

The Urban Indian Experience in America

By Donald L. Fixico

(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001. 251 p. Cloth, \$35.00; paper, \$17.95.)

HISTORIAN DONALD FIXICO has done a valuable service by synthesizing a large body of literature into a readable survey of the issues that have faced urban Indians since World War II. Organized thematically, the book begins with an overview of the federal government's relocation program, which sponsored about 100,000 Indians who moved from reservations to cities in the 1950s and 1960s. Subsequent chapters deal with the "urban Indian" as a stereotype, the survival of cultural traditions, economics, education, alcoholism, health care, the creation of new forms of pan-Indian recreation and association, and middle-class Indians. Fixico drew some of the material for this study from his first book, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945–1960* (1986), and therefore this new book could be considered a sequel, taking up where the relocation program left off to follow the story of Indian urban life into the 1960s and 1970s.

Although Fixico provides a useful introduction to the topic, he unfortunately does not break away from the stereotypes of urban Indians that he derides. This is mainly due to the sources he used. Fixico relied extensively on federal government reports investigating what, during the relocation era, was commonly called "the Indian problem." He also used the findings of sociological studies conducted during the 1960s and 1970s, many of which framed their research questions on minority urban life around social problems: poverty, ghettos, unemployment, drinking, poor health, broken families, and failure at school. He did not conduct any new oral histories but does refer occasionally to existing collections. As a consequence of his research approach, Fixico's basic premise matches that of the paternalistic bureaucrats and researchers who have conceptualized cities as bad for Indians. Even the chapter on "Retention of Traditionalism" dwells on social pathologies as captured in such phrases as "This dismal situation threatens family unity" and "Serious social and psychological problems disturb the spiritual balance of the Indian child and cause identity problems."

Fixico's pessimistic stand on cities could have benefited from a reading of historian Robin D. G. Kelley's

humorously, wisely titled *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (1998). Kelley critiqued scholars, mainstream social institutions, and American popular culture for characterizing black urban neighborhoods and family life as pathological and inherently a problem. Instead, Kelley argued that the city is a site for creativity in music, art, and other forms of cultural expression.

Since the majority of American Indians moved to cities on their own and not under the auspices of the federal relocation program, as implied by Fixico's opening chapters, there must have been incentives that drew them. Fixico does mention powwows, and he lists many Indian organizations that formed in cities throughout the United States, but these more positive urban Indian experiences do not receive as much attention and detail as they deserve.

Still, because so little has been written about this important change for American Indians—more than half now live in urban areas according to the U.S. census—*The Urban Indian Experience in America* provides a good grounding for learning this basic history.

Reviewed by Nancy Shoemaker, associate professor of history at the University of Connecticut-Storrs and the author of American Indian Population Recovery in the Twentieth Century (1999) and "Urban Indians and Ethnic Choices: American Indian Organizations in Minneapolis, 1920–1950," published in The Western Historical Quarterly (1988).

Sowing the American Dream: How Consumer Culture Took Root in the Rural Midwest

By David Blanke

(Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000. 282 p. Cloth, \$59.95; paper, \$21.95.)

DAVID BLANKE uses the rise of consumer culture to explore the tensions between community and individualism in the rural Midwest. The topic is an important one, and the analysis and writing are challenging. Though Blanke leaves Minnesota out of his definition of the Midwest, readers of this journal will find his story interesting. His carefully researched book argues that rural consumers played a critical role in shaping consumerism during its formative period, 1820–1900.

Blanke argues correctly that nineteenth-century farmers lived comfortably in a world that mixed equal parts of community and individualism within a framework of capitalist relations. This analysis includes “a demand-driven access to goods, the progressive reform of the distribution system, a communal justification of purchasing activities, and a democratic and virtuous application of the economic benefits derived from their efforts.” Blanke argues that this republican consumerism found its most complete expression in the Grange.

