

## Curator's Choice



Study for *Man and the Energies*, a mural at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester. Oil on canvas, ca. 1950. Gift of the artist.

In 1994 artist William Saltzmann chose the Minnesota Historical Society as the repository for his professional papers as well as a selection of artworks that span a 50-year career. Born in Minneapolis in 1916, Saltzmann was resident artist and director of the Rochester Art Center from 1948 to 1964 and then taught art at Macalester College in St. Paul until his retirement. His papers in the MHS manuscripts collections will provide researchers with documentation of a long exhibition career and of his architectural commissions that often incorporate wood, metals, and stained glass. Saltzmann reflected on common threads in his diverse works: “The significance of light, the discipline of structure, the range and dynamism of visual elements, and the range of their relationships are abstracted from all subject matter.”

—THOMAS O’SULLIVAN, curator of art



*Wedge*, Oil on canvas, 1976. Gift of the artist.



FRONT COVER: Duluth orphans enjoy oranges and milk at a picnic in Fairmont Park’s zoo on August 3, 1932. Mayor Samuel F. Snively, host of the annual outings, made development and promotion of the city’s parks and Skyline Parkway a top priority in his four-term administration. For the story of Snively’s road-building activities, turn to the article on page 146.

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# Book Reviews

## **BLACK FIRE: THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY.**

*By Nelson Peery.*

(New York: New Press, 1994. 340 p. Cloth, \$22.95.)

This is a splendid, much needed addition to the autobiographical literature of African Americans who have family, career, or residential ties to Minnesota. One should overlook Nelson Peery's claim that his autobiography is not also history. A major contribution of *Black Fire* to Minnesota's social history is that it treats, in part, the dreams, fears, and culture of a segment of Minneapolis's tiny poor and working-class African-American population. It is a tale of wandering and seeking during the Great Depression. Peery sometimes employs a street-culture ethos and a folk-culture point of view that often is erased from life stories written by some middle-class Blacks who seek social respectability outside the race.

Overall, Peery strives to describe and explain the first 20 years of his life, during which he grappled with racial limitations imposed by de facto Jim Crow in liberal Minnesota. As a World War II soldier, his personal war was against institutional racism and anti-Communist imperialism abroad. Peery's book is one of the latest works exploring the intellectual and political awakening of a young black male.

The author, now 69, recounts his life from 1928 to 1946. At age five he moved with his family from St. Joseph, Missouri, to rural Wabasha, Minnesota. The Peerys were the town's only Black family. With no end to the depression in sight and with the sensational Scottsboro case still in the news, in about 1935 Pop Peery moved the family—including his seven sons—the 85 miles upriver to Minneapolis. There, the elder Peery continued his job with the Railway Mail Service. Nelson, the second son, enlisted in the army the day after graduating from South High School in 1942. Assigned to the all-Black 93rd Infantry Division, his final tour of duty was in the South Pacific.

Peery's treatment of his life in the military is unsatisfactory. The problem is related to proportion. Although he was a soldier between 1942 and 1946, the army years take up two-thirds of the book. Accounts of women, whisky, and white racism, and of contradictory strategies to deal with discrimination, stretch boringly into micro-detailed passages about military maneuvers. Peery shows how soldierly hell-raising was the glue of bonding between Black soldiers stationed with him in Arizona, Louisiana, the Mojave Desert, and the Philippines. Yet the essential question arises as to the relevance of the totality of such passages to the author's intent to give order

and meaning to his life as a "revolutionary." Peery is revolutionary in that he mixes a cultural Black nationalist orientation with his sympathies for communism. But his revolutionary stance most often seems the result of mere posture rather than of disciplined critique and rational action. For instance, there is no analysis of class or culture. Although he supports the freedom struggles of people of color elsewhere, he does not reflect deeply upon what may be called proto-multinational capitalism in the 1940s and its relationship to Third World countries such as the Philippines. By the end of the autobiography, one suspects that veteran Peery is revolutionary more in name than in fact. The "real" revolutionaries in America, represented by nameless Black and white participants in the civil rights movement that overthrew Jim Crow, were marching toward the horizon. Unfortunately, Peery ends his book in 1946 before we discover to what use he may have put his "black fire" during the movement.

