Chippewa Child Life and Its Cultural Background.
By M. Inez Hilger, with a new introduction by Jean M. O'Brien.

This ethnography, which was first published in 1951, is the result of anthropologist Hilger's fieldwork on nine Chippewa (Ojibway) reservations in the 1930s. The value of Hilger's account includes her focus on child life, a topic neglected not only by scholars of the day but by contemporary researchers as well. While conducting her study, the author interviewed ninety-six Chippewa men and women on the following reservations: Mille Lacs, Nett Lake, Red Lake, Vermilion Lake, and White Earth in Minnesota; Lac Courte Oreilles, La Pointe, and Lac du Flambeau in Wisconsin; and L'Anse in Michigan. Those interviewed included elders who were among the first generation of Chippewa to experience reservation life. Hilger also selected informants representing the second and third generations, people who had either been reared by grandparents or lived among those who adhered to tribal ways.

The first half of Chippewa Child Life includes a detailed presentation of tribal beliefs and practices devoted to phases of child development. Hilger's frequent use of direct quotations from the men and women she interviewed enhances and personalizes the text and lets the reader make his or her own interpretations of the material. The second half of the book, which describes the cultural milieu in which the child was raised, is similar in organization and content to Frances Densmore's Chippewa Customs (1929).

Among the book's strengths are the rich descriptions of prenatal and postnatal practices that are timeless in their appeal and wisdom. For example, the recognition that violations of dietary restrictions and other proscribed behaviors adversely "affected the physical nature and/or the personality make-up of the unborn child" is as valid today as it was in the 1930s and earlier. Further, that "the husband [of a pregnant wife] was strictly forbidden to strike his wife or speak roughly to her" recognized the critical role of the father to the developing child. Besides adhering to proper diet and conduct, women were encouraged to walk around or work until labor pains grew severe, in order to ease their delivery. Hilger pointed out that several informants were "much amused" at the idea of a new mother being confined to bed for several days after giving birth.

The sections on child care are equally rich. For instance, adults cut a small hole in the heel or ball of the sole of a child's first moccasins. This was done in the hope that when the child grew to maturity, he or she would be so hard working "as to wear out his or her moccasins." Other practices that Hilger described acknowledged or marked phases in the child's development. For example, when a youngster first took a short walk, the event was marked with a feast.

Much of the material in Chippewa Child Life is informative to read in the context of contemporary issues concerning the care of children. As disposable diapers and other waste contribute to the mounting pollution of today's environment, for example, it makes sense to seek better methods. It is worthwhile, too, to read other perspectives on the controversial abortion issue. Hilger sought information on that topic, questioning her sources on the exact point during gestation at which a fetus becomes a human being. The methods and practices of the past can inform the present in providing better care for children.

This reprint edition is greatly enhanced by the work of Red Lake artist Patrick Des Jarlait, selected for the cover, as well as the new introduction by Jean M. O'Brien. I would take issue with only a few of O'Brien's points in her assessment of Hilger and her writings. Although I agree that the 1930s was a critical time of change, the shift in government policy from concerted assimilation to Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier's endorsement of multiculturalism did not necessarily filter down to the level of reservation communities during that period. The practices of local officials, the isolation of sizable segments of the tribal population, the state of communication networks during that time, and the question of whether officially endorsed policies actually translated into practice, among other factors, are important considerations.

And, while O'Brien assessed comments such as, "Today hardly anyone listens to parents" as reflecting the transition occurring in Chippewa communities during that period, I also interpret these statements as a recurring lament of adults in each generation.

Reviewed by Paulette Fairbanks Molin, an enrolled member of the Minnesota Chippewa tribe from White Earth, who holds a doctorate from the University of Minnesota. Her article on Indian education at Hampton Institute, Virginia, appeared in the Fall 1988 issue of this magazine.
Richard White's book is a culmination of this trend. Starting with an encyclopedic knowledge of the recent literature, he has performed the vast task of going back to the original sources—from the Jesuit Relations and the French archives to the papers of Sir William Johnson—and reinterpreting their evidence within a modern matrix. That data was desperately needed. Eurocentric assumptions about political organization, economic motivation, and social change produced nonsensical results when applied to Indians' actions. Viewed within a cultural context, not only did Indian acts make sense, but European acts took on a new and unexpected cast. The story has slowly changed from one of conquest to one of accommodation and mutual invention. The frontier is a far more complex and interesting place now.