Blanke makes important contributions to our understanding of the rise and fall of the Grange, the relationship of rural to urban areas, the emergence and significance of mail-order businesses, and, of course, the rise of consumerism. By placing farm demand at the center of the debate on consumerism, he shows rural people to be significant actors, shaping the modern system of exchange that had come to dominate U.S. life by the early-twentieth century.

In his strongest chapter, Blanke shows how mail-order pioneer Montgomery Ward (recently run out of business) responded sensitively to rural consumer demand in building his empire. What farmers wanted, Blanke argues, were high-quality products at a fair price. Farmers wanted to get as close as possible to the producer in their exchange network, freeing them from the unfair “tax” of the middleman. At first, farmers formed cooperatives to fulfill this need, moving from local to state-run enterprises. In 1872 Montgomery Ward began his first successful wholesale business and married Elizabeth Cobb, whose uncle was the state purchasing agent for the Michigan Grange. Ward hitched his wagon to the Grange and soon, it seems, fulfilled the farmers’ consumerist vision more efficiently than the old Grange purchasing agents. By 1890 Minnesota-born Richard Sears would challenge Ward’s notion that farmers wanted quality at fair prices above all else by using modern forms of marketing and advertising, along with lower prices and credit, to sell products by mail. A decade later, Sears’s success would show that the older Granger notion of consumerism had failed in the face of image-oriented advertising and cut-rate prices.

Blanke has written an important book that challenges us to think about ourselves as consumers. Farm families did, indeed, struggle with the meaning of individualism and community, and this struggle manifested itself in the arena of exchange. But just as important for many farm families was the struggle to find balance in their position as consumers and producers. I would encourage readers to compare Blanke’s findings on rural America with Lawrence Glickman’s book, *A Living Wage*, which analyzes working-class attitudes about consumerism during the same period. Glickman shows that workers linked production to consumption much more closely than the farmers studied by Blanke. I suspect that a different reading of the material from the rural Midwest would yield findings similar to Glickman’s.

In this age of global capitalism, nothing is more important than gaining a critical perspective on consumption and its relationship to production. U.S. consumers still demand a quality product at a fair price, and so we go to Walmart. There we buy products made by people in distant lands whose lives we do not know about or care to understand. Nineteenth-century farmers and workers have important lessons to teach us. We must mix our individualism with a growing sense of community that extends beyond our borders, and we must think about the people who produce what we consume. Only by learning these lessons can we have justice in our global village.

Reviewed by Jeffrey Kolnick, who teaches, among other topics, the history of rural people at Southwest State University in Marshall, Minnesota.

The University of Minnesota, 1945–2000

By Stanford Lehmborg and Ann M. Pflaum

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. 424 p. Cloth, \$29.95.)

WRITING THE HISTORY of an institution as large, complex, and rich in tradition as the University of Minnesota for a span of 55 years is a daunting challenge. Stanford Lehmborg and Ann M. Pflaum undertake the task with a dazzling presentation of facts and reminiscences packed into 400 pages. Each of the book’s five chapters roughly corresponds to the terms of one or two presidents: 1945–59 (James Morrill), 1960–74 (O. Meredith Wilson and Malcolm Moos), 1975–84 (C. Peter Magrath), 1985–97 (Ken Keller and Nils Hasselmo), and 1997–2000 (Mark Yudof). The book is encyclopedic in scope, with a wealth of detail recounting key episodes and chronicling the evolution of campuses, colleges, departments, administrative units, extension services, athletic teams, and other centers that comprise the university.

Treatment of several topics is outstanding. The vitality of campus life after World War II emerges as veterans determinedly pursue education under the GI Bill, students and staff share the challenges of classroom and housing shortages, and scholars begin coming to grips with Cold War America. The brief, ill-fated, and traumatic presidency of Ken Keller is the subject of a riveting section that sheds light on the academic culture of the university and the university’s place in the political culture of Minnesota. A clearly discernable thread throughout the narrative is the overcoming of barriers to women in academia. Sometimes this occurred in path-breaking accomplishments of scholars, administrators, and student athletes, other times in contentious episodes such as the Rajender case of the 1970s involving equal treatment of faculty members.

