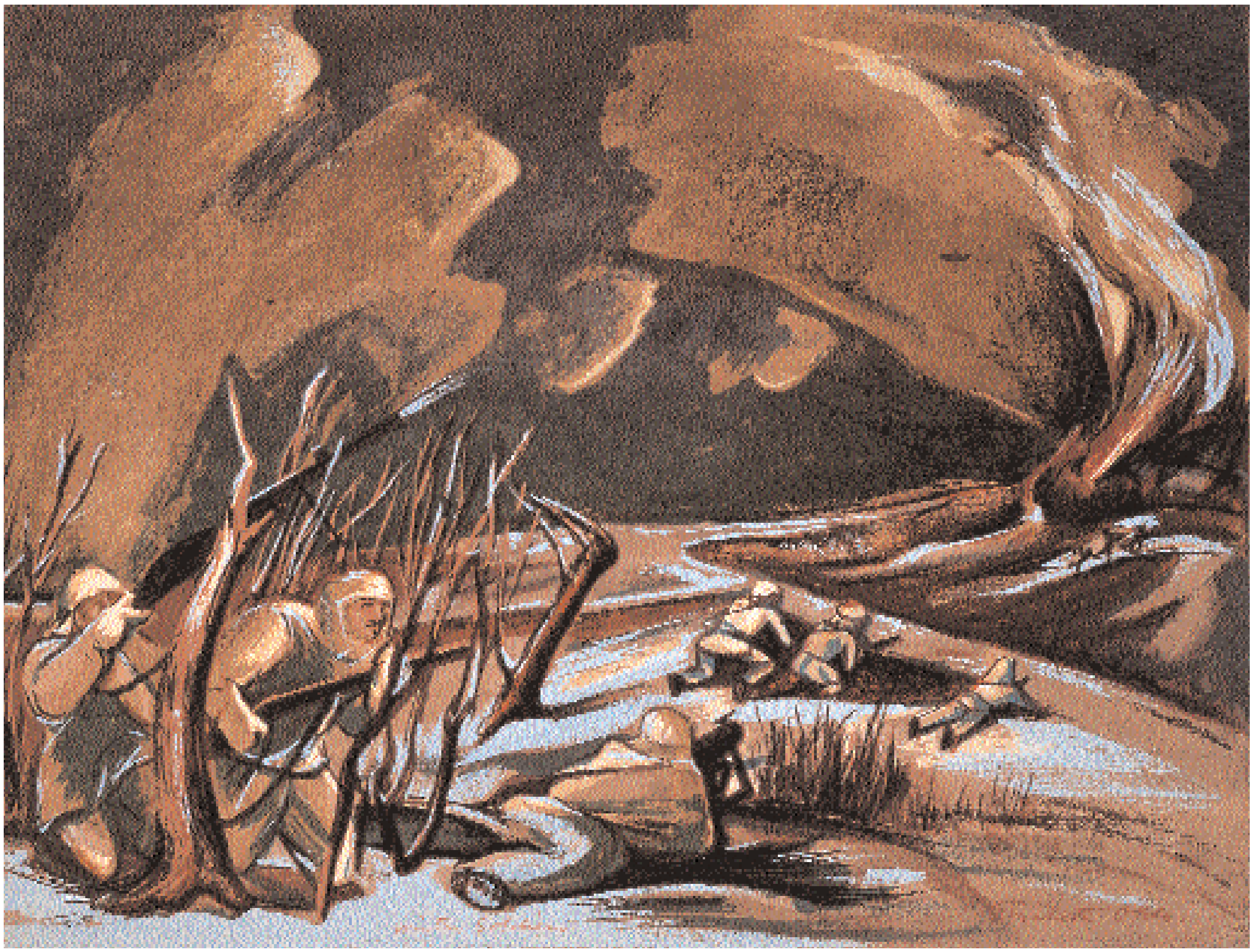
Curator's Choice



Elizabeth Olds, Winter Soldiers, *silkscreen, about 1940.*

During World War II, artists across America turned their skills to the war effort with images that documented the armed forces or illustrated the work of war. Elizabeth Olds observed army maneuvers in Pennsylvania as the basis for this silkscreen now in the Minnesota Historical Society collections.