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The origins of the elaborate language and behavior of the middle ground are sketched in telling examples. We see Indians appealing to traditions of Christian prophecy to manipulate the French and Frenchmen using Algonquian customs of gift-giving to manipulate Indians. We see both sides struggling to invent a hybrid system of justice to deal with cross-cultural crime. We even see the French adopting and adapting Algonquian customs to settle internal French disputes.

Though the concept of the middle ground encompasses economic relations, social relations, and even sexual relations, White's main interest is its political aspect. He focuses on the invention and evolution of the series of alliances formed in the Great Lakes region between the French and Algonquian tribes and, later, between the British and the mixed Iroquoian-Algonquian-Siouan peoples of the west. White traces how these alliances, first formed for strategic purposes, eventually "grafted together imperial politics and the village politics of kinship." In the process, two totally alien concepts of power merged.

The French role in the west, White argues, was based not on military conquest nor on technological superiority nor on commerce, but on a profoundly Algonquian source of power: mediation. The ability of the French, as outsiders, to negotiate alliances, settle disputes, and mobilize rival groups against a common enemy made them, in the metaphorical language of the tribes, "Fathers"—not European patriarchs, but "allies, protectors, suppliers, and . . . mediators." Not that the French were happy with this role; on the contrary, they yearned for the reality of imperial conquest that later historians accorded them. The tension between "the Algonquian ideal of alliance . . . and the French dream of force and obedience" forms a recurring theme in White's story—a theme that continues into the British era, explaining anew Pontiac's War and other conflicts.

Despite the stunning amount of detail White marshals to support his view, there are some troubling aspects to it. In his focus on politics, he tends to discount all other sources of Indian motivation, including economic ones. Contrary to most historians, he argues that Great Lakes tribes did not covet the middleman position in the fur trade or defend it against French competition. This dismisses the most common explanation for the origin of the Fox wars, downgrading them from a clash based on Fox economic strategies to a mere village squabble, to which the French overreacted. In this and other instances, White's interpretation robs the Indians of policy and strategy, too often reducing their motivations to blood feuds and revenge. They appear as "quarreling children," helpless to mediate their own disputes before the arrival of the French Father, who transforms them from "terriified" and "impoverished" refugees cowering in the west into "a confident and expanding people reoccupying country long denied them." After all the revisionism is over, the Europeans are still in the driver's seat, and the Indians' motives remain as murky as ever.

This is not, however, true throughout the book. How the "new Indian history" works at its best is demonstrated when White comes to the Byzantine complexity of the Ohio Valley in the eighteenth century. Here he deciphers the intricacies of intratribal politics, a task that is horribly complicated given that the Europeans recording the story rarely understood
what was going on themselves and tended to attribute every event to the machinations of other whites.

In fact, one cannot escape the knowledge that this is a post-Cold War book. Where older historians saw the collision of European powers played out by manipulated Native American proxies, White sees a frontier that was a welter of ethnic and regional conflicts where superpowers interfered at their own risk. Far from setting the agenda, France and Britain were sucked into a maelstrom of Indian politics they barely understood and could not hope to control. It is a story that suits our times as well as Turner's suited his.

Reviewed by Carolyn Gilman, director of exhibitions and design at the Missouri Historical Society. She is the author of five books on fur trade and Indian history, including The Grand Portage Story (1992).

Poor Women and Their Families: Hard Working Charity Cases, 1900–1930.
By Beverly Stadum.

