Curator’s Choice

Change is a constant in the fickle world of fashion, and style shifts are one way to mark the passing of years. Spanning a century, these women’s and girls’ dress and casual shoes from the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society evoke different eras and women’s changing tastes in the twentieth century. Clockwise from top: black suede pump with gold-embossed leather bow, 1930s; blue leather open-toe pump, 1950s; white child’s leather moccasin with jeweled toe, 1990s; red platform open-toe sandal, 1940s; brown kid laced demi-boot with silk-brocade uppers, 1900; floral fabric spike-heeled pump, 1960s; silver platform sandal, 1970s; red and gold T-strap evening shoe, 1920s.

—LINDA McSHANNOCK, museum collections curator

FRONT COVER: It’s about time. Faced with looming deadlines, a waning century, and the start of a new millennium, the editors and contributors to the twentieth century’s final issue of Minnesota History could only agree with this age-old maxim. Measuring the passage of time, whether by seasons or seconds, at work or at play, has been a human obsession for millennia. A sampling of Minnesota time-keeping devices from MHS museum collections includes men’s and women’s gold and silver pocket watches from the nineteenth century and wristwatches from the early twentieth.
BOOK REVIEWS

Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940
By Brenda J. Child
(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. 145 p. Cloth, $35.00.)

Pipestone, Flandreau, Carlisle, St. Francis, Chemawa, Chilocco, Haskell. These names, and those of other boarding schools, have a particular resonance for American Indians, calling to mind a jumble of images, anecdotes by family and friends, fragments of stories, memories of place, unquiet silences, minefields of emotion. The singular descriptor of a boarding-school name has the power to evoke myriad responses from Indian people. These responses are a testament to the profound, continuing impact the extensive number of mission and federal schools had on the lives of those they sought to transform. The legacy of this schooling is complex, at once multifaceted and intergenerational. Family members pass along any number of stories, memories, attitudes, habits, skills, and feelings to their children and grandchildren. Perhaps a penchant for inspection-worthy punctuality and order or conditioned responses to triggered memories can be traced to boarding-school life. Perhaps legendary needle or repair skills get passed down to the next generation along with stories of resistance. Perhaps a marriage kindled in boarding school accounts for the intertribal composition of a family. Perhaps silences from family members about their experiences speak loudest of all. Certainly the legacy is complicated, a mixture of love, anger, pain, loss, grief, and humor at the very least. After all, the people dearest to American Indians—their very own family members—were at the mercy of boarding schools.

Scholar Brenda J. Child describes two such schools, Flandreau Indian School in South Dakota and Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas, in this fine book. Drawing from documents including letters written by students and their parents, Child focuses on students from the Upper Midwest, especially Ojibwe. Organized into seven chapters, Boarding School Seasons intersperses the voices of those “who have for too long been anonymous and relegated to the periphery of American history” in examining topics such as homesickness, health issues, and resistance at Flandreau and Haskell. Child positions these voices, and the lives they represent, in their rightful place at the center of the boarding-school narrative. Eloquent and moving, the writing uncoiled in federal archives capture a measure of what the experiences were and what they meant for those enmeshed in the U.S. government’s assimilationist educational system.

Both products of the late-nineteenth-century federal boarding-school system, Haskell was founded in 1884 and Flandreau in the early 1890s. As Child points out, these schools had sizable numbers of students from the Upper Midwest. Flandreau’s students initially came primarily from Dakota and Ojibwe communities but eventually included representation from other tribal groups. This school, which shared similarities and interactions with the Pipestone boarding school across the state line in southwestern Minnesota, today “has the distinction of being the country’s oldest boarding school in continuous operation.” Haskell, with a more intertribal student population, often listed “Chippewas” as the second-largest group of pupils. After becoming a junior college by 1970, the school eventually developed into present-day Haskell Indian Nations University.

