnesota boundary westward to the Missouri River. Much of this work consisted of retracing the 7th standard parallel, which had been surveyed previously for most of the distance. Marking as the survey proceeded, Bates’s men erected 380 monuments east of the Missouri. The bulky markers, with an average weight of 800 pounds, had been hauled by railroad from Sioux Falls to selected points near the boundary and then distributed by wagon. The lower half of the seven-foot-long stones was buried, which was sufficient to support the inscribed top portion that identified the states and, in some instances, such things as township lines.

In the summer of 1892 Bates completed the original surveying and marking of the more remote boundary between the Missouri and Montana. This work presented some complicated transportation arrangements in moving monuments from Sioux Falls by rail to the Missouri, up the Missouri by steamboat and then along the boundary by wagon.

In keeping with federal regulations, Bates’s work had to be inspected by a qualified surveyor. The examination contract was awarded to one of Pettigrew’s friends—George G. Beardsley of McCanna, North Dakota. After completing his examination in October, 1892, Beardsley pronounced Bates’s survey to be “a marvel of accuracy.”

Iseminger not only portrays the nature of the Bates survey and the Beardsley examination, but places their activities in a broader context. Thus, he describes the settlement of the boundary area, the history of its frontier communities, and
the nature and methodology of public land surveying in the United States. As a way of bringing his history up-to-date, Iseminger covered the present-day status of the boundary markers. He concluded that more than half of the original 720 monuments still stand, but many others have succumbed to road construction, vandalism, souvenir hunters, and breakage caused by livestock and equipment. In this connection, one is struck by the lack of provision for some type of boundary maintenance. Unlike the Canada-United States boundary, which is inspected and remonumented as necessary at regular intervals, the North Dakota-South Dakota boundary was surveyed, marked, and forgotten.

Iseminger's work should increase public consciousness of the boundary monuments as interesting reminders of the area's past. This book should enjoy a wide readership. It deals with a fresh topic, is well researched, clearly written, and lavishly illustrated. The coverage of Missouri River steamboating and the use of quartzite as building stone is unnecessarily long and detailed for purposes of this history, but overall Iseminger has produced an excellent monograph, which is appropriately related to regional and national themes.

Reviewed by William E. Lass, professor of history at Mankato State University and author of Minnesota's Boundary with Canada: Its Evolution since 1783 (1980).

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By David Montgomery.


THIRTY YEARS AGO, a group of farm and labor activists compiled a “People’s Centennial” collection of essays, marking the struggles and contributions of working people over Minnesota’s first century. Among the authors were such well-known names as Meridel LeSueur and Irene Paul. While many of the essays were reminiscences and first-hand accounts, one of the more interesting historical studies was entitled “How Gene Debs Stopped the Great Northern,” by one Amos Flaherty, who is otherwise unidentified.

“Flaherty” was a pseudonym for a 30-year-old machinist at the giant Honeywell plant, David Montgomery. A graduate of Swarthmore in the late 1940s and a veteran of the American military, Montgomery had learned the machinist’s trade, joined the Communist party, entered a Brooklyn, New York, plant, and become a leader in the militant United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers Union. Ultimately fired and blacklisted on the East Coast, he moved to Minnesota and Honeywell, where “the sense that an injury to one [worker] was an injury to all ran through the whole department with such effectiveness that, in the end, the only way Minneapolis Honeywell could get rid of us was to close the entire division.”

When he lost his job at Honeywell and quit the Communist party, Montgomery decided to pursue the study of American history at the University of Minnesota. He took his experiences with Minnesota workers, labor activists, and radicals to graduate school with him. While the “power elite” model dominated intellectual thinking in the 1960s, Montgomery’s experience refused to allow him to buy into this perspective. His sense of the active role of working people—in shaping their own lives and in shaping society—informedit his historical research, research that began to reshape the entire field of American labor history. One theme has united the seemingly diverse topics in his published works to date: “My study of both shop-floor struggles and the Reconstruction period has underscored for me the fact that the working-class has always formulated alternatives to bourgeois society in this country, particularly on the job.”