A Minneapolis native who studied art in her home town and in New York, Olds was the first woman to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship. She was an innovator in the use of silkscreen technique as a fine-art medium, which she called "serigraphy" to distinguish it from its more mundane, commercial uses. Olds won national awards for her prints of working people and social commentary in the 1930s. As a new decade brought new struggles to the nation's attention, Olds, like fellow printmakers, reflected the nation's preoccupations in her art.

—Thomas O'Sullivan, curator of art

FRONT COVER: With pennants in hand, youthful members of Hamline University's Vote for Women Club gathered in 1913 in St. Paul under the banner "Not Privilege But Justice." For a look at two generations of suffrage leaders and the road that brought victory 75 years ago, turn to the article beginning on page 290.

Book Reviews

North Star Statehouse: An Armchair Guide to the Minnesota State Capitol.
By Thomas O'Sullivan.
(St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1994. 110 p. Paper, $16.95.)

Minnesota's state capitol is widely—and justly—admired as one of the finest buildings of its time in America. As such, it has long held a special place in the hearts of Minnesotans, whose affection for it has never diminished despite the political shenanigans that sometimes erupt within its white-marble walls.

Yet for all the familiarity of the capitol's basic architectural style, it is in many ways a very odd building, at least to modern eyes. What makes it so peculiar is that it is an honest-to-goodness, no-holds-barred, beaux-arts pile, loaded with the kind of representational and allegorical art that has long since gone out of fashion. The heroic statues, goddess-laden murals, and pious portraits that adorn almost every nook and cranny of the building are survivors from a lost age of art. Intended to instill an aura of civic virtue, these didactic displays are at once terribly corny and deeply touching. At a time when the very notion of civic virtue seems under attack from every conceivable quarter, the capitol is a building that continues to insist in its own old-fashioned way that the idea of government, if not always its practice, is somehow a noble thing.

All of which helps explain why Thomas O'Sullivan's *North Star Statehouse* is such an interesting and valuable book. O'Sullivan, curator of art at the Minnesota Historical Society, puts the capitol's artwork in the context of its time and place. In the process, he enables us to see the capitol with new and refreshed eyes, to understand the idea behind the building and the idealism that motivated its creators, chief among them the architect, Cass Gilbert.

Delivering exactly what the title promises, O'Sullivan's book offers a quick but detailed armchair tour of the great building, from basement to dome. Nicely organized, the book begins with a brief history of how the capitol, completed in 1905, came to be. Much of this territory is covered in Neil B. Thompson's fine 1974 book, *Minnesota's State Capitol: The Art and Politics of a Public Building,* and O'Sullivan wisely keeps his account brief. He includes a thumbnail biography of Gilbert, who was catapulted to national renown with his design for the capitol, and also provides a brief discussion of the so-called American Renaissance movement, of which the capitol remains a major monument.

The bulk of the book focuses on a tour of the capitol's major spaces, including the rotunda, the state supreme court and legislative chambers, and the opulent governor's office. All of these spaces come with plenty of heavy-duty art, including a variety of huge murals distinguished by their size, allegorical complexity, and bracing lack of political correctness. One mural in the senate chamber, for example, bears a title—*The Discoverers and Civilizers Led to the Source of the Mississippi*—that would probably inspire lawsuits were it unveiled today. O'Sullivan, to his credit, doesn't get overly judgmental about this sort of thing. Instead, he concentrates on putting the capitol's occasionally quaint period pieces into the context of their times by explaining both the stylistic conventions and the ideology that drove turn-of-the-century academic art. O'Sullivan also offers sketches of some of the artists—Elmer Garnsey, John LaFarge, Edwin Blashfield, and Daniel Chester French, among others—who worked with Gilbert to create the capitol's abundance of art.

Even those who have spent a lot of time in the capitol are likely to make intriguing discoveries with the aid of this book. O'Sullivan, for example, details the many native Minnesota species, both animal and vegetable, that Gilbert wove into his ornamental program. Column capitals harbor lady-slippers, railings feature cavorting gophers, loons fly on bronze gates, and shocks of wheat decorate the walls. "One can take a capitol tour as a vicarious nature walk," O'Sullivan notes wryly.