One of the greatest strengths of Boarding School Seasons is that it presents the perspectives of students and their parents against the backdrop of varying economic and social circumstances in their home communities. In other words, the interplay between home and school and the bond between child and parent are examined, not considered terminated because of the physical separation necessitated by off-reservation boarding-school enrollment. As Child points out: “Distance caused hardship, distress, and unimaginable misery but failed to extinguish the very real influence parents and family continued to exert over the lives of students.” In her findings, “letters from parents communicated a determined and passionate commitment to children.” Child concludes that in a number of instances boarding schools served as a refuge from family crises, economic hardship, and racism in public schools, “somber testimony to the poor quality of reservation life for Ojibwe families in the early twentieth century.”

Underscoring the fact that attendance at schools such as Flandreau and Haskell affected a multitude of families in complex ways, Child incorporates into her narrative information about members of her own family from Red Lake Reservation in Minnesota. “Like most Native Americans of my generation,” she writes, “I first learned about government boarding schools from a grandparent.” Besides drawing from her grandmother Jeanette Jones Auginausk’s account of attending Flandreau, Child includes a family photograph of her great-grandfather, David Jones, a Carlisle student who played football with Sac and Fox athlete Jim Thorpe and the Oorang Indians football team. By doing so, she gives voice to the immediacy and personal legacy of the boarding-school experience for countless tribal people. Stories about mission and federal boarding schools abound in American Indian families and communities, compelling evidence of the pervasive impact of the schooling. In relatively recent times, these schools have begun to be examined from the perspectives of the students who attended them and the relatives they left behind. Boarding School Seasons, winner of the North American Indian Prose Award, is a welcome addition to that effort. The book is a very valuable contribution to a profoundly important story.

Reviewed by Paulette F. Molin, a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe from White Earth, who serves on the faculty at Hampton University in Virginia. She recently cocurated the perma-
The Witness of Combines
By Kent Meyers

In his preface, Kent Meyers succinctly describes the essence of this book, and I can do no better than to quote him directly: “My father died when I was sixteen, and with his death the farm passed out of our family’s hands. These essays explore the meaning of that double loss. In doing so, they explore the richness of family life, the nature of work, and the ways that communities can both reify and redeem loss.”

The 229 lyrical pages that follow could be variously described as memoir, regional history, short story, essay, or prose poetry. They are all of those things. And this collection of 23 chapters has an overall impact that is definitely greater than the sum of its parts.

In the first—and title—chapter, we read about the neighboring farmers of Morgan, Minnesota, coming unexpectedly with their combines to help harvest the corn that Kent and his brothers had planted in the season of their father’s death: “And the combines came as a communal action, out of respect for my father, an acknowledgment of his passing, and a healing gesture from the human, communal heart.”

Throughout the book we read about the lessons that Wayne Meyers imparted to his nine children, mostly through silent but powerful example. In a chapter called “Birds Against the Glass,” young Kent is surprised when his father causes the family to be late for church because he feels compelled to find, and put to merciful death, a bird wounded after flying into the windshield. In a lovely chapter called “The Conversation of the Roses,” the author describes his mother and grandmother talking softly as they inspect grandmother’s roses, finding peace and refreshment in work that has been done for beauty’s sake alone. This is followed by a story about “My Grandmother’s Bones” in which the young narrator is shocked and repulsed—and simultaneously ashamed of his emotions—when he guides his grandmother by the arm and feels her fragile bone and withering flesh. The last page of this chapter is pure poetry.

This book contains several accounts of the expected farm kid adventures—including secret forts, haymow hideouts, and rafting across a flooded field—all well told. But my favorite sections are Meyers’s descriptions of farm work and the lessons and rewards inherent in feeding hungry cattle, chipping frozen silage in midwinter, building a windbreak, straightening the bent hammermill, picking rocks, rooting out cockleburs, plowing, planting, harvesting, doing what must be done in its season. He speaks about the “diurnal rhythm of chores that shaped our days . . . . The discovery—as opposed to the imposition—of rhythm in work, like the discovery of rhythm elsewhere—in language, in music, dance, waves, the seasonal return of the stars, the flap and glide of a bird, the flow of sports—is a satisfaction, sometimes a deep and abiding joy. Feeding the cattle allowed the discovery of rhythm within rhythm, a polyphony so complex it takes a whole life to understand and appreciate it.”