The Fall of the House of Labor is the mature work of a prominent scholar, now the Farnam Professor of American History at Yale University, and the country’s leading labor historian. It also bears the imprint of the author’s Minnesota experience. While Montgomery has broadened his scope to explore the experiences of unskilled immigrants, African Americans, and women and to probe the role of the state and the local community as well as the shop floor, working-class agency remains the core of his study. The results are most impressive.

This book is full of the rich detail that those familiar with Montgomery’s work have come to expect. Workplace after workplace comes to life, peopled with flesh-and-blood men and women with their own thoughts about how work ought to be organized, their own scale of values about responsible behavior, and a variety of organizations through which they attempted to impose their conceptions. Confronted by management bent on gaining the upper hand, these workers waged some of the most massive battles in the history of American labor. They also fought a less dramatic but nonetheless telling day-to-day struggle over the “frontier of control”—the space that they would control at work vis-à-vis the space that management could control.

The Fall of the House of Labor also offers some fresh perspectives on an overall vision of the direction of social change in America during the first three decades of this century. “Although my specialty is working-class history,” Montgomery once explained, “the subject I am trying to get at is the history of capitalism.” This volume brings his work much closer to this goal and opens up for the reader a window into the working-class impact on the history of American capitalism. It is neither a bemoaning of workers’ exploitation nor a celebration of labor’s “contribution” to American society. Rather, it offers a detailed and thorough look at the depths—and the limits—of workers’ influence on the direction of American society, from the shop floor to the state.

Last fall, many students and scholars of Minnesota history enjoyed a treat when they heard Professor Montgomery deliver the keynote address at the Northern Great Plains History Conference in Eveleth. It was his first visit to Minnesota in many years, and he was in rare form. His talk explored the impact of Iron Range workers on the course of the American labor movement. Those present will need no urging to read The Fall of the House of Labor. But if you weren’t there, this volume offers a golden opportunity to partake of the richness of Montgomery’s work and share in the harvest of the seeds planted three decades ago at Minneapolis Honeywell, in
Meridel Le Sueur’s study, in the precinct caucuses of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party, and at the University of Minnesota’s history department.


FROM 1935 to 1943 a team of exceptionally talented photographers traveled across the United States documenting the experience of the Great Depression and World War II. The project was headed by Roy E. Stryker under the auspices of the Resettlement Administration, a New Deal agency concerned with the plight of the rural poor. In 1937 the RA became the Farm Security Administration; in 1942 Stryker and his staff were assigned to the Office of War Information. Following the war, the photographs were deposited in the Library of Congress. Known as the FSA-OWI Collection, the 88,000 captioned prints are housed in 235 file drawers and organized by region and topic.

Documenting America is the definitive study of the FSA-OWI Collection. Through the able guidance of the editors, the history and significance of “this most momentous photograph project ever conceived” is presented in words and pictures. Unlike earlier publications and exhibits that feature the best-known images of Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Arthur Rothstein, and other legendary FSA photographers, this volume is organized by photographic assignment. The result is a work that places them in historical time and provides a rich understanding of how the collection evolved.

By way of illustration, two of the 15 essays feature the work of photographers with Minnesota connections. John Vachon, a native of St. Paul, joined the staff in 1936 as a file clerk and messenger boy. Encouraged by Stryker, he began experimenting with a 35-mm Leica in and around Washington, D.C. His first major assignment was in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1938; of his 208 photographs 99 are featured in this selection, depicting flophouses, an armored car, parade onlookers, and grain elevators (a favorite subject of Vachon). As the FSA project evolved, Stryker had told his staff “to photograph anything, anywhere in the United States . . . that seemed interesting and vital.” Vachon’s pictures of Omaha reflect this artistic freedom so essential to the success of Stryker’s project while also revealing Vachon’s emergence as one of America’s finest photographers. Whenever he returned home to Minnesota to visit his parents, Vachon armed with camera and film. His photographs taken in the Twin Cities and around the state are among the best in the FSA-OWI Collection.

Gordon Parks attended various high schools in the Twin Cities. The only black on the FSA staff, he joined the project in 1942. Featured in Documenting America is his series, “Ella Watson, U.S. Government Charwoman.” In Grant Wood style, Parks photographed her in front of an American flag with a broom in one hand and a mop in the other. This famous image is enhanced by his pictures of Mrs. Watson at home, at church, and at work. Vachon and Parks became close friends, and each went on to distinguished careers: Vachon as a senior staff photographer at Look and Parks as Life photographer, filmmaker, television producer, and writer.