For all of its merits, the book has several limitations as a work of history. Senior administrators and selected faculty members figure prominently as they and their academic units march across the pages like entries in a college yearbook with little cohesion or context. Although this can be partly attributed to the size and complexity of the university, the authors relegate overviews and major themes briefly to the book's acknowledgements and epilogue with no development in the main narrative. The University of Minnesota's emergence as a large, multicampus system conformed to a national trend after World War II, yet the only reference to this appears in a footnote. Major events such as acquisition of the Duluth campus in 1947, building the West Bank campus in Minneapolis during the early 1960s, and closing the Waseca campus in 1992 just seem to happen with little examination of circumstances. The book, sponsored by the University of Minnesota, also has the quality of a court history that can benefit from familiarity but can lack detachment. The authors themselves have had long-term affiliations with the university's Twin Cities campus, Lehmborg as a renowned scholar and chair of the history department, Pflaum as a graduate student and later an administrator.

As a sequel to James Gray's *University of Minnesota 1851–1951* (1951), this book brings the story of the university to the end of the twentieth century. It is a valuable reference work and a necessary point of departure for scholars conducting further research on the university. It also serves as a source for past and present members of the university's community to reminisce about a favorite faculty member, a colleague, a memorable experience, and other ways that the University of Minnesota touched their lives.

Reviewed by Mitchell Rubinstein, who received the Ph.D. in history from the University of Minnesota, lives in St. Paul, and works in higher education.

Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life

By David Glassberg

(Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001. 269 p. Cloth, \$50.00; paper, \$18.95.)

DAVID GLASSBERG'S BOOK is a searching exploration of the divide that separates academic history from the sense of the past that all of us carry wherever we go—our sense of having ancestors, of being *from* someplace, of being connected to traditions. “Must there be such a gulf between scholarly and personal uses of the past?” he asks.

Glassberg pursues this theme across five distinct yet interconnected essays, each of which analyzes ordinary Americans actively defining and deploying history: a

Massachusetts town debating what sort of statue should commemorate its World War I veterans, the city leaders of San Francisco mounting an historical festival in 1909, viewers of Ken Burns's *Civil War* television series writing him heartfelt letters, contemporary residents of three Massachusetts towns struggling to define their town character, and Californians setting out to mark the historic features of their landscape. Two overview chapters about Americans' sense of history and of place put these essays into context.

Throughout the volume, Glassberg argues that popular representations of history, although perhaps loose with facts and thin on theory, carry an emotional clout lacking in academic work. Whether raising an historical marker or staging a commemorative parade, ordinary Americans—out of instinct and self-interest—tell stories about the past that are rooted in personal emotion and a firm sense of place. Academics, driven by their own professional imperatives and self-interests, *de-emphasize* these same qualities, producing analyses bereft of personal voice and divorced from local geography. The time has come, Glassberg feels, for academic historians to reveal themselves: “Our own experiences, our own families, our own communities, can be the source of historical insights. . . . [W]e can establish who we are only by writing from a place, from a community, from a location in the world.”

True to this theme, Glassberg is at his best when closest to the ground. His chapter on “Remembering a War” offers an astonishingly rich, step-by-step account of the process that Orange, Massachusetts, went through in memorializing its World War I dead. Shortly after the surviving veterans returned to town in 1919, there was talk of building a memorial arch or obelisk. After heated debate, the town voted instead to build a “living memorial,” a downtown park, without commemorative statuary. For the next decade and a half, veterans groups pressed for a three-dimensional tribute within the park. Glassberg traces their efforts to sway public opinion, the various designs considered along the way, and then, most strikingly, the transformation in the 1930s of the commemoration effort into an *anti-war* campaign. Spurred by revelations of profiteering during World War I and by the despair of the Great Depression, a pacifism movement was sweeping across America. In Orange, the movement penetrated some surprising enclaves. For Memorial Day, 1931, the high-school principal wrote an article for the school paper, urging students who watched the veterans on parade to imagine “shell-torn mud-spattered, bleeding humanity as it was on the fields of France. While the band is playing a stirring march, I hope that you will hear the cry of suffering humanity as God has heard it through all the wars of the ages.” The town's young clergyman, Wallace Fiske, addressed veterans in a similar vein in a 1932 sermon. When the veterans finally won their memorial statue in the park in 1934, it did not depict a heroic fighter. It shows a weary veteran painfully recounting his war experiences to an angry and disillusioned young boy.