Passages like these make The Witness of Combines something far more than personal reminiscence, more than a nostalgic look at a way of life that is passing into history.

Reviewed by Sara De Luca, author of Dancing the Cows Home: A Wisconsin Girlhood (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1996). This memoir of Wisconsin farm life received an Award of Merit from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and was produced as a stage play by ArtBarn Theatre, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, in 1998.

To Be the Main Leaders of Our People: A History of Minnesota Ojibwe Politics, 1825–1898
By Rebecca Kugel

Rebecca Kugel carefully situates herself as a social historian and an ethnohistorian who intends to provide an Ojibwe perspective on their political history in Minnesota between 1825 and 1898 by drawing on an abundant supply of Ojibwe voices recorded by missionaries, agents, and the like. She begins by describing the age-old Ojibwe political
pattern of “civil leaders,” or wise and respected elders, and “warriors,” or young men under 40 who typically carried out decisions made by the civil leaders. The warriors were often more militant and impatient with cautious, consensus-building negotiations. The midnineteenth century, a time of critical change and strife, gave the warriors’ impetuosity greater appeal and challenged the authority of the civil leaders.

Professor Kugel correctly interprets political differences within the Ojibwe as a feature of precontact years and as functionally useful, rather than being purely destructive and negative, as older analyses of “factionalism” have argued. Ojibwe political divisions had widespread counterparts among native groups across the continent and involved similar issues concerning legitimate leadership roles. Even as factions contended with others, they also accorded each other intrinsic respect, for both had roots that lay deep within the contours of Ojibwe political expectations.

Each faction also sought alliances with outsiders, as they had for generations. Whether the potential allies were fur traders, their bicultural offspring, or various denominations of missionaries, Ojibwe expectations of fruitful alliance were always the same. Allies were expected to be generous, respectful, and reciprocal. Ojibwe political leaders were often disappointed by the failure of their erstwhile Euro-American allies to behave appropriately. Kugel forcefully shows how these relationships could only ripen and persist in an atmosphere of ambiguity that was open to cross-cultural interpretations. When the motivations of each group were laid bare, it became clear that neither had much in common with the other.

The dualism of the political divisions was everywhere apparent. As game disappeared, agriculture seemed an attractive alternative, and civil leaders sought knowledge of American technology from missionaries. They did not hold education in the gospel of paramount importance, much to the missionaries’ chagrin. If missionaries became too troublesome, warriors would intervene and drive them away.

Ojibwe leaders played off the images of Indians that came to populate the Euro-American imagination. “Good” Indians sought alliances; “bad” Indians drove missionaries away; both played important roles in Ojibwe struggles to maintain their dwindling autonomy. Leaders could draw on the substance of these images time and again as they attempted to mold the relationship to their liking and benefit.

Kugel’s analysis is best when interpreting the Mississippi and Leech Lake civil leaders and their sought-after, yet troubled, alliance with Episcopal missionaries. At White Earth Reservation, sons of many prominent civil leaders became ordained as Episcopal deacons and assumed positions of religious and political importance at other reservations in northern Minnesota. They even went on strike when they felt they were being discriminated against by the church because they were natives. Kugel spotlights their creativity and determined efforts to remain in control.