The book also includes a brief chapter on the capitol mall (the creation of which caused much urban destruction) and the not-always-inspired artwork that has flourished there. He concludes with a chapter that examines the capitol's role in the history of the state and its continuing presence as Minnesota's dominant symbol of government.

North Star Statehouse is a pleasure to read. Crisply written, it is mercifully free of even the slightest hint of "artspeak," that incomprehensible patois that some art historians use in lieu of real thought. O'Sullivan also has a sly sense of humor, and he isn't afraid to be critical (though in a generally gentle way) of some of the capitol's more fustian artwork. I would have enjoyed a little tougher criticism in places, but that doesn't seem to be O'Sullivan's style.

The book offers a nice selection of black-and-white photographs, along with a group of well-reproduced color plates. Most of the photographs aren't very large, however, and there's no doubt that a book of this sort would have benefited from a larger coffee-table format. That the book also lacks footnotes won't bother general readers in the least, but those of a more scholarly bent will find their absence irritating.

O'Sullivan does append a brief bibliographic essay at the book's end.

Still, there's really not much to complain about here. Perhaps the final word on this attractive little book is that it is in every respect worthy of the building it so ably describes.

Reviewed by Larry Millett, *architecture writer for the* St. Paul Pioneer Press *and author of* Lost Twin Cities *(MHS Press), which won the 1993 International Architecture Book Award from the American Institute of Architects.*

Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900–1940.

By Mary Neth.

(Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. 347 p. Cloth, $39.95.)

Daily the news brings us stories of the social problems of rural America: family farms gone under, Main Street cafes closing their doors, small towns paying bonuses to attract medical doctors, and even bachelors advertising for prospective wives! Meanwhile, overall farm production steadily climbs, thanks to government farm policy and the technologies of modern agribusiness. Once the symbolic wellspring of American values of independence and hard work, the family farm now seems crowded out by corporate agriculture. How did this happen?

This landmark study of agriculture in the western Midwest traces the roots of today's rural dilemmas to the first four decades of this century. Neth argues that early in the century family farming rested on a system of family labor, kinship ties, and practices of neighboring to survive an uncertain marketplace. Farm families pursued strategies of reciprocity—exchange of work and goods, visiting, and domestic production—which increased farm income by cutting expenditures.

Enter government policymakers and rural reformers, who in the 1920s and 1930s promulgated a progressive ideology that was antithetical to the community-based system of small family farms. The new ideology, based upon the urban, middle-class, nuclear family, promoted agricultural efficiency through investment of capital in new technology and championed domestic consumerism to replace women's home production. Neth argues that farm people did not buy the new ideology hook, line, and sinker but rather selectively adopted, adapted, and resisted the new practices to sustain traditional ways. They bought cars and telephones to maintain social ties and joined political groups like the Nonpartisan League to voice their discontent with farm policy. But as a chapter on threshing makes abundantly clear, the progressive vision of independence struck at the heart of community rituals and diminished neighborhood networks of reciprocity. Without that support, small farms fell by the wayside. Depopulation stifled local economic development and propelled farm children to the city for economic opportunity.

A major component of Neth's convincing argument is an analysis of gender. Those who would dismiss this as women's history would be making a mistake, because Neth skillfully dissects ideologies of manhood as well as womanhood in the farm enterprise. She shows how the progressive ideology altered what was expected of a farmer—and of a farmer's wife. For example, a farmer was to aspire to be a businessman, freed from the manual labor of the farm by his machines. The "farm wife" was to become a domestic manager, shun physical labor, and become an educated consumer. For women, the alteration was of great importance; their domestic work became devalued in relation to men's commodity production for cash. Neth explores the intersections of gender and class to show why the progressive ideology was more readily adapted by prosperous farmers and remained out of reach for the cash-poor on the bottom rungs of the ladder. She demonstrates the potency of gender analysis for illuminating an obscure and neglected past.