Still, the positive features of this volume are found in its earlier chapters dealing with Peery's youth in Minnesota. He also spins gripping tales of high adventure as a freight-train-jumping hobo. Examples of the racial anger of Peery's teen years are balanced with loving portraits of Father Thompson, the Fisk-educated minister of the Minneapolis Episcopal church; Ernestine, a smart, Black 16-year-old whose father was a Communist and who introduced him to the word "revolution"; Six, a strapping Norwegian schoolmate; and Heidi, a white girl with racist parents who shared her poetry and herself with him. Peery too briefly recalls his association with the legendary Meridel Le Sueur, who taught him how to write, as did Miss Abigail O'Leary, a schoolmarm in the Christian Socialist tradition.

This book is highly recommended for the historian and the lay reader alike who want to learn more about aspects of Black life in Minnesota, especially in Wabasha and Minneapolis during the Great Depression. *Black Fire* should be included on the short list of important books on this topic by Evelyn Fairbanks, Roy Wilkins, Carl Rowan, Whitney M. Young Jr., Taylor Gordon, Gordon Parks, and Marian Wright Edelman. A paperback edition would make *Black Fire* available to a large undergraduate audience.

*Reviewed by Harry McKinley Williams, assistant professor of history at Carleton College, who is the author of a recent journal article on H. L. Mencken and George S. Schuyler (1895–1977), the controversial Black journalist. He is currently writing a biography of Schuyler.*

## ENTITLED TO POWER: FARM WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY, 1913–1963.

By Katherine Jellison.

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993. 217 p. Cloth, \$39.95; paper, \$13.95.)

The mechanization of farming is credited with the increase in efficiency of U.S. agriculture and the enormous decrease in the number of people working on the land. Most research into the development of mechanization has assumed that farmers have been male. Researchers have looked at the substitution of machines for human and animal labor in men's tasks, which were viewed as the farm's food- and income-producing activities. Katherine Jellison acknowledges the productive work of farm women, who combined domestic tasks with agricultural activities. That intertwining of productive and reproductive roles is the basis of her examination of both the ideology and the practice of bringing power, through the internal-combustion engine and electrification, to rural households.

The author acknowledges the incredible physical labor that household chores demanded and documents women's legitimate demands for relief. But she also documents the market-oriented production that farm women did, demonstrating the link between women's desire for power to do *household* work and their desire to use the time gained not only to protect their health but also to increase their *farm* work and income-generating activities.

Focusing on the north-central region of the United States, including Minnesota, Jellison shows how the goal of most farm women—to be more productive—was subverted by programs in both the public and private sector. Those programs were built on what Peggy Barlett calls “the industrial moral economy,” which sought to turn farm women into consumers whose homes would emulate urban households as units of consumption rather than production. Jellison bases her conclusions on careful study of contemporary surveys and census documents; analysis of policy, advertisements, and letters farm women wrote to farm magazines, the secretary of agriculture, and the president of the United States; ethnographies of Shelby County, Iowa, and Haskell County, Kansas, which had been studied beginning in the 1930s; and her own interviews with women in those counties. Using feminist scholarship, Jellison interprets farm women's acceptance of new technology in their daily lives and their simultaneous rejection of the homemaker role as resistance to patriarchy, both at home and in the larger culture, represented by market and bureaucratic structures. She does not, however, attribute feminist motivation to these women, who criticized men for not living up to their patriarchal responsibilities of economic support and physical protection.

Jellison links the beginning of national programs to limit farm women's productive roles to American progressivism and the country life movement at the turn of century. To make the quality of rural life equal urban life, reformers believed that much volunteer work had to be done at the community level in schools, churches, and health-care provision. Women were critical to such institutional revitalization, and any market orientation on their part—or too much time spent in household tasks—would detract from community work and their key family duty of child socialization. The author demonstrates the inherent middle-class bias in this program and its implications for policy.

As rural mechanization increased, it was difficult for

women to argue for a share of power because the patriarchal assumptions of the family and nation valued men's work over that of women and children. Outsiders who favored the mechanization of women's work viewed this advance primarily as a way to keep women on the farm. These supporters judged rightly from women's comments that their workload led either to an early death or urban migration.

Jellison's careful scholarship shows how official programs denigrated women's local knowledge and assessment of their own needs. Farm women were viewed as “empty slates,” doing the wrong things because of lack of knowledge and adequate technology. If given both, the women could emulate the urban model but stay in rural areas and not add to urban problems.

By tracing the entire period of transition to mechanical power on the farm and in the farm household, Jellison shows the power and partial success of converting farm women from producers to consumers. But she also documents their continued resistance to the mirage of middle-class domesticity. The book is extremely well done, integrating a wide range of historical sources with clear writing devoid of scholarly jargon. It is necessary reading for scholars interested in farm women and pleasurable reading for those interested in seeing how changes in technology have different impacts on men and women.