Others represented in this collection include Russell Lee, Ben Shahn, Marion Post Wolcott, Jack Delano, Esther Bubley, Marjorie Collins, John Collier, Jr., Lange, Rothstein, and Evans. Unfortunately, the editors were unable to include two others who are recognized as major American photographers: Carl Mydans and Arthur Siegel. Introductory essays provide brief biographical descriptions as well as details about the assignment featured. Six of the 15 series are of the home front taken during World War II.

This is a handsome book with excellent reproductions prepared from the original negatives. An essay by Lawrence W. Levine on photography and the 1930s and 1940s and one by Alan Trachtenberg on “reading the file” offer important interpretive understandings. Especially useful is an appendix, which describes the size, scope, and organization of the FSA-OWI Collection. An index, bibliography, and list of the Library of Congress order numbers complete the volume. Looking back on the project, Stryker wrote that “We introduced America to Americans.” From today’s perspective, the FSA-OWI photographs are cultural icons that present an America that used to be. In helping our generation appreciate the collection, Brannan and Fleischhauer have selected themes and images that display both the difficult times and the determined response of the American people. This book will be valued by scholars as a significant contribution to the history of photography and of 20th-century America; it will be enjoyed by anyone who loves a good photograph.

Reviewed by Robert L. Reid, professor of history and vice-president for academic affairs at the University of Southern Indiana, who is completing a book for the MHS Press on Minnesota as seen by the FSA photographers.
THE SOLON J. BUCK Award for the best article to appear in Minnesota History during 1988 has been given to Linda Mack Schloff for her study entitled “Overcoming Geography: Jewish Religious Life in Four Market Towns,” which was published in the Spring issue. The prize of $600 will be presented at the society’s annual meeting in November.

This year’s judges were Carl H. Chrislock, professor emeritus of history at Augsburg College and a two-time winner of the Buck Award; Kathy O’Brien, Minneapolis city councilwoman and a former MHS staff member; and Mary D. Cannon, editor of this journal.

MINNESOTANS of Swedish descent and perhaps scholars of Swedish-American material culture will be particularly interested in author-photographer Anja Notini’s Made in Sweden: Art Handicrafts Design, a colorful, large-format hardcover volume available for $45.00 from Meckler Press, 11 Ferry Lane West, Westport, Conn. 06880. Issued in 1989, the book includes pictures and interviews of artists and craftspeople who make puppets, glassware, straw and wood handicrafts, ceramics, paintings and drawings, saddlery, sculpture, textiles, gold, silverware, and other metalwork. Also represented are some industrial designers.

VOLUME 32 of Norwegian-American Studies (Northfield, Norwegian-American Historical Assn., 1989, 297 p., $15.00 plus $1.00 postage and handling), dedicated to the late Carlton C. Qualey, provides a particularly interesting assortment of articles. It includes pieces on Norwegian-American tobacco farming in Wisconsin, the role ethnicity played in Scandinavian immigrant women’s choices of husbands, and two fascinating analyses of immigrant life based on extant rural Norwegian-American buildings and their supporting documentation. Another essay calls for American archives to collect and preserve the letters sent from Norway to America as the vital other half of the “America letters” that immigrants sent home from the United States. Author Oyvind Guliksen looks briefly at several sets of letters from those who stayed behind in Telemark to their relatives in Minnesota and elsewhere. Gracia Grindal analyzes a drawing by the well-born wife of an immigrant Lutheran pastor to show how she adapted to pioneer life. Other articles look at music, literature, Civil War letters, and reasons for emigration, particularly from the Sogn district. The volume concludes with two helpful compilations, one an annotated bibliography of recent publications in Scandinavian-American history and the other a description of recent additions to the Norwegian-American Historical Association’s archives at St. Olaf College.

THE FOURTH VOLUME in the Norwegian-American Historical Association’s Topical Studies series is Nina Draxten’s monograph. The Testing of M. Falk Gjertsen (Northfield: NAHA, 1988, 134 p., $12.00). The biographical work focuses on a scandalous incident, “mild by present-day standards,” in the career of a prestigious and respected middle-aged Lutheran minister near the turn of the century. Falk’s ultimate triumph over adversity is a good read. And the volume also offers insights into the interaction between the immigrant social world and the larger community in the emerging metropolis of Minneapolis.