Because it lays bare the connections between the economic and the social, capitalism and culture, this book is an authoritative addition to the new rural history. Historians of women, social policy, and the Midwest will also find this book articulate and broad based. Neth draws upon a range of sources (diaries, oral interviews, sociological studies) to give voice to rural people themselves. At times she depends too heavily upon a particular Wisconsin diary, and one wishes she had documented patterns of landholding to support arguments regarding the disappearance of small family farms. These are small reservations, to be sure.

Now, when it is fashionable to bash government policy, Neth's book raises new questions as we survey the damage done by well-meaning but ill-informed policymakers and rural professionals. The story told here highlights the dreadful power of policy to remake an entire sector of the economy with little thought to the dire social consequences that ensue. By explaining a rural America long gone, *Preserving the Family Farm* will help us think more clearly about hog houses, set-asides, pesticides, and, ultimately, whether or not what is happening in the countryside really matters to us beyond what we pay for groceries. This book is not just for historians but also for those who care about rural people and places and their meaning for America.

Reviewed by Susan S. Rugh, *a history professor at St. Cloud State University, where she teaches courses on the history of rural America. She is completing a book that explores issues of culture and capitalism in the making of the 19th-century midwestern family farm.*

One-Room Schools in the Middle West: An Illustrated History.

By Wayne E. Fuller.

(Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994. 139 p. Cloth, $29.95.)

For those who attended them, one-room schools on the plains and rolling hills of the Middle West evoke mixed emotions. Nostalgic longing for the simplicity of days gone by is often interrupted by more realistic thoughts of the hard life of farmers and their families during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Images of rosy-cheeked pupils playing around a maypole come up as frequently as those of poorly

dressed children trudging through snowdrifts to a schoolhouse with inadequate heating, ventilation, and equipment. Teachers are cast as sweet country girls, fresh out of normal school, who lovingly encourage each of their charges on to greatness. Yet, the reality was a life of overwork for little pay. Expectations for rural schoolteachers included providing quality education and teaching outstanding morals, as well as cleaning privies, shoveling snow, and surviving the loneliness of rural life without colleagues, friends, and family.

In this book the author examines virtually every aspect of the life and times in a one-room school and provides depth and insight into many of these notions. The result is a realistic and balanced view. Though less than idyllic and often downright grim, these schools, Fuller concludes, played an important role in the development of rural communities and rural scholars, providing a positive focus for many communities having little solidarity. Many one-room scholars went on to achievements equal to or better than those of students from larger and better endowed schools. (Dale Carnegie attended a one-room school in Missouri!)

With proven scholarship in the history of rural education, Fuller provides a skillfully researched, provocative, and readable history of schools in 12 midwestern states. His chronology begins with the development of rural schools in the Midwest and the earliest legislation in 1785 providing for schools in every township. It ends with the final days of consolidation and the virtual demise of one-room schools during the 1950s, brought about by declining rural populations, better roads, and much improved transportation. In between, and as each chapter unfolds, Fuller describes midwestern aspirations for education, student life at school and at home, school curriculum and architecture, teacher training, and how one-room schools weathered economic and political cycles, especially during the depression.

Most interesting is the recurring theme of tiny rural communities made up, in many cases, of uneducated farmers who tenaciously insisted upon providing education for their children through good times and bad. Their ability to retain local control and to resist consolidation seems remarkable. "Overall, no people in the nation tried harder or sacrificed more to give their children an elementary education than the midwestern farmers. This was why they built new schoolhouses and added new school apparatus; this was why they sent their children to school long before compulsory education laws said that they must." Fuller contends that the reluctance to consolidate was fueled by the fear of what might happen to their children in larger, unknown schools. He also suggests that in many rural areas the loss of the community school meant the loss of community. In Minnesota, numerous common or rural schools, usually in the more prosperous areas of the state, existed well into the late 1960s. The last ones merged, often reluctantly, with the larger independent districts only after the office of the county superintendent of schools was officially abolished in 1971.