This book, by a professor in the department of social work at St. Cloud State University, examines three hundred women charity recipients in Minneapolis during the early twentieth century in the context of their multiple roles as mothers, workers, and wives. Relying on welfare-agency case records housed at the University of Minnesota's Social Welfare History Archives, Stadum attempts to piece together fragments of women's lives in "an interpretive synthesis that speaks of these women as a blunt aggregate, but also reveals how individuals persisted in maintaining their lives with children and with men."

The book is organized into five chapters. The first presents a profile of three poor women, along with the history of the local system of services and relief provided by the Associated Charities, which became the Family Welfare Association of Minneapolis in 1922. The next four chapters look at the changing nature of social welfare in other localities.

Second, Stadum notes how the historical record she studied was "mediated through the eyes and ears" of social workers but does not follow up on how that might affect the story she tells. Finally, this very local case study might have been set in a larger context, particularly with some speculation as to how poverty and welfare in Minneapolis (with its relative ethnic and racial homogeneity) compared to poverty and welfare in other localities.

Nevertheless, Poor Women and Their Families has important strengths, primarily in the discussions of domestic violence and in the vivid presentation of the social history of early twentieth-century Minneapolis. The lives of these otherwise obscure women are recaptured through Stadum's close reading of their case records, which allows the stories of individuals to emerge clearly and sometimes lyrically. There is an interesting implicit theme about the nature of pre-New Deal relief policies on the local and state level and how women shaped and were shaped by these efforts. This book offers no less than a testament to the courage and individuality of hard-working women who kept body and soul together for themselves and their families in the most difficult of conditions. Readers interested in the history of Minneapolis, of social welfare and poverty, and of women, work, and family life will find much of value in this study.

Reviewed by Lynn Y. Weiner, associate professor of history at Roosevelt University, Chicago. Her most recent article, a survey of women, work, and historic sites, has been published in Page Putnam Miller, ed., Reclaiming the Past: Landmarks of Women's History (1992).

Norwegian Americans and the Politics of Dissent, 1880–1924.
By Lowell J. Soike.
(Northfield, Minn.: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1991. 275 p. Cloth, $18.00.)

All politics is local—so goes the old saw, most recently attributed to Tip O'Neill, an Irish-American politician from Boston. His observation is equally appropriate when applied to Lowell J. Soike's account of Norwegian Americans in the Upper Midwest. Norwegian Americans and the Politics of Dissent chronicles several moments of political realignment in which that immigrant group abandoned the Republican party in early manifestations of their now oft-chronicled progressive political tradition. Soike, however, takes on more than just the regional voting behavior of a single nationality group.

His book, a revision of his 1979 doctoral dissertation at the University of Iowa, is an impressive study of gubernatorial and presidential elections in some 189 predominantly Norwegian towns and townships of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Though the useful primary elections are left out of this study, Soike is able to challenge those who would explain voting behavior on religious or ethnic grounds alone. He also rejects the older notion that socioeconomic class explains all. Instead, his more nuanced approach argues that "while, con-
ceptually, religious, ethnic, and economic forces might be treated as independent influences, in practice they are often joined or in constant dialogue with each other. In other words, many influences—from both the Old World and the New—shaped Norwegian-American voting patterns. He finds no monolithic Norwegian vote, especially in those times of political insurgency when the GOP's hold was broken. Norwegian-American political culture was more complex than simple categories can explain. Instead, Soike offers a generational analysis that turns on several interrelated factors: the migrants' region of origin in Norway, their Old World political assumptions, their time of arrival in the United States, and the nature of American politics during their first years there.

The book's heart is found in two substantial case studies. The first takes up populism in Otter Tail County during the 1880s and 1890s. Soike argues that this agrarian movement appealed to recent arrivals from Norway who brought with them grievances against entrenched interests. When the Republicans failed to respond to their concerns, they readily embraced the Populists. In Otter Tail County, however, local political rivalries undercut the insurgency. To make his point, Soike recounts the story of Haldor Boen, a Norwegian American who rose from local politics to a congressional seat by 1892. Boen's political career, it seems, was cut short by local factionalism and infighting.