The book’s subtitle, A History of Minnesota Ojibwe Politics, belies the fact that only the Gull Lake, Leech Lake, and White Earth groups are covered. Other sizable communities at Red Lake, Mille Lacs, Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, Bois Forte, Otter Tail Lake, and Pembina receive scant attention, if any. The White Earth case is considerably more complex than Kugel allows. The Episcopal Ojibwe comprised a small minority of the resident population. The majority were resoundingly Catholic and followed bicultural lifeways similar to those of their Canadian métis cousins. Many highly visible and vocal leaders hailed from this group and championed their own agenda, not one that conformed to Ojibwe political cleavages from an earlier era. In addition, the immigrant bands from Otter Tail Lake and Pembina transplanted their own leadership roles when they joined the original Mississippi band immigrants, yet they are scarcely mentioned. The White Earth story is one of diverse immigrant bands trying to forge a reservation identity while struggling to safeguard their resources from both external and internal threats. They built on past patterns but did not entirely replicate them.

All in all, this study of the politics of the Ojibwe in central Minnesota in the nineteenth century is a welcome addition to our understanding of American Indian political leaders. Their ingenuity in extending, then withholding alliances to maximize their threatened autonomy is remarkable. Rebecca Kugel does an admirable job of setting it forth.

Reviewed by Melissa L. Meyer, professor of history at the University of California at Los Angeles. Her book, The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at the White Earth Reservation, 1887-1920, is a detailed social, economic, and political history of the White Earth community at the turn of the twentieth century. She is currently completing a study of tribal enrollment policies, with special attention to blood-quantum requirements.

The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life
Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen

For anyone interested in the field of public history, the name of this new book is likely to have a familiar ring. Past Meets Present, Presenting the Past, The Unpredictable Past, and The Powers of the Past are just a few of the recent scholarly publications that have a good deal in common with this one. But in its path-breaking methodology, The Presence of the Past is wholly unlike its similarly named siblings. As the authors state, their study “takes up a subject that is at the heart of the historian’s inquiry (the past) but investigates it at a moment in time (the present) that historians generally leave to sociologists and anthropologists.”

The central tool of their investigation is that mainstay of the social scientist: the opinion-research survey. In this case, 1,453 American men and women from all parts of the country and covering a broad spectrum of race, ethnicity, age, and income responded to telephone interviews conducted in 1994 by the Center for Survey Research. Interviewers asked about participation in historical activities (such as vis-
iting museums, reading books, attending family reunions, and working on hobbies or collections related to the past); feelings of “connectedness” to the past; opinions on the relative “trustworthiness” of historical sources (for example, history museums, family members, high-school or college teachers, movies, books, or television shows); and the relative importance of knowing about the past of various groups—one’s own family, racial or ethnic group, community, or the United States as a whole. The interviews lasted an average of 39 minutes and ranged upward to two hours.

The project was originally conceived by a group of academic and public historians, filmmakers, and museum professionals known as the Committee on History-Making in America, which was formed in 1989 with the goal of improving communication between academic historians and larger audiences. The project’s pioneers “shared a conviction that professional historians were painfully unaware of how people outside their own circles understood and used the past.” The task of synthesizing the mountain of data—more than 3,400 pages of transcribed conversation and hundreds of pages of tables—fell to David Thelen, professor of history at Indiana University and former editor of the Journal of American History, and Roy Rosenzweig, professor of history at George Mason University. (Thankfully, readers who feel statistically challenged are not required to sort out regression tables or dependent variables; for the record, all of the statistics and the wording of the survey itself are available on a website: www.chnm.gmu.edu/survey).

The book is a fascinating collection of insights, some of them surprising, all of them challenging and thought provoking. One key finding is that Americans draw a clear line between “history,” which is thought of as something formal, official, and distant, and “the past,” which is intimate, personal, and inclusive. This is a message the authors clearly want their principal intended audience—professional historians, especially in academia—to hear. But another motivation behind the survey and this publication of its results is to quell the chorus of conservative critics scolding and ridiculing Americans for their indifference to or ignorance of history. “The issue,” the authors here write, “is not Americans’ lack of knowledge about the past or their sense of disconnection from it. Rather, it is that most Americans simply do not recognize themselves and their families in a distant narrative that stretches from election to election, war to war, and equates our national past with the history of the nation-state.” Americans, the authors assert, care deeply about the past and fully engage the past in their daily lives.