READERS interested in women’s history will be pleased to note the publication of The American Woman 1857–88, A Report in Depth, edited by Sara E. Rix for the Women’s Research & Education Institute of the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987, 350 p. $18.95). Four substantive essays, including “Women in Twentieth Century America: An Overview” by Sara M. Evans, comprise half of the book. The remainder is made up of a section entitled Women in Brief that contains short sketches on such topics as women in business, in the military, science, intercollegiate sports, and unions—among others; women and reproduction; images of black women; Latinas in the United States; and women among immigrants. Tables and a statistical appendix on “American Women Today” complete the volume.

DANIEL J. BOORSTIN brings together forty years of his reflections on Hidden History: Exploring Our Secret Past in a newly issued paperback edition of the 1987 book (New York: Random House, 1989, 332 p., $9.95). This wide-ranging look at American history, culled from Boorstin’s earlier books, articles, and speeches, examines such diverse topics as Paul Revere, the Adamses, and a Jeffersonian circle of “natural philosophers” to advertising, a “characteristic folk culture of our society,” and a section entitled “Unsung Experiments” that looks at politics, philanthropy, and the arts. In a pithy epilogue, the author peers into the future of the “Republic of Technology” and what it holds for the nation’s third century.

RICHLY illustrated with color and black-and-white photographs, The American Swedish Institute, A Living Heritage (Minneapolis, the Institute, 1989, 87 p., $14.95, available at the museum bookstore, 2600 Park Avenue) is both the history of a building and the man who built it. The rag-to-riches story of Swedish immigrant Swan Johan Turnblad is somewhat sketchy. Author Sherry Butcher-Younghans, curator of collections at ASI, notes “The Turnblads were a reserved family... Little is known about the family’s personal life and few records were kept.”

More than three-quarters of the book is devoted to this Minneapolis building, its contents, and its transformation from a residence into a cultural center and museum. Chapters detail its architectural and artistic elements—such as woodwork, stone carvings, and decorative plaster—and
then take the reader on a tour of the historic mansion, room by room. A chapter on the museum’s collections presents objects as examples of the institution’s mission as an ethnic organization to collect objects that explain the Swedish presence in the Midwest during the period of that group’s immigration.

READERS who enjoy gentle altercation will be interested to note Richard N. Current’s Arguing with Historians: Essays on the Historical and the Unhistorical (Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1987, 208 p., cloth, $25.95, paper, $14.95). In this collection of essays, many of them previously published in journals and other volumes, Current takes on various Civil War topics such as “Who Started the War, Abraham Lincoln or Jefferson Davis?” and “Carpetbaggers Reconsidered.” Final chapters address “Fiction as History: Vidal, Haley, Styron” and “The New Ethnicity and American History.”

AUTHORS Lillian Schlissel, Byrd Gibbens, and Elizabeth Hampsten take the study of women’s diaries and letters one step further in Far From Home: Families of the Westward Journey (New York, Schocken Books, 1989, 264 p., cloth, $19.95). Each author has contributed a chapter that follows the fortunes of a family as it made its way west, either in parts or united. In the case of the Browns of Virginia, for example, Charles went west to establish himself before his wife, Maggie, and child joined him in Colorado. George and Abigail Malick and their four children left Pennsylvania for Illinois where they farmed for more than a decade before the couple set off for Oregon, not yet declared a territory, hoping that their children would join them the following year. The Neher and Martin families, on the other hand, were Germans from Russia who set off with the ultimate destination of South Dakota, only to find themselves, after much traveling and many stops, in North Dakota instead.

Letters between the western travelers and their loved ones at home are the primary focus of the book. Summaries at the beginning of each chapter give the broad outline of each family’s fate; in addition, the authors have each done a skillful job of weaving together the letters with both factual matter and commentary that place the correspondents and their situations in social and historical context. A final chapter, “Families and Frontiers: A Reading for Our Time” presents the authors’ interpretation of the impact of the frontier on later generations of Americans.

