

**Minnesota, Real and Imagined:  
Essays on the State and Its Culture**

*Edited by Stephen R. Graubard*

(St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001. 285 p. Paper, \$14.95.)

**WHAT CAN A HOOSIER** say about this place and its people and not sound envious? Do we really need to read more evidence about how lucky Minnesotans are, how nice, how caring? Is there any more to say about this North Star State, this land of purity and sky-blue water, this place of the Minnesota Miracle and the Five Percent Club, of the moralistic culture where “pretty good” (the best Indiana can hope for, some might say) is not good enough? Do we have to hear again the Gopher roll call: Hubert Humphrey, Harold Stassen, George Draper Dayton, the Guthrie Theater, Norman Borlaug, Minnesota Public Radio?

Well, yes, we do. First, not everyone knows. There may even be some Minnesotans who do not know. Despite having one of the finest historical societies among the 50 states and some of the finest historians and writers anywhere in the nation, there are natives who have not yet heard the news. Doubtless there are even Minnesotans whose primary insight into their place is through Lake Wobegon stories (a better source than many states have, to be sure, but still far from what is richly available in this blessedly introspective state). And if all Minnesotans do not know their own place, outsiders are far less informed. So, yes, we need to revisit this particular state.

But it’s not just knowing that Minnesota is special. How? Why? And what about yesterday and tomorrow? It is these far more complicated matters that the contributors to *Minnesota: Real and Imagined* take up. Editor Stephen R. Graubard organized the collection as a special issue of *Daedalus*. His laudable purpose was to introduce Europeans to an America not often covered in the bi-coastal media. Among the strongest cases for Minnesota’s special qualities is the group of scribblers Graubard rounded up for this volume: Nina M. Archabal, Rhoda R. Gilman, Annette Atkins, Joseph A. Amato and Anthony Amato, David A. Lanegran, John S. Adams, Thomas D. Peacock and Donald R. Day, Richard M. Chapman, John E. Brandl, Virginia Gray and Wyman Spano, Michael O’Keefe, Jon Pratt and Edson W. Spencer, Joe Dowling, and Robert J. White. There is not a clunker in the bunch. On the contrary, each essay is a delight—informed,

thoughtful, often witty. Each writer takes the state and the challenge of writing about it seriously. What better testimony to the commitment that “pretty good” is not good enough?

Most important, these essays suggest that the story is less simple than it often appears. The essays are full of end-of-century introspection, even anxiety, about where the state is heading. Of course, Governor Jesse Ventura raises that question most immediately (and earns more index entries than any other individual). But far more important are deeper changes within and without. What is the future for the Ojibwe and Hmong people as Minnesotans?

Are today’s divisions of race, religion, and ethnicity—likely far wider than those that separated Northern European Lutherans and Catholics—causing unbearable centrifugal forces? Does the declining rural population and withering farm and small-town economies mean an end to pioneer traditions? What happens, as Nina Archabal notes, when the Chatterbox Cafe is boarded up? And, to quote the title of a luncheon talk in spring 2000, “Has the Twin Cities Economy Lost Its Blue-Chip Status?” Should the state that produced and processed grain and lumber really be proud of the Mall of America? What is the future of a place sitting in the center of America but on the periphery of the global economy? Indeed, will there be a place for a place like Minnesota (or Indiana) in a footloose economy and global culture of Hollywood and McDonalds? Will we all end up with no place to love or hate?

Most of the authors in this collection look such monsters squarely in the face. While there is celebration, this is not a celebratory volume. And while there is optimism, this is not a Pollyanna bromide. Annette Atkins, for example, offers readers the telling stories of people whose lives and choices show “complicated and conflicting truths.” Joseph Amato and Anthony Amato consider the imagined as well as the real, the possibility that Minnesota is “counterfeit,” a “continuous artifice.”

Thoughtful, tough-minded, yet proud, these Minnesotans write and think in a way that even a Hoosier can admire.

*Reviewed by James H. Madison, the Thomas and Kathryn Miller Professor of History at Indiana University, Bloomington. Among his books are The Indiana Way: A State History (1988) and A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America (2001).*

## Soldier, Settler, and Sioux: Fort Ridgely and the Minnesota River Valley, 1853-1867

By Paul N. Beck

(Sioux Falls, SD: Center for Western Studies, Augustana College, 2000. 199 p. Paper, \$12.95.)