*Reviewed by* Cornelia Butler Flora, *director of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, which links research and action to improve the well-being of individuals, families, and communities in the 12 north-central states. Her own research looks at agriculture, natural resources, and community sustainability in both northern and southern countries. She is senior author of Rural Communities: Legacy and Change and one of the developers of the 12-part Public Broadcasting System series and video course of the same name.*

## DILLINGER: THE UNTOLD STORY.

By G. Russell Girardin, with William J. Helmer.

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. 345 p. Cloth, \$27.50.)

Time, place, and circumstance shape history in mysterious ways. Fortunately, these elements coincided so we can now enjoy this wonderful book several decades after John Dillinger's relatively short (about 14 months) but celebrated career of crime. Dillinger was the right person at the right place and the right time to become, possibly, America's last genuine outlaw hero. With the Great Depression in full force and J. Edgar Hoover's FBI struggling to establish itself, time, place, and circumstance meshed, creating a fascinating historical subject.

In 1934 G. Russell Girardin was an ambitious and talented young advertising copywriter when by chance he met Louis Piquett, Dillinger's lawyer. Like most Americans, Girardin had enthusiastically followed the Dillinger story to its bloody conclusion earlier that year. Girardin had a gift for seeing history in the making. After a brief conversation, he asked Piquett for the “inside” story of the outlaw's legendary feats. Piquett, himself facing criminal charges, needed money and so established a conduit of information linking himself,

Girardin, and Arthur O'Leary, who had been a chief contact with the Dillinger gang. The result was a series of weekly newspaper articles titled "Dillinger Speaks," published in the Saturday supplements of the Hearst newspapers from October 1936 to January 1937. These stand as the only detailed accounts of Dillinger's life and career culled from the confidential testimonies of those who knew him. Even though Girardin confined himself to dealing with verifiable facts, many of the exciting stories revealed in this book had to be concealed until now for his own protection. The full manuscript sat on a shelf for more than 50 years until time, place, and circumstance concurred again.

William J. Helmer, a crime historian and *Playboy* editor, accidentally found what he calls the Dead Sea Scroll for Dillinger historians while doing research in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin. After some detective work of his own, Helmer found Girardin in 1990, and the two began the collaboration that produced this substantial contribution to the study of outlaws and history in general. The sources could not be more primary. They include personal interviews with Dillinger's close collaborators, his father, his sister, and FBI agents, as well as police records, affidavits, and personal letters collected directly from Dillinger's family.

The authors complement each other wonderfully. (Unfortunately Girardin died of a stroke soon after they began their work.) While Girardin presents an exciting, extremely well-written and well-balanced account, Helmer frames each chapter with well-researched and insightful historical commentary. This combination puts the whole Dillinger saga, from his first prison release in May 1933 to his ascension to the status of noble bandit by the time of his death in July 1934, in clear historical context. An added feature is Helmer's "After the Facts," a thinly disguised collection of fascinating and helpful footnotes that contribute substantially to Girardin's manuscript. Another helpful section is "A Dillinger Chronology," a quick reference for dates and places important to his reign as a celebrated outlaw.

A celebrity of Dillinger's stature suffers from so much "disinformation"—either through glamorizing by the press or debasing by official authorities—that presenting a true account of his exploits is nearly impossible. One person's noble bandit is another's base criminal. Dillinger's talent for public relations was matched, however, by Girardin's gift for fairly presenting at least two, and often three, sides of an event. He lets us judge Dillinger for ourselves.

Nevertheless, the overriding tone of the book entices us to sympathize with Dillinger because of his audacity, natural charm, good humor, generosity, gallantry, and ability to outwit a generally bumbling FBI. The facts that Dillinger was betrayed by a woman—a paramount theme for any outlaw hero—and then gunned down from behind by G-men only make it easier to embrace his heroics and see him as a victim of circumstance. Apparently, Dillinger's life did approximate his legend.

Minnesota figured prominently in the Dillinger story. It was in St. Paul where he met "Baby Face" Nelson and Homer Van Meter to form his notorious gang of bank robbers. St. Paul offered the gang asylum long enough that many places still enjoy notoriety. After reading this book, you'll gain a new appreciation for 95 South Lexington Avenue, the scene of a bloody shootout and escape worthy of any good gangster

movie, or University Avenue and Marion Street, where Van Meter was killed by St. Paul police.