The survey finding that probably most distressed the authors concerns the loathing that respondents expressed toward their formal history education in secondary schools. One respondent characterized it as “a giant data dump that we were supposed to memorize.” In fact, most respondents still associated the very word “history” with formal history education, one of their most unpleasant experiences with the past. (Of course, it is doubtful that any single secondary-school subject—biology, say, or algebra—would be filed under “recalled fondly” in most people’s memory banks.)

Finally, it should be noted that Americans do not deplore all sources of “official” or expert historical information—that is, sources other than the personal or familial. Nearly 60 percent of the respondents report having visited a history museum or historic site within the previous year, and they rate these sources higher on the “trust” scale than any other. There are many reasons for this “remarkable story of museums.” Respondents recognize in the best history museums and historic sites a lack of mediation between themselves as visitors and the hard things and facts of the past. Museums offer to them what they were looking for in all of their excursions into the past: a sense of immediacy and intimacy, empathy and engagement.

More than 170 years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote: “Democratic nations care but little for what has been, but are haunted by visions of what will be.” On the overwhelming evidence amassed in The Presence of the Past, that is one axiom that may have to be revised.

 Reviewed by Brian Horrigan, an exhibit curator at the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul.
THE WPA Directory of Churches and Religious Organizations in Minnesota, compiled in 1942 but newly organized and indexed, has been reissued by editor Antonia Hawkins Richardson (St. Paul: Padian Press, 1997, 288 p., $35.00 plus tax and $3.00 for postage and handling). The indexes, which are particularly useful to genealogists, list churches by locality and local address; names of some 4,500 clergy, teachers, and officials; and churches by denomination. The new-format paperback has an appendix with guidance for future research.

PART HISTORY, part boosterism, New Ulm in Word and Picture: J.H. Strasser’s History of a German-American Settlement, 1852 is now available in English, translated from the original German by Don H. Tolzmann in collaboration with Frederic R. Steinhauser. Most of the 77-page illustrated volume first appeared as a series of newspaper articles written by Strasser and other prominent town residents. Chapters on the founding and establishment of New Ulm are followed by topical glimpses at the Dakota War of 1862, the town’s public school, its industries, the locust plague, and “a look into the future.” Two more recent appendixes, an essay on frontier pragmatism by Hildegard Binder Johnson, and one on the Hermann monument by Tolzmann round out the book. Published as part of a series by the Max Kade German-American Center of Indiana and Purdue Universities, Indianapolis, and the Indiana German Heritage Society, it may be ordered for $9.00 plus shipping and handling from NCSA Literatur, 430 Kelp Grove Rd., Nashville, IN, 47448; (812) 988-2860.

FOUR CENTURIES of women’s history are the focus of Midwest Women: Work, Community, and Leadership at the Crossroads, edited by Lucy Eldersweld Murphy and Wendy Hamand Venet (Bloomingon: Indiana University Press, 1997, 304 p., cloth, $39.95, paper, $19.95). Of particular interest to Minnesota readers are contributions by Rebecca Kugel, “Leadership within the Women’s Community: Susie Bonga Wright of the Leech Lake Ojibwe,” and by Tanis C. Thorne, “For the Good of Her People: Continuity and Change for Native Women of the Midwest, 1650–1850.” Other essays explore the world of women’s work at home and out of the home.

THE EVERYDAY LIFE of the men, women, children, and families who worked and played on Michigan’s Keweenaw Peninsula is the subject of Larry Lankton’s fascinating social history, Beyond the Boundaries: Life and Landscape at the Lake Superior Copper Mines, 1850–1875 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 247 p., cloth, $39.95, paper, $16.95). Steeped in the region’s history from his previous studies of mining technology and labor, Lankton now provides a detailed, readable, and well-rounded account of day-to-day living. Beginning with the special sense of place that the area inspires, he moves on to the rigors of travel to this isolated area, the challenges of settling in, the area’s distinctive foodways, the work of keeping house, and other topics including leisure pastimes, illnesses, and the not-so-pretty shattered dreams in “Lunatics, Larcenists, and Lives of Woe.” A final chapter documents transformations wrought by three decades of development on the mining frontier.