Soike's other central episode concerns Trempealeau County, Wisconsin, during the heyday of Robert M. La Follette. Herman L. Ekern, this chapter's Norwegian-American protagonist and a locally prominent progressive, suffered a fate similar to Boen's when his devotion to La Follette cost him his state assembly seat. Ekern's mistake? He backed La Follette's choice for governor, the Swedish-American Irvine Lenroot, against the incumbent, Norwegian-born James Davidson. Thus, the Ekern/La Follette brand of progressivism was overcome by what the author labels "national pride and prejudice" when Trempealeau County's Norwegians chose ethnic solidarity over progressive politics and sent Ekern packing.

In general, this well-crafted account convinces the reader that moncausal explanations cannot fully explain Norwegian-American politics. Soike is to be applauded for reminding us to consider the world the migrants left behind and to take into account political differences between states. Some readers, however, might expect more from his interpretive framework, especially the cultural definition of class and class consciousness first sketched some thirty years ago by British Marxist historian E. P. Thompson. To put it another way, the sources of Norwegian-American political dissent are less clear than the many ways in which that dissent was expressed. The strongest impression left by the book is that individuals count in American politics every bit as much as general categories such as religion, nationality, and economic position. In Soike's words, "voter reactions to a politician's winning personality and to immediate political issues reached to every level of politics." By reviving local political figures such as Boen and Ekern, Soike has returned the study of politics to its local roots.

In short, this is a fine book which rewards a close reading and whose argument contains more than can be mentioned here. Norwegian Americans and the Politics of Dissent will appeal to readers interested in the history of the Upper Midwest, and it will fascinate specialists and generalists alike who care about the rich fabric of local political life in this plural society.

Reviewed by Christopher W. Kimball, who teaches American History at Augsburg College, founded in 1869 by Norwegian immigrants to the United States. He specializes in the political history of the Progressive Era.


THIS ATTRACTIVE and absorbing volume will inspire many to visit or, as it did this reviewer, revisit the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary in Theodore Wirth Park, Minneapolis, even though it is a little sad to compare the present garden with that described by its originator nearly ninety years ago. Author Martha Hellander vividly presents the combined record of Eloise Butler (1851-1933), her wide-ranging life as a semiprofessional botanist when professional botany was still largely a masculine preserve, and the development of one of the first—if not the first—public wildflower gardens. Butler's pride and joy. As Bonnie Harper-Lore of the National Wildflower Research Center notes in the book's foreword, "The soul of the Wild Gardener and the renewal offered by her garden are captured in these pages."

Hellander and her husband moved to Minneapolis from Chicago and built a house not far from the garden, where the author spent many happy and restorative hours. Finding that no biography of Butler had been published, Hellander set about the thorough research that brings to life this remarkable woman and her times.

Today, Butler's life history would seem simple and unexciting. Born in Maine, she graduated from Lynn (Massachusetts) High School in 1870. After teaching during that summer in a one-room schoolhouse, she entered the recently organized Eastern State Normal School at Castine, Maine, graduating with honors in 1873. At the age of a year of teaching in one-room schools in rural Indiana, she did not find a position to her liking. She then moved to Minneapolis, where she taught grammar grades for two years until she was transferred to the high-school division, where she taught botany for more than thirty years.

With determination, Butler led a handful of other teachers in the struggle to have the city establish a preserve for the wild plants that were being displaced by urban expansion. From 1911 until her death, she was the official curator of her beloved wildflower garden. Eloise Butler died of a heart attack on her way into the preserve on a rainy afternoon in April 1933.

As The Wild Gardener vividly shows, botany in general and wildflowers in particular were the center of Butler's life.
Her enthusiasm inspired many of her students to become significant contributors to that field. The book chronicles her annual travels back to Maine to botanize with her sister, three excursions with her to Jamaica to gather specimens, especially marine plants, a trip to the tragically short-lived Minnesota Seaside Station on Vancouver Island, and excursions all over Minnesota in search of native wildflowers. More personal are the selections from Butler's writings, which include accounts of the Jamaica trips, wildflower articles written during the summer of 1911 for the Minneapolis Sunday Tribune, and notes for the book she intended to write.