Recounting these twists and turns, Glassberg demonstrates the power of “microhistory” at its best. He animates the story of the pacifism movement with truth-fixing details: the Massachusetts branch of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom distributing “peace kits”; Orange high-school students eager to enlist in the Second World War being required first to look through a book showing explicit photos of World War I casualties; residents ignoring the monument during World War II and then, briefly, rediscovering it as an oppositional site during Vietnam War protests; Wallace Fiske rededicating the refurbished memorial in 1998, 66 years after his impassioned anti-war sermon. Glassberg’s sensitive account reveals the past as an ever-shifting mosaic of interpretations and re-interpretations, each of which draws life from—and sustains—the people who embrace them.

Compared to this intimacy, his analysis in other chapters seems detached. The essay on marking historical sites in California is rich in detail, but his chapter on Ken Burns is surprisingly lifeless. He codes a random sample of 444 letters sent to Burns according to the subjects they address—for example: “10 percent . . . commented on his use of still photographs, 14 percent on his use of music, 21 percent praised the way he incorporated diaries and letters into his film.” Is science of this sort really the best way to understand what Burns’s letter-writers can tell us? Glassberg’s exploration of town character in New England likewise relies on sketchy social science. He conducted a series of public meetings in three Massachusetts towns, attended by a self-selected group of residents. He con-

cludes that different people within these groups bring their own perspectives to the towns, not always subscribing to the “official” Chamber-of-Commerce definition of town character. Is this news? Perhaps a less artificially assembled body would have led Glassberg to richer findings. Finally, the book’s overview chapters (“Sense of History” and “Place and Placelessness in American History”) display a truly impressive command of recent scholarship but have a dutiful air, lacking the passion that animates his more detailed accounts.

Part of the issue, perhaps, is that for all his idealism about the power of history in ordinary people’s lives, Glassberg defines his audience as academics. At several points, he directly addresses his “fellow historians,” and he concludes by reflecting on what he wants to convey to his graduate students about the practice of history. Although a path-breaker in pursuing public history, Glassberg seems to be reaching back to address academics on their own terms, sometimes at the expense of the richly human stories he prizes.

Perhaps such trade-offs are the essence of a bridge-building work such as this one: residents on both banks want to see the go-between as their own. If at times *Sense of History* seems a bit dry, it nonetheless offers exemplary models of a personally revealing, honest, and geographically rooted exploration of how Americans make the past their own.

Reviewed by Benjamin Filene, an exhibit curator at the Minnesota Historical Society and the author of Romancing the Folk: Public Memory and American Roots Music (2000).

NEWS & NOTES

RICH WITH DETAIL and captivating in its variety, *Diaries of Girls and Women: A Midwestern American Sampler* edited by Suzanne L. Bunkers (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001, 457 p., paper, \$24.95) presents excerpts from the diaries of 46 girls and women who lived in Minnesota, Iowa, or Wisconsin between 1837 and 1999. The book’s chapters—American Girls, Coming of Age, Journeys, and Home, Work, and Family—highlight both the diversity of experience and the common threads that run through the diarists’ lives. Entries are chronological within each section. Bunkers’s introduction explores the theory and practice of writing and

reading diaries, and her introductory notes on each diarist further enhance the volume.

FIRST PUBLISHED in 1903, *The Story of Cole Younger by Himself* is back in print with new footnotes, additional photographs, and an introduction by James-Younger Gang specialist Marley Brant (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000, 127 p., paper, \$12.95). Written after the “old guerrilla” was paroled from Stillwater prison and 25 years after the failed raid on the Northfield bank, the book begins with Younger’s childhood days and chronicles his exploits as Civil War soldier,

outlaw, convict, and “gentleman.” Brant’s introduction provides an informed counterpoint to the reformed outlaw’s tale, pointing out that Cole “uses the power of the printed word to deny his wrongdoings and elevate himself into a misunderstood, if not honorable, war hero and protector of truth, justice, women, children, and the American way.”