Fuller takes this theme one step further when he describes the debate among educators over whether the quality of education in one-room schools was on par with that in larger town and urban schools: "In their makeshift clothes and worn, battered shoes, many [children] were the poorest of the poor, and so were their schools. On the one hand, most could have profited—especially in the upper grades—from larger libraries and some of the sophisticated teaching aids that were available in urban schools. On the other hand, children in the country schools had what money could not buy. They had small schools in which everyone was important and no one's identity was lost. They had stable families and parents who were interested in their education and especially in the school that was peculiarly their own. Finally, unlike urban children, they had meaningful chores to do and the great outdoors, with its abundant resources."

Fuller's text is thoroughly documented with photographs, pictures, charts, and maps. His primary sources come from 10 of the dozen midwestern states' archives and historical societies, local newspapers, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives. This book will be an asset for the patrons and staffs of state and county historical societies and libraries in colleges and universities with education programs. Scholars of midwestern education and rural politics will find it useful, as will archivists whose collections include government records. Graduates of one-room schools would be pleased to see that such a fine history has been written about their rural education.

Reviewed by Mary Klauda, *a government-records archivist for the Minnesota Historical Society. In her 15 years at the MHS, she has acquired records of hundreds of Minnesota's one-room schools for the state archives.*

Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little Town: Where History and Literature Meet.

By John E. Miller.
(Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994. 208 p.
Cloth, $24.95.)

In many ways, this book fills out nicely the historical setting of Laura Ingalls Wilder's last four books. DeSmet, South Dakota, rises from the prairie as the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad pushes through from Tracy, Minnesota, in the 1870s. Typical railroad town, it stretches out narrowly from the train station, leaving the "other side of the tracks" empty for years to come. Pa Ingalls's store takes its place among banks and a fancy brick-fronted hardware store, and from the station where Laura went upstairs for a memorable party, salesmen saunter to hotels nearby.

In John E. Miller's narrative, we can follow characters from the books to the grave; the stingy businessman, for example, who in *The Long Winter* threatened to overprice wheat brought by young heroes through the blizzard, dies a resounding community success with the biggest gravestone in town. Settlers migrate in from New England and New York and then move on to the West Coast or return east as far as Minnesota. The cultural heritage they bring with them, as many readers have sensed in Wilder's books, is firmly established as Congregational-lyceum-pro-education Yankee.

With the historian's customary bow to the "frontier thesis" of Frederick Jackson Turner, Miller uses DeSmet's "churning" migration to show that the frontier did not, in fact, advance steadily westward. Nor did the "wild west" last very long. Civilization caught up almost immediately with the early pioneers, and in their hunger for news, ideas, and eastern entertainment, residents of DeSmet played host to phrenolo-

gists, lecturers, black singers, and elocutionists in the first community buildings erected, the schoolhouse and Congregational church.

He also surveys the drafting, editing, and expansion of the books between Wilder and her collaborator, daughter Rose Wilder Lane. He has nothing but respect for Lane's part in the duet and convincingly displays both her editing and the original contributions in descriptive passages. He describes how Wilder folded several real-life individuals into narrower fictional characters and on occasion streamlined the course of events.

Miller often writes in an engaging manner. Even the demographic chapter contains lively letters written to the DeSmet newspapers from former residents, suggesting the papers' roles as community centers. If all of the chapters worked as smoothly as this one, I'd have no complaint. But they don't; the author is pulled off course by some apparently unresolved attitudes about his project.

The first has to do with classifying the series as children's literature. Occasionally Miller patronizes his choice of subject as "sanitized history that excluded unpleasant realities." He castigates Wilder for ignoring class differences, for example, then provides a reason for doing so: DeSmet was so small and new that class distinctions had yet to arise; "poverty flats," as Laura called the other side of the tracks, had few residents. At another point Miller recognizes that Wilder dealt with the most extreme cultural conflict on the frontier—between Indians and settlers.

Miller also charges Wilder with being a children's author of inferior creative powers. When she turned to an "adult novel with grown-up themes," he writes, referring to the manuscript describing her early marriage to Almanzo and the economic hardship that forced their move from DeSmet, "she found herself on much more difficult terrain and never submitted the manuscript for publication." Coming toward the end of his book, this bald dismissal of Wilder's talents calls into question Miller's own use of her work.