Clear pictures of Butler's personality, her devotion to her field, and her relations with many friends and colleagues—mainly botanists, professional and amateur—will interest environmentalists as well as the general public. Throughout the volume there runs the story of the wildflower garden. We follow it from Butler's success at having the city dedicate the park to its beauty when her life ended within it—and we appreciate it more today because of The Wild Gardener.

Reviewed by Edmund C. Bray, whose works include several geology books and "Surveying the Seasons on the Minnesota Prairies: L. R. Moyer of Montevideo," in the Summer 1982 issue of this magazine. Mr. Bray is a member of the Minnesota Commissioner of Natural Resources' Advisory Committee on Scientific and Natural Areas.

News & Notes

A QUESTION for readers: We are considering offering for sale slipcases that will hold one volume (eight issues) of Minnesota History. These handsome, sturdy cases have the look of leather and are open only at the back for maximum protection and ease of storage. They are embossed with the magazine title and come with a gold-foil transfer for marking the year and volume number. Given reader interest, the cases will be available for about $10.00 in the summer of 1993. To help us decide whether to offer them, please let the editor know if you are interested in purchasing one—or several.

ST. PAULITES, expatriates, and others interested in local history will be pleased to note the publication of St. Paul, The First 150 Years, written by Virginia Brainard Kunz, with research by Jane McClure. This attractive, well-illustrated volume of 120 pages takes the city from its beginnings in the early nineteenth century through cycles of boom and bust to its status as "a community in transition, 1950-1990." The author has done a good job of balancing the particulars of city history with important national events and movements that shaped or otherwise influenced the local scene. Noteworthy is her inclusion of ethnic and minority cultures within the matrix of city life. An appendix listing sources for those who wish to read more is a welcome addition. Published by the Saint Paul Foundation in 1991 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the naming of the city, this book may be purchased from local bookstores for $7.95.

A CHRONOLOGY, six thematic chapters, and two comprehensive rosters make up Minnesota Newspaper Association, 125 Years of Service to Minnesota, its People and to Journalism, edited by George S. Hage, professor emeritus of the University of Minnesota school of journalism and mass communication. While the chronology lays out developments within the organization, beginning in 1867, the chapters discuss such subjects as reactions to changing technology, the association's efforts to ensure "open government" through coverage of the Capitol beat, and libel suits and mediation resulting from published stories. Sidebars sprinkled throughout profile notable members of the association. The 149-page book, published in 1992, is available at no cost from the Minnesota Newspaper Association in Minneapolis.

THE TRANSFORMATION of the treeless Canadian prairie into one of the world's major wheat-producing areas meant the birth of more than 250,000 farms in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The resulting demand for low-cost homes and farm buildings spawned a massive, externally based lumber industry with extensive ties to Minnesota. In Buying Wood & Building Farms: Marketing Lumber and Farm Building Designs on the Canadian Prairies, 1880-1920 (Ottawa: Environment Canada, Canadian Parks Service, 1991, 199 p., paper, $20.35), G. E. Mills traces the changes in this industry after the depletion of Minnesota's pine forests. Canadian mail-order firms rapidly took over, selling pre-cut lumber based on specifications in architectural plan books. Their legacy, as shown in this photographic survey of published plans and built examples of pre-1920s farm buildings (grouped according to roof types and layouts), is a stark landscape of aging, milled-lumber buildings of simple, often austere, forms and designs. Mills's unusual union of business and architectural
IN HOPES of helping researchers uncover “mostly buried treasure,” Stearns Publishing has issued A Selected Topical Index to Newspapers. The two sheets of microfiche include 4,500 articles and more than 7,000 topics, following the Library of Congress subject headings for topics and subtopics. The index is international in scope and includes publications as early as the London Gazette (1665–1800), Hampshire Gazette (Northampton, Massachusetts, 1786–1800), and closer to home, the Detroit Gazette (1817–1830). The index may be ordered from the publisher, P.O. Box 690, Riverton, UT 84065, for $14.95.