**THIS IS THE FIRST DETAILED**, scholarly history of Fort Ridgely, which served as a frontier vanguard during the early settlement of Minnesota. The establishment of the fort in 1853 was an outgrowth of the Traverse des Sioux and Mendota treaties of 1851 by which the four subtribes of the Eastern Dakota Indians (sometimes called Santee Sioux) ceded their lands in Minnesota Territory and northern Iowa to the United States. Post-treaty negotiations led to the creation of two long, narrow reservations along the Minnesota River upstream and near the future site of New Ulm. The federal government started building Fort Ridgely near the easternmost end of the Lower Sioux reservation as the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute Dakota were being moved to their new home.

Fort Ridgely was intended to be a buffer between the reservation Dakota and the white-occupied sections of Minnesota to the east. This role was complicated by Minnesota Territory's land boom. By 1858 the rapidly expanding farming frontier had moved close to the reservations. The federal government's response was to coerce the Dakota into selling the northern half of both reservations. After that setback, the Dakota became increasingly distrustful of the government and settlers. Strained relations contributed to the Dakota Conflict of 1862, during which Indian forces twice assaulted Fort Ridgely.

After the rapid subjugation and expulsion of the Dakota from Minnesota, Fort Ridgely stood as the most significant base in a frontier defense line that included many settler forts. Volunteer troops maintained it, motivated by the widespread fear that hordes of Dakota warriors would emerge from the west to ravage the state. But army expeditions and the construction of new military posts in Dakota Territory soon made Fort Ridgely obsolete.

Beck ably describes Fort Ridgely's place vis-à-vis the Dakota, Indian agents, and settlers. In relating the cultural, economic, and social impact of the post, he provides much information about the Minnesota River valley frontier. Using a variety of sources including unpublished army records and manuscripts, he effectively portrays the peacetime contacts between the troops and the Indians. Likewise, he covers the role of the garrison in policing the reservations as well as apprehending off-reservation liquor peddlers. His excellent discussion of supply and transportation contracts awarded to civilians helps promote understanding of the fort's impact on the Minnesota economy.

Regrettably, this book, which has much to offer, is marred by factual and mechanical errors that demon-

strate a certain lack of knowledge about Minnesota history and, especially, its historiography. For example, Henry H. Sibley was Minnesota Territory's first delegate to Congress and the state's first governor but was never the governor of Minnesota Territory. The Big Sioux River, which runs through eastern South Dakota, is not Minnesota's western boundary, and Fort Ripley is very close to Minnesota's geographic center—not in the northern part of the state.

Accurate citing is a vital part of any scholarly work. One might expect an infrequent error, but some in this book defy comprehension. The author mistakenly credits Lucy Leavenworth and Wilder Morris as coeditors of *Old Rail Fence Corners: Frontier Tales Told by Minnesota Pioneers*, which was edited by Lucy Leavenworth Wilder Morris. Likewise, G. Hubert Smith (his correct name) is also called G. Herbert Smith and Hubert G. Smith. Additionally, some articles attributed to *Minnesota History* were published in the *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society* and vice versa. If this book is ever reissued, the entire bibliography should be rechecked.

This study should be used with caution. Despite its limitations, however, it enhances understanding of the army's role on the Minnesota frontier.

*Reviewed by William E. Lass, a professor of history at Minnesota State University, Mankato. His many writings on Minnesota include a second edition of Minnesota: A History (1998).*

## The Kensington Runestone: Its Place in History

By Thomas E. Reiersgord

(St. Paul: Pogo Press, 2001. 219 p. Paper, \$17.95.)

This lively book will be provocative reading for anyone interested in the Kensington Runestone. For the uninitiated: In 1898 Olof Ohman found the buried stone tangled in the roots of an aspen tree on his farm near Kensington in north-central Minnesota. Symbols chiseled into the face of the stone were eventually determined to be runes, which are usually translated: "We are 8 goths and 22 northmen on an exploration journey westward from vinland. We had our camp by 2 rocky islets one day's journey north of this stone. We were out fishing one day. When we came home we found 10 men red with blood and dead. AVM save us from evil. We have 10 men by the sea to look after our ships. Year 1362."

Reiersgord, a lawyer and independent scholar, believes this inscription is authentic, and he has a radically new interpretation of its origins and significance. If he is right, the stone is evidence of contact between Nordic Europeans and North Americans before Columbus and of the ensuing influences on Indian population size, language, religious practices, and political arrangements.