Perhaps Miller is displaying an academic and historical bias against fiction, especially fiction written by women for children. In the worst possible light, I suspect him of focusing on Wilder's popular work to draw its appeal toward his own research. How many readers, I wonder, would Miller have found for a book on another frontier town along the Chicago-Northwestern line?

In a more temperate vein, I acknowledge Miller's genuine interest in the literary process with which Wilder and Lane created the series; he accords them their creative due. Yet he struggles to separate history from memory. Citing authorities on memory, he describes its selective, creative service to the needs of the present. No one would argue with this idea of memory as the lens through which writers view the past. Miller seems ready to acknowledge that historians must use a similar lens, retelling the past to serve the ideological and moral needs of the present. But then, he strikes a caveat: it is children's textbooks he means to compare with historical fiction, as they both try to "guide behavior, inculcate virtue, and undergird morale."

"For people who value accuracy, critical analysis, honest difference, and the inclusion of groups and values that had been left out," he then writes, "new kinds of stories and history would have to be written." Any careful reader of Miller's own book will find that he accords each of these qualities to Wilder. He fails to show that her works speak only to the era of the 1930s and 40s in which they were published. In fact, though it is interesting and sometimes entertaining to read about the context of Wilder's stories, their power of empathetic recreation emerges undiminished from Miller's treatment.

Seeming at times to realize this, Miller often writes with more sympathy for Wilder's historical and creative accomplishments than his drastic judgments would suggest. One wonders about his own history with the books. Did he read them as a child? Have they provided long-term guidance and inspiration for his interest in the Upper Midwest frontier? A "yes" to any of these questions might explain how the Little Town books manage to get the better of Miller's academic skittishness.

So at the end of the work, our enjoyment is edged with irritation: the solid elaboration he offers becomes something of a pretext for trotting out academic fads—semiotics, for example. He belabors the open-ended, fluid operation of memory and creativity, as if he could still its workings in all historical endeavors. In truth, when we think about the art of history writing, we recognize that it is as creative as fiction: in choice of language, in storytelling, imagery, and moral emphasis, history and fiction writers work the same field. It is a shame that Miller could not more boldly accept these similarities. He might have written more enjoyably for readers of Laura Ingalls Wilder's classics, still read by adults to children and remembered by all ages as the most vivid portraits we have of the Upper Midwest frontier.

Reviewed by Margot Fortunato Galt, *a poet and author of* The Story in History: Writing Your Way into the American Experience *(1992) and* Up to the Plate: The All American Girls Professional Baseball League *(1995). She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in American Studies and teaches creative writing and multicultural curriculum at Hamline University in St. Paul.*

WANDA GÁG.

By Karen Nelson Hoyle.

(New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994. 144 p. Cloth, $22.95.)

The 1993 centenary of the birth of Minnesota born-and-bred artist-author Wanda Gág continues to yield retrospective fruit. Karen Nelson Hoyle's slim but dense study of Gág's literary achievements joins Audur H. Winnan's catalogue raisonné of her prints, published two years ago. Both authors seek to establish a secure niche in their respective fields for an artist whose fame derives from the realm of children's books—and mainly from one book, *Millions of Cats* (1928). Wanda Gág is not lacking our love, but Winnan and now Hoyle want us to take her more seriously.

Winnan's effort stands up better than Hoyle's. The print catalogue not only brings to our attention much of the fine art Gág produced but also summons up a rich sense of the milieu in which she moved, a lively appreciation of her working methods, and a keenly drawn portrait of her life and mind. Because in these desperate times no study of a dead creative person is "complete" without an excavation of its subject's sex life, Winnan serves up the requisite racy items. While she

does not deliver them gratuitously, they are also not exactly essential to our understanding of Wanda Gág.

Karen Hoyle does not traffic in boudoir antics. But then she does not move much into the territory of personality or informed speculation about artistic motives or telling anecdote either. What she does is examine how Gág wrote and drew and saw to completion each of her 10 books, published over an 18-year span. A professor and curator of the Children's Literature Research Collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries, Hoyle draws on Gág's personal papers and correspondence both to create a picture of Gág the author, illustrator, and translator and to limn an important period in children's book publishing—in which Gág played an original and highly influential role.