This book is a real steal and deserves to become legendary in its own right. It vivifies a special person at a special time and a special place, and it reads like the best of fiction—only it's great history.

*Reviewed by James C. Moss, who holds a Ph.D. in Folklore and Folklife from the University of Pennsylvania. Much of his research and several of his publications have explored how outlaw heroes interact with their own legends.*

## **FROM SKISPORT TO SKIING: ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF AN AMERICAN SPORT, 1840–1940.**

*By E. John B. Allen.*

(Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993. 229 p. Cloth, \$30.00.)

When skiing was introduced into the United States in the midnineteenth century, its purposes were generally utilitarian. Whether the person on "snowshoes" (there was no English-language word then for *ski*) was engaged in supplying outlying communities or repairing railroads, the object of the activity was far removed from today's recreational or competitive sport. In this admirably researched and amply illustrated history, E. John B. Allen chronicles the evolution of what was once referred to as *skisport* into the modern sport of skiing (a word, Allen reports, that became ubiquitous about 1900, having been borrowed from the Swedish word *skidor* for skier).

The term *skisport* has a confused linguistic history. Norwegians and Swedes had no word for "sport"; the closest approximations are *idraet* (Norwegian) and *idrott* (Swedish), which refer to outdoor physical exercise. In 1905 six Norwegians and a non-Scandinavian interloper gathered at Ishpeming, Michigan, to found a national ski association. One of their first accomplishments was a yearbook named *The Skisport*, an all-encompassing term that quickly came to mean skiing as recreation, sport, and business.

Historian Allen has written a similarly all-encompassing linguistic, social, material, political, ethnic, and economic history of this sport. He ranges across the United States from California (where the first "snowshoers" were strictly utilitarian) to New England (where elite college youth helped transform a sport into a highly competitive enterprise). The hills of New England were also in the sights of ambitious Yankee entrepreneurs who saw white gold on top those undersized mountains.

Similarly skimpy elevations were also within the range of midwestern immigrants. Easterner Allen cannot—and does not—avoid the middle-American portion of his story. In fact, it is critical to his central argument. *Skisport* as originally practiced by (mostly) Norwegian and (a few) Swedish immigrants was pursued solely for developing "strength, manliness, and toughness." But lest we think that the *idraet* ideal was sabotaged by pampered, power-hungry outsiders, Allen quickly points out that the dual lure of dollars and glory attracted Scandinavian immigrants themselves.

By the turn of the century, ski jumping was already a semiprofessional sport in Minnesota. A man named Mikkel

Hemmestveit, a Norwegian-immigrant jumper, dominated the sport locally. Relying on a style that found him “raising himself as a bird would raise,” Hemmestveit competed for a club in Norman County. So good was he that citizens of St. Paul sought to lure him to the capital city. He refused—for the moment—and the *Norman County Index* smugly suggested that he be sent to St. Paul as a state senator instead because “he appears to be the only man in the Red River Valley that can attract the attention of that august body.”

A year later Hemmestveit moved to St. Croix Falls, but when he won the ski-jumping prize at the St. Paul Winter Carnival, the city, “in its greed for glory,” claimed him as its own. Hemmestveit himself was not beyond jumping for money: As Allen puts it, “cash never had the materialistic attraction in Scandinavia that it had for the immigrants in America.” When, in a futile effort to preserve the *idraet* ideal, the national ski association abolished all cash prizes, jumpers responded with a boycott, forcing the group to reinstate the awards. Americans, immigrants or otherwise, according to Aksel Holter, *The Skisport* editor, were “amateurs at heart—professionals of necessity.”

Borrowing heavily from the work of Allen Guttmann, Allen concludes that by 1940 American skiing was, in fact, a modern sport. In place was a ski bureaucracy that sanctioned professionalism, determined the conditions of competition, oversaw equal access to it, and kept careful records of ski events. By that time the sport was also on the verge of becoming a major recreational activity for more than midwestern immigrants and east- and west-coast elites—and a major moneymaker for owners of ski resorts. World war delayed that growth, but in the following years skiing in America has become even further removed from its *idraet* past.

*Reviewed by John C. Chalberg, who teaches American history and sport history at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minnesota.*

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## News & Notes

READERS of *Minnesota History* who would like a copy of the table of contents for the eight issues comprising volume 53 (Spring 1992 through Winter 1993) may obtain one by writing the editor, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul 55102-1906.