A SMALL BUT BEAUTIFUL exhibit catalog from the State Historical Society of North Dakota titled Sacred Beauty: Quillwork of Plains Women (Bismarck, ND, 1998, 30 p., paper, $6.95) features the intricate patterns, colors, techniques, and uses of quillwork on items ranging from baby cradles to tipi bags. Some of the objects have rarely been seen because of their fragility. Represented are works by Sahnish (Arikara), Hidatsa, Dakota, Crow, and Mandan women. Women elders served as exhibit advisors. Order from the North Dakota Heritage Center at (701) 328-2666 or www.state.nd.us/history.

Ibce Wicona, a magazine now in its second year, is published to educate and foster discussion among and about Dakota and Nakota people. It is available from editor Florestine Renville German at RR1, Box 75, Peever, SD 57257. Subscriptions are $18.00 for four quarterly issues; a single issue costs $5.95.


A REPRINT in 1997 of Paul F. Sharp’s 1948 publication The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada: A Survey Showing American Parallels includes two new introductions that set the original work in historical context and discuss the findings of half a century of historiography. William C. Pratt’s essay provides an American perspective, while Lorne Brown offers a Canadian point of view. Similar conditions on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel meant that farmers in the transborder region had much in common, including the Nonpartisan League. Beginning with the land rush of the early decades of the twentieth century and ending with the progressive heritage of the years following World War I, Sharp’s book delineates the ways in which farmers found a political voice. This 147-page paperback, published by the Canadian Plains Research Center at the University of Regina, is available for $15.00. For ordering information, contact the publisher at (306) 752-7699 or mlazgarb@leroy.cc.uregina.ca.

THE FOND DU LAC BAND of Lake Superior Chippewa (Ojibwe) has published an account titled A Forever Story: The People and Community of the Fond du Lac Reservation (Cloquet, 1998, paper, 305 p., $15.95). Edited by Thomas D. Peacock, the book recounts the migrations that brought the Ojibwe to the area near Cloquet, reprints historically important written documents related to Fond du Lac, details leadership of the band from the late seventeenth century, and includes oral interviews with many band members. A final chapter lists and translates the names and nicknames of members from the 1800s. Many black-and-white photographs capture the faces and circumstances of Fond du Lac families.

AN ACCOUNT OF the Marcus Nelson Family titled A Minnesota Remembrance:
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Making a Life in the Land God Forgot by
Robert O. Harder (Aitkin County Historical Society, 1998, 77 p., paper, $12.95) brings to life the hardships of immigrants settling in the Big Sandy Lake and Tamarack areas of Aitkin County. More than 100 photos enhance the entertaining volume prepared largely from family letters. Order from the Depot Museum in Aitkin, (218)927-3548.

VOYAGEUR COUNTRY: The Story of Minnesota’s National Park by Robert Treuer (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, 208 p., paper $14.95) has been reissued for readers interested in the history and environmental significance of northern Minnesota’s Voyageurs National Park, currently visited by more than 250,000 people each year. Treuer’s book, first published in 1979, provides invaluable background for policy decisions about the future of the park, which is threatened by its own popularity.

Another reprint, Portage into the Past: By Canoe along the Minnesota-Ontario Boundary Waters by J. Arnold Bolz and beautifully illustrated by Francis Lee Jaques (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, 181 p., paper, $14.95) recounts the author’s 1958 journey retracing the voyageurs’ route from Grand Portage on Lake Superior through the Quetico-Superior country to Rainy Lake.