The picture that emerges is rendered more clinically than vividly. While Hoyle does clearly convey Gág's intense dedication to all aspects of her work, we do not see enough of the rest of her penetrating character or of those things about her personal life (apart from the shaping influence of her hard-luck youth) that affected her work. To know and appreciate Gág as an author we need something besides details about her working methods and how they evolved over the course of her too-short career. We need to know more than the marketing considerations that went into each book and the critical and public response each one received. And we require more than recitations of the contributions Gág made to her field. While these things are all pertinent and valuable—and while Hoyle records them scrupulously—she strings them together instead of putting them at the service of a larger and more compelling framework.

Those demerits noted, Hoyle's strong sense of scholarly duty produces material that will be of interest to Gág fans. After opening with a workmanlike biographical essay, the author traces the gestation of *Millions of Cats* to show how Gág devised techniques that would become basic not only to most of her books but also to kids' picture books from that day forward: imaginative use of the two-page spread; employment of hand-lettered text (by her brother, Howard) to match the feeling of the images; and the use of black ink on white paper (instead of color), which revived a style that had been common in 19th-century popular illustration. As Hoyle notes, Gág's "significant contribution was integrating the cover, endpapers, illustrations, and story into a complete whole."

Millions of Cats made Gág instantly famous and loosed a torrent of offers, mostly to illustrate other writers' stories. For the better part of a decade, however, she remained determined to produce children's books from her own head and hand. These included *Snippy and Snappy* (1931), *The ABC Bunny* (1933), and *Gone Is Gone* (1935). Her first departure from this practice, the translation and illustration of a group of Grimm fairy tales that had fascinated her from childhood, led to a commission in 1938 to interpret the Grimms' *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.* In what is the most interesting part of Hoyle's study, we learn how children's librarians around the country badly wanted an interpretation of the fairy tale published that would correct the numerous inaccuracies in the immensely popular Walt Disney version, which had just been released. Hoyle makes a detailed comparison between the feature-length cartoon (and its accompanying books and merchandise) and Gág's rendition, providing a fascinating glimpse of the moment when mass-media pulverization of children's classics was just getting under way. Gág's Snow White proved popular, but it was no match for the movie. And while her books generally sold well (despite the Great Depression) and met with critical kudos, none of them ever won the coveted Caldecott or Newbery awards.

Although it is unfortunate that Hoyle has not done more to capture Wanda Gág in her time, she has assembled a good deal of information that will someday prove useful to the biographer wanting to write a comprehensive study of this singular artist.

Reviewed by Phil Freshman, *a Minnesota Historical Society Press editor whose seven-year-old daughter is so impressed by Wanda Gág's art and storytelling that she had her hair bobbed to match the coiffure Gág favored all her adult life.*

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News & Notes

OUR READERS WRITE: L. Jane Wilson, whose work as superintendent of Westminster Presbyterian Church's Chinese Sunday School was discussed in Sarah Mason's article, "Liang May Seen and the Early Chinese Community in Minneapolis," in the Spring 1995 issue, has sent us virtually full identification of the men, women, and children in the picture that appeared on page 233. (She was misidentified!) The names are now on file with the photograph in the MHS research center. In addition, Ms. Wilson wrote:

"Seven of the women were war brides; the others were remnants of an earlier Sunday school which had been in existence intermittently since being organized at Westminster Church, Minneapolis, in 1882. At one time in the 1950s there were about 20 Chinese war brides in the school. The school met on Sunday afternoons until about 1956 when it was decided to try to integrate it into the regular Sunday morning church school and services. By this time there were about 100 Chinese families involved, and for a time this was somewhat successful. A class for newly arrived Chinese and others whose English did not permit them to enjoy regular services was continued until about 1976. . . .

"I have learned that the photographer for this picture was a talented young man, Bing Wong, who had arrived the year before knowing no English but who went on to become a well-known professional photographer in Minneapolis."