IN THE TRADITION of John Steinbeck and many others, John E. Miller has taken to the road in search of authentic American life and insights. Miller’s scaled-down quest, though, covers only one road—U.S. 14—in only one state—South Dakota. His book *Looking for*

*History on Highway 14* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1993, 254 p., paper, \$15.95) reminds readers that places and people close to home contain perspectives on historical events large and small. Miller chooses not to develop theoretical matters but instead to concentrate on the stories and places, the people and the past, that make up this landscape. Full of local color and detail, the book creates a good starting point for understanding much that is significant about South Dakota.

—Patrick Nunnally

TWO SONS of River Falls, Wisconsin, collaborated on *Kinnickinnic Years* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Arrow Printing, 1993, 395 p., paper, \$21.95 plus \$2.95 shipping and handling). John J. Prucha and Norman A. Foss chronicle their lives and community between 1930 and 1950, two momentous decades in what they characterize as “small town Middle America.” Descriptive passages alternate with first-person anecdotes on topics as diverse as the weather, interfaith relationships, temperance, holiday and seasonal celebrations, and, of course, the Great

Depression and World War II. Illustrated with photographs and several maps, the book imparts the flavor of time and place, which may feel familiar to readers from other towns in the region. *Kinnickinnic Years* is available from M. F. Dagnal Enterprises, P.O. Box 820, Carnegie, Pa., 15106-0820.

WHAT DO Oscar Wilde, Mark Twain, Henry David Thoreau, and Frederika Bremer have in common? All share the distinction of being among *Minnesota's Literary Visitors*, drawn to the region between 1838 and 1890 to view such marvels as Minnehaha Falls, Fort Snelling, and the Falls of St. Anthony. John T. Flanagan's eleven essays, originally published in *Minnesota History*, are reprinted in this 233-page paperback, issued in 1993 by Pogo Press of St. Paul. New to the volume is Moira F. Harris's essay, "Minnesota's Community of the Book," which describes the state's long tradition of support for literature and its "infrastructure of literary activity," including authors, publishers, periodicals, and bookstores. The book may be ordered from Pogo Press, 4 Cardinal Lane, St. Paul, 55127, for \$13.95 plus \$2.50 shipping and 6.5 percent sales tax (Minnesota residents).

SIXTEEN articles previously published in Indiana's *Black History News & Notes* have been gathered into *Indiana's African-American Heritage* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993, 243 p., cloth, \$27.95, paper, \$14.95). Archivist Wilma L. Gibbs, who edited the collection, selected biographical essays as well as topical ones addressing education and culture, cities and rural communities, women, and the role of the church in everyday life. A final section examines sources for "connecting the dots"—researching African-American history in Indiana. This nicely illustrated book is available from the Indiana Historical Society, 315 W. Ohio St., Indianapolis, 46202.

CARLOS AVERY, the multitalented writer, editor, and game and fish commissioner from Minnesota is the subject of a 24-page pamphlet by Evadene B. Swanson and Gustav A. Swanson, published by the McLeod County Historical Society in 1993. The booklet provides a biographical sketch of the versatile Avery, a listing of his various jobs and numerous accomplishments, and a chronology and source list. It is available from the McLeod County Heritage Center, 380 School Rd. N., Hutchinson, Minn., 55350.

A PICTURE of life in Blue Earth, Minnesota, emerges from the journal of one of its early residents in "*The City That She Loved*," *A Reflection . . .* by Janet Ross (St. Paul: St. Thomas Technology Press, 1993, 147 p., \$7.95). Etta Chadbourn Ross moved to the small town as a young woman in 1869, married, and raised her son there. She kept a journal from 1883 until her death 20 years later. This chronicle of the daily life of a middle-class Victorian woman, supplemented by excerpts from the local newspaper, paints a portrait of the community's cultural life and the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, of which Etta Ross was a founding and enthusiastic member.

BRANDON UNIVERSITY will sponsor the 30th Northern Great Plains History Conference in Brandon, Manitoba, September 27–30, 1995. Proposals for papers or sessions in any area of history are welcome. Please send a one-page prospectus and brief vita by March 31, 1995, to Hans Burmeister, Dept. of History, Brandon University, Brandon, Manitoba, Canada R7A 6A9.

TRACING the doll industry back to its beginnings in the United States, Miriam Formanek-Brunell examines who was constructing toys and related gender issues in *Made to Play House: Dolls and the Commercialization of American Girlhood, 1830–1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, 233 p., cloth, \$25.00). The author shows how dolls during various social eras inculcated that period's ideals; for example, antebellum rag dolls taught girls sewing skills, Progressive Era dolls promoted health and activity, and baby dolls of the 1920s fostered maternal impulses. In this well-illustrated social history, Formanek-Brunell also examines male and female dollmakers and the different kinds of ideals their toys promoted.