SOCIAL, political, and economic change throughout the twentieth century is the important backdrop to historian Oscar J. Martínez’s survey, *Mexican-Origin People in the United States: A Topical History* (Tucson: University of Arizona



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Press, 2001, 244 p., cloth, \$45.00, paper, \$17.95). Noting that more than 20 million Mexicans and Mexican Americans live in the U.S. today, the book examines a century's worth of immigration trends, labor conditions, and racism before discussing growing community unity and political power. Looking back over the century, the author concludes that many conditions have improved, and the struggles have gained some people, at least, a place in the mainstream. Though the book focuses on the West, its story resonates in the Midwest as well.

FOCUSING on one important facet of a complex politician's career, Timothy N. Thurber's book, *The Politics of Equality: Hubert H. Humphrey and the African American Freedom Struggle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, 352 p., cloth, \$46.00, paper, \$21.00) also renders a detailed examination of postwar American liberalism. Beginning with Humphrey's tenure as mayor of Minneapolis, where race and reform were major formative issues, the book charts Humphrey's—and the nation's—successes and failures at achieving political, social, and economic equality for African Americans. Race, class, and politics were the volatile elements in Humphrey's quest to bring about racial justice through economic reform. Detailing Humphrey's substance and style, the book also provides a close look at the workings of the Democratic Party and the political temper of the nation.

TWO HISTORIES of Minnesota communities told through captioned photographs have recently been published by Arcadia Publishing: *The Kashubian Polish Community of Southeastern Minnesota* by the Polish Cultural Institute and *Shoreview, Minnesota* by Verna Rusler (both 128 p., 200+ photos, paper, \$19.95). Readers with personal connections to the Kashubian Poles who settled in the Winona area will enjoy the historical photos of families and friends, many of whom retained their distinctive Polish dialect. Residents of the farming-and-summer-cottage community, now a Twin Cities suburb, will appreciate the historical changes and continuities in Shoreview's popular activities and land use.

WHEN ASKED to write his memoirs, the late Samuel H. Morgan, an ardent advocate for public parks, penned a story focused not on himself but on the parks and nature preserves to which he devoted 40-some years. *Environmental Recollections* (St. Paul: the author, 2000, paper, 64 p.) recounts how Morgan realized his dream of providing the Twin Cities metropolitan area with the variety of parks, park reserves, and trails that the public enjoys today. This was not always an easy task, as his account of the battle for Afton Park, among other chapters, shows. Nor did Morgan ever believe that his task was complete: "Other areas needing preservation remain—especially now, lower Grey Cloud Island. I leave that, dear readers, to you." Maps, photos, and a brief reading list round out this story of the creation and strengthening of a nationally recognized regional park system. The book is not for sale, but copies are available for reading in the Minnesota Historical Society Library.

ONCE the magnificent trees were harvested, the northern Great Lakes region from western Michigan through Minnesota became a desolate area, poor for farming, known as the cutover. In *Planning a Wilderness: Regenerating the Great Lakes Cutover Region* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, 207 p., cloth, \$29.95), journalist James Kates describes the almost Herculean task of recreating a "natural" forest. Beginning in the 1930s, regional planners, conservationists, foresters, land economists, and game managers were among the key designers, while politicians and writers articulated the issues and sold them to the public. The new "wilderness" was designed to provide a stable economic base of harvestable timber as well as a recreational playground for the increasingly affluent middle class. As Kates shows, the media and planners invoked popular myths linking frontier individualism to forests and wilderness in order to sell the reforestation program. In the end, Kates concludes, "The majority of today's Great Lakes forest is a 'wilderness' on a human scale: a somewhat wild-looking landscape where every acre is a product of human intent."



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