HOWARD SIVERTSEN pays homage to the Great Lakes fur trade in *The Illustrated Voyageur* (Mt. Horeb, Wis.: Midwest Traditions, 1994, 72 p., cloth, $20.95). This Grand Marais artist and writer shows a deep affection for his subject, expressed in vivid paintings paired with lively stories. The 32 pictures illustrate many aspects of the trade: exciting scenes of rapids and lake storms, the festivities of rendezvous time at Grand Portage, and quieter moments encamped or picking blueberries. Sivertsen blends his retelling of voyageur ways with quotes from traders and travelers in brief but engaging stories. His paintings are equally evocative, with attractive landscape settings serving as backdrops for his energetic figures. The artist is careful in his self-proclaimed "interpretations" but never lets details overwhelm the spirited scenes. Describing his methods, Sivertsen admits, "I am guilty of the idealism of my modern-day opinions." His romantic enthusiasm is not only apparent but infectious, too. Readers can use Sivertsen's bibliography and guide to museums to follow his lead in rediscovering the voyageurs for themselves.

—*Thomas O'Sullivan*

VIOLENCE, Resistance, and Survival in the Americas: Native Americans and the Legacy of Conquest, edited by William B. Taylor and Franklin Pease (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994, 336 p., cloth, $49.00) provides a well-organized look at three periods of Indian-European relations. Part I, devoted to early-colonial Spanish America, examines the "culture of conquest" evident in the various writings of Spanish contemporaries. The case studies presented in Part II explore Indian strategies of "survival, adaptation, and cultural creativity" in three Indian communities during the eighteenth century. The four essays of Part III continue the theme of survival and adaptation in the context of U.S. occupation of the continent since the beginning of the nineteenth century. This collection provides the reader with a valuable overview of the history of Indian-European relations and explores with caution and academic vigor the complex issues surrounding this period of American history.—*John Waslif*

IN 1981, near the end of the energy crisis and the onset of the nation's most recent farm crisis, American Energy Farming Systems began to promote and sell a "providential," Cinderella-like plant that seemed to promise new hope for the depressed agricultural economy. Historian Joseph A. Amato's *The Great Jerusalem Artichoke Circus: The Buying and Selling of the Rural American Dream* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, 245 p., cloth, $44.95, paper, $16.95) tells the story of the failed attempt by a less-than-honest businessman to turn what farmers had considered a weed into a major cash crop. Peopling this compelling narrative of a scam are a cast of boosters, evangelicals, and farmers whose broken dreams form an instructive look into the region's painful ongoing search for economic diversity.

Amato bases his account on a wide array of legal and public documents including a bankruptcy hearing, two grand-jury investigations, three trials, and many legal appeals, one of which led to the Minnesota Supreme Court (white-collar crimes, Amato notes, *abound* in evidence); investigations in McLeod and Lyon Counties; and extensive oral interviews. A foreword by Paul Gruchow offers perspective on the interplay between industrial agriculture, genetic engineering, and rural mythology in the artichoke debacle. Amato's conclusion suggests the ways that greed, ignorance, and boosterism converged in the (rarely successful) effort to transform a plant into a crop. The result is local history at its creative best.

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

Elegantly simple and glowing with light, this vase reflects the aesthetic of its creator, Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933), a leader in the American art-nouveau movement. The son of jeweler Charles L. Tiffany, Louis perfected his craft through constant experimentation at his New York factory. Demonstrating his preference for organic forms and mastery of hand-blown glass, this six-inch vase dated 1894 appears with other Tiffany pieces under "G-is-for-Glass" in the "Minnesota A to Z" exhibit at the History Center in St. Paul. Also on view is "Lady in the Moon," a Tiffany stained- and leaded-glass window created for the dining room of the now-gone Schurmeier mansion on St. Paul's Crocus Hill designed by Clarence H. Johnston Sr.

Frederic C. Miller donated his collection of Tiffany art glass and a handsome display case to the Minnesota Historical Society in 1936 in memory of his wife, Bertha Robbins Miller.

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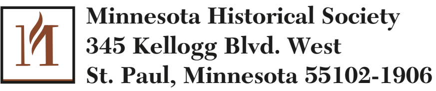
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