MARK F. DIEDRICH’S new book is The Odyssey of Chief Standing Buffalo and the Northern Sisseton Sioux (Minneapolis: Coyote Books, 1988, 115 p., $16.95). It recounts the life of the “last great Sisseton” leader from his birth in about 1833 near the headwaters of the Minnesota River to his death in 1871 near Bear Paw Mountain in present-day Montana. The author describes Standing Buffalo’s role in the 1862 Dakota war and his later efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement of differences between his people and the United States. Diedrich examines in some detail the Indian leader’s effort to get help from the British and his years of wandering “like a phantom on the prairie.” His death in a foray against the Gros Ventres “was a virtual suicide.” It was also “his masochistic escape from the adverse controversies and hardships which had plagued his entire adult life.” A number of photographs and maps enhance the text, and the annotated book includes a bibliography and an index.

THE THREE DECADES between the turn of the century and the advent of the New Deal are the focus of Thomas J. Morain’s book, Prairie Grass Roots: An Iowa Small Town in the Early Twentieth Century (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988, 257 p., $24.95). The study of the Greene County town of Jefferson is the seventh volume in the Henry A. Wallace series on agricultural history and rural studies. While the work emphasizes a particular locality, Morain makes it clear that “what was occurring in Jefferson was also happening in . . . similar towns in Illinois, Minnesota, and Nebraska.” Utilizing the new social history techniques, he interviewed nearly 50 residents of the community: the data he gathered on social identity, gender, technology, morality, World War I, and the boom and bust of the 1920s illustrates vividly the changes in rural life. By the end of the 1920s, the author finds that “it was obvious that the urban centers, not the farm and small town, were coming to dominate American life.”

A FASCINATING contribution to the literature on homesteading the Upper Midwest is Sophie Trupin’s Dakota Diaspora, Memoirs of a Jewish Homesteader (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1988, 164 p., $6.95). In 1904, Harry Turnoy, a cheese merchant, fled the anti-Semitic persecutions of Czarist Russia to establish a place for his wife and four children in America. He stopped briefly with a younger brother in Chicago before taking a quarter section of land in North Dakota. Four years later the family followed. (The author was about six years old at the time.)

In brief vignettes that typify this genre of memoir, Trupin details the travail and triumphs of her family’s pioneer life. All settlers experienced the hardships of the homestead life to some degree—the loneliness, uncertainty, and poverty. For Jews, totally unaccustomed to rural life, dependent on a community for worship, religious functionaries, and the rudiments of maintaining ritual requirements such as keeping kosher, the challenge of survival was magnified. The family lost the homestead and moved to the town of Wing, where Mr. Turnoy opened a butcher shop.

The bulk of this book takes readers through the period between the author’s emigration and her grammar school graduation, during World War I. In a brief opening section Trupin reconstructs her family’s life in Russia and precise reasons for leaving. A final section wraps up the story, following her parents’ emigration to Israel in 1935.

Dakota Diaspora is a Bison Book reprint of the edition Sophie Trupin published in 1984. It is a welcome addition to the literature on Jewish settlement outside of major urban centers.

POSTERS of the WPA by Christopher DeNoon (Los Angeles, Wheatley Press, 1987, 175 p., $39.95) uses 320 illustrations, 280 of them in color, to correlate the posters with the artistic, social, and political movements in America between 1935 and 1943. A brief history of the New Deal and its use of the visual arts chronicles the beginning of the poster division, its productivity, the decline of the Federal Art Project, and the fate of the WPA posters. Most of the book, however, is devoted to reproductions of the art in all of its topical variety: posters for the United States Travel

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A WELCOME addition to the excellent work, Crossroads in Time: A History of Carlton County, Minnesota, reviewed in the Winter, 1987, issue of this journal, is author Francis M. Carroll's Reading and Research supplement. The information in this 20-page booklet is "designed to help people to do further reading and research about Carlton County and also to suggest some topics that merit further investigation and study." Topics and bibliography are keyed to the chapters in the original book. Published in 1989, the supplement is available from the Carlton County Historical Society Museum, 406 Cloquet Ave., Cloquet, 55720 for $2.95 plus 6% sales tax. Postage will be added for those ordering a copy through the mail.