ORAL traditions and newly discovered manuscript sources inform *The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France* by R. David Edmunds and Joseph L. Peyser (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, 282 p., cloth, \$24.95). The book's eight chapters chronicle the sober story of how the Mesquakie of central Wisconsin attempted to maintain their independence from both their French and Dakota enemies. Overwhelmed by the French in the eighteenth century, they took sanctuary among the Sac Indians, with whom they remain closely identified.

A LONG-RANGE view of the Twin Cities emerges in John S. Adams's and Barbara J. VanDrasek's *Minneapolis-St. Paul: People, Place, and Public Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, 238 p., cloth, \$24.95). Written from the viewpoints of urban geography and planning, the book contains a wealth of social, economic, and political data that helps explain how the cities came to be the way they are and how they might develop in the future. The authors sketch the present "character of the place" before reaching back to settlement days to chart urban growth, development, decay, and revitalization. They also examine postwar suburban growth and its consequences for the central cities.

EIGHT essays, originally oral presentations, are the core of *Buried Roots and Indestructible Seeds: The Survival of American Indian Life in Story, History, and Spirit* (Madison: Wisconsin Humanities Council, 1993, 76 p., paper, \$8.00). Articles include George L. Cornell's "Native American Perceptions of the Environment," Gerald Vizenor's "Trickster Discourse: Comic and Tragic Themes in Native American Literature," Joseph Bruhac III's "The Circle of Stories," and Denise Sweet's "Blackbird Women." The volume can be ordered from the Wisconsin Humanities Council, 716 Langdon St., Madison, 53706.

IMMIGRANTS from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland speak in the pages of *New Land, New Lives: Scandinavian Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest* by Janet Rasmussen, published in 1993 by the Norwegian-American Historical Association in Northfield, Minnesota, in cooperation with the University of Washington Press, Seattle (320 p., cloth, \$24.95). The author has grouped excerpts from interviews with first-generation immigrants into five sections: the homeland, the new land, and new lives: work, family, and tradition. Each speaker is named, and each narrative begins with a biographical sketch. The book offers a variety of experiences and a wealth of memorable quotes, from Elsie Odmark's "Did we get to heaven?" to Thorvald Kifoed's "I'm not going to freeze for five dollars a month in Minnesota." *New Land, New Lives* is available from the Norwegian-American Historical Association, St. Olaf College, Northfield, 55057; please include \$2.00 postage and handling.

## FROM THE COLLECTIONS

The lure of efficiency and order—a place for everything and everything in its place—emanates from this burnished walnut desk, an 1880s example of the Moore Combination Desk Company’s “patent secretary.” Drawers, horizontal and vertical files, and pigeonholes surround the leather-topped, pull-out writing surface. The front section reveals more than 30 bins, additional pigeonholes and files, and two small cupboards. A mail slot on the desk’s exterior leads directly into one of these cupboards, offering office users tidy storage even when the desk is closed. In addition, open space in the unit’s front allowed a busy worker to close the desk with the writing surface extended, still covered with papers. For all of its features—not to mention the turned spindles, ornamental metal accents, and curved feet on casters—this was Moore’s standard grade, the plainest model available from the Indianapolis firm.



The desk served its original owner, Harrison McKusick of Stillwater, in his career as a bookkeeper, manager, and then agent for several hometown land and timber firms. Upon his retirement in the 1920s, the family donated the desk to a local church, which used it until about 1949. The Minnesota Historical Society acquired this well-traveled secretary, still in excellent condition, in 1986.

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## M Minnesota Historical Society

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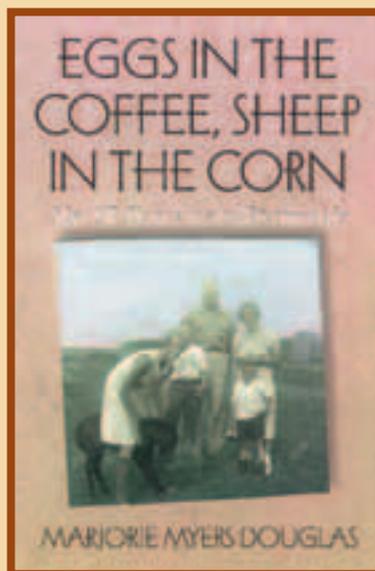
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