NEIGHBORING WISCONSIN is the subject of several recent publications. Wisconsin Past and Present: A Historical Atlas by the Wisconsin Cartographers’ Guild (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, 123 p., cloth, $39.95) features a wealth of fascinating historical and geographical data, full-color maps, text, photos, and illustrations. Thematically the atlas highlights the peoples and cultures, economy and land, and sociopolitical landscape of the state, and maps range widely from glacial landscapes and Native American mounds to tourism, the 1990s in Milwaukee and Madison, and historic disasters. Explored in depth are the history of indigenous peoples, immigrant groups, cultural legacies, natural resources, agriculture, industries, geographical and political boundaries, political and social movements, and government institutions such as military installations and educational facilities. The fascinating atlas, which will be a model for any other state to follow for years to come, commemorates Wisconsin’s 150th year of statehood.

Wisconsin Revisited: A Rephotographic Essay by Nicolette Bromberg (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, 80 p., paper, $20.00) pairs historic photos with modern images taken from the same spot. Photographers then and now captured moments of everyday life—work, play, and everything in between. The statehood sesquicentennial project resulted in about 240 new images paired with old ones, from which several traveling exhibits were also prepared.

Like Our Sisters Before Us: Women of Wisconsin Labor by Jamakaya (Milwaukee: Wisconsin Labor History Society, 1998, 93 p., paper, $5.00) is a sesquicentennial project based on interviews with prominent women in the labor movement. The interviews suggest how workplaces have changed for women over the years and the kinds of struggles working women have had with employers and, sometimes, their own union brothers. Order from Wisconsin AFL-CIO, 6333 W. Bluemound Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53213.

A substantial new history titled The Wisconsin Frontier by Mark Wyman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998, 336 p., cloth, $29.95) describes the varied peoples and diverse landscapes that connected to make Wisconsin a center of trade and human contact. The book describes the rule of the French, the British, and, within a generation, the Americans; and how the fur trade gave way to lumbering, mining, and fishing, and finally agricultural settlement; and waves of European immigrants. Wyman’s story ends with the concluding decade of the nineteenth century and the cutover lands and game scarcities that were a legacy of the settlers’ belief in the inexhaustible resources of the frontier.

THIS OLD FARM: A Treasury of Family Farm Memories and This Old Tractor: A Treasury of Vintage Tractors and Family Farm Memories are two new nostalgic, large-format books edited by Michael Dregni with forewords by Roger Welsch (Stillwater: Voyageur Press, 1999, 140 p., cloth, $29.95 each). They are filled with historic and modern color and black-and-white photographs, advertising art, reminiscences, and miscellany that salutes the country’s rural heritage. Both make for entertaining browsing by former farm residents or readers curious about rural living.
HORSE-DRAWN SLEIGHS and crowds of bundled-up pedestrians share this wintery moment in time—2:25 P.M. by the street clock—captured more than a century ago on what is now Minneapolis’s Nicollet Mall.

Looking northeast from Fifth Street toward the Mississippi River, the view captures the vitality of a thriving big-city downtown at the turn of the century. The mostly three-story buildings seem pedestrian-friendly on the sunny afternoon, however cold, and most of the sleighs appear to be making deliveries without regard for traffic lanes or keeping to the right side of the road.

Viewed under a magnifying glass, signs along the avenue advertise (from left) the W. J. Dyer organ and piano store, Gustav Simmon’s furrier business, and the Twin City Dye Works. Across the street at 311–15 Nicollet (background) is the tall-towered Minnesota Loan and Trust Company, a Gothic extravaganza built in 1885 (and demolished by 1920), perhaps the Twin Cities’ first skyscraper. Lining the street (moving toward the photographer) are the Palace Clothing House (M. L. Rothschild, president), a wallpaper store, Browning, King & Co. clothing store, Goodyear Rubber Goods, two more furriers, and Yerxa Brothers wholesale grocery.

If the unknown photographer had waited a few hours, the hanging carbon-arc electric light in the foreground would have brightly illuminated the street below. Electricity had arrived in the city in the early 1880s, although gas lamps continued to light some Minneapolis streets until 1924.
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