A CENTURY of Good Living: North St. Paul, 1887-1987 [1988] provides an excellent example of the possibilities of local history. Working with her collaborators to collect, select, and organize the documents of the town's past, Rosemary Palmer presents both a story of suburban development and the biography of a unique place, with plenty of names, dates, places, anecdotes, reminiscences, photos, and newspaper ads. Carolyn Griffith's administrative histories of the town's municipal departments add to the book's usefulness as a reference tool, as does the detailed index, which includes topics such as day care, hot-air balloons, and movies (but not booya, which is mentioned several times), as well as names of people and organizations.

Palmer organizes her narrative chronologically, using periods that have meaning for the nation as well as North St. Paul. After launching the city in 1887, she moves to Suburban Wonder: From Boom to Bust (1888-1894), then to the Progressive Era with Recovery and Growth (1894-1917), followed by Thresholds: North St. Paul at War and Peace (1918-1945), and The Newcomers: Challenges for the Future (1946-1980s). By using eras common to national histories, rather than a decade-by-decade approach, Palmer is able to set a history of one small place into its larger geographic contexts. The epilogue pictures the centennial celebration itself.

The writing is lively and readable. Palmer makes good use of the telling anecdotes that abound in local history, some right in the text and others in sidebars that illuminate or add to the main narrative. Readers might wish that dates had been included with the newspaper excerpts and ads that form a large percentage of the sidebars.

Palmer spent part of her childhood in North St. Paul, which may have contributed to her success in creating an evolving sense of place for this suburban St. Paul town. The 296-page volume is available at the MHS and at Ramsey County libraries.

THE LIFE and career of C. A. George Newmann (1890-1952), a hypnotist and mind reader born as Christian Andrew George Nae'seth at Kenyon, Minnesota, are sketched in James B. Alfredson's monograph, Newmann: The Pioneer Mentalist (Glenwood, Ill., David Meyer Magic Books, 1989, 49 p., $25.00). For some 50 years the "Master of Mental Marvels" performed mainly in Upper Midwest small towns, while compiling scrapbooks of magic memorabilia (now in the Library of Congress) and gathering a collection of magic literature whose mysterious history Alfredson also traces. This limited edition book is available from the publisher: Meyerbooks, P.O. Box 427, Glenwood, Illinois 60425.

THE QUESTION MARK in the title of "We, The People"? Satiric Prints of the 1930s is the key to the inquisitive viewpoint of a recent publication on New Deal art. Richard N. Masteller of Whitman College uses American prints to explore the commonly heard rhetoric of "the people" in images of social, political, and cultural satire.

Three Minnesotans feature prominently in the category of social satire: Adolf Dehn, Wanda Gag, and Elizabeth Olds, all of whom were widely known and respected as printmakers with a message about Americans and their values. This 75-page catalog of an exhibition at Whitman College's Sheehan Gallery reproduces 68 prints to illustrate Dr. Masteller's cogent thesis that American artists were "familiar with—and when they desired could deploy—satiric strategies that subverted the optimistic assumptions inherent in the myth of 'we, the people.' " The catalog is available for $5.00 from the Sheehan Gallery, Whitman College, Walla Walla, Wash. 99362.  

Thomas O'Sullivan

THE Nation Builders: A Sesquicentennial History of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, 1836-1863 (Fort Belvoir, Va.: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1988, 81 p., $2.75) recounts the brief official life of this "small dedicated group of officers . . . who played a major part in a period of dramatic development aptly characterized . . . as a 'transportation revolution.' " Edited by Frank N. Schubert, the small book pulls together both the military and civil accomplishments of the corps. Minnesotans will be especially interested in the chapter on navigation, which covers work on the Great Lakes survey and the Mississippi River system, and the section on expanding frontiers, which includes some history of the military roads and looks briefly at the contributions of Joseph N. Nicollet. Readers will regret the lack of an index. The book is available from the Government Printing Office.

A CALL for papers has been issued by the Missouri Valley History Conference, scheduled for March 8-10, 1990 at Omaha, Nebraska. Proposals for sessions or papers in any field of history should be submitted by November 1, 1989, to Jerold Simmons, Program Co-ordinator, MVHC, Department of History, University of Nebraska, Omaha, Neb. 68182.