Reiersgord draws evidence from many fields of study, including history, archaeology, ethnohistory, geology, biochemistry, and the Norse sagas. He also goes beyond direct evidence to proximities, possibilities, and coincidences to offer imaginative hypotheses. For several philosophers of science (whom he does not mention) this is a legitimate step in scientific theorizing. In reviewing Reiersgord's book, I have suspended judgment about his theory and the stone's authenticity. Given space constraints and the many specialized disciplines the author invokes, what follows is a necessarily simplified, straightforward sketch of many of the theory's main points.

First, about the stone itself: Reiersgord asserts that it was carved on an island in Knife Lake, 18 miles southeast of Lake Mille Lacs in central Minnesota—not near Kensington. The stone is a slab of graywacke, which is not found in the Kensington area but is plentiful near Mille Lacs. It was carved by Roman Catholic monks of the Cistercian order from Gotland, an island in the Baltic Sea—not by Vikings. "Goths" and "northmen" are not synonymous with "Swedes" and "Norwegians." Vinland is the island now known as Anticosti Island in the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. The northmen migrated there from Greenland in about 1348, and the monks, who left Europe to escape plague, famine, and religious persecution, settled there later.

The monks probably hired the northmen for a journey of exploration. They sailed and portaged west, eventually leaving their ships on the south shore of Lake Superior. They then followed the network of rivers to Knife Lake, where they met Dakota Indians who guided them to Mille Lacs. On going ashore after fishing, they found the ten dead men referred to in the inscription. Back at their main camp at Knife Lake, the monks carved the stone.

Then, the monks probably read the inscription aloud, which to the Dakota would mean the stone was talking. This, perhaps, contributed to the beginning of Dakota stone worship. The runestone, in particular, was venerated by the Dakota; they cared for it until the 1840s, when they reverently buried it near present-day Kensington.

Gifts of steel cutting tools and the runestone itself probably explain the frequency of Dakota words based on "isan"—"knife" or "cut stone." The monks also gave the Dakota a pipe as a gift from the Virgin Mary, who thus took her place in Dakota history as White Buffalo Woman. Reiersgord also believes that Father Hennepin's accounts of his 1680 travels show evidence of the Kensington Runestone's influence on Indians, such as their prodigious weeping, characteristic of Cistercian prayers.

Reiersgord posits that the blood mentioned in the inscription signifies one or more forms of bubonic plague; thus, the runestone shows that the dread disease was in North America in the fourteenth century. This fact could explain the disappearance of the city of Cahokia and the unexpectedly small population found in North America by early Euro-American settlers.

The artifacts in the "Beardmore Find" (Ontario, Canada) may be from the burial of one of the exploration party who died on the return trip to the community of Europeans in Vinland. Reiersgord believes these Europeans were the Mundua people, who, joined by local Indians fleeing plague, became the Marten clan of the Ojibwe. The clan's descendants still have European features, and some live in the Vineland community near Mille Lacs. (A 1998 study at Emory University showed that 25 percent of the Ojibwe population of the Great Lakes region "carry Mitochondrial DNA markers revealing significant European pre-Columbian contact through the maternal line.")

Reiersgord further believes that other early European influences can be found in the rituals of the Ojibwe Midewiwin (Grand Medicine) Society and in their strategic reasons for expelling the Dakota from the Mille Lacs area in about 1750. He also holds that the Peterborough Petroglyphs support his theory. Found in 1954 near Peterborough, Ontario (900 to 1400 C.E.), these 900 carved figures include 14 of canoes or boats that look like Viking sailing ships. When Jonathan Carver referred to "heiroglyphicks" in his journal of 1767, it is possible that he was talking about the Kensington Runestone, as well.

As Reiersgord states, his theory suggests lines of research for more direct evidence. No doubt his book will inspire criticism and debate, which, let us hope, will generate more light than heat. One helpful thing that critics and supporters alike could do is to make sure their findings and arguments about an opponent's position apply unambiguously to that position and not to their own version of it. To that end, they should state an opponent's position as clearly, evenhandedly, and systematically as possible—and even try to strengthen it.

*Reviewed by James Smith, who edited the Minnesota Historical Society's Roots magazine from 1987 to 1993, the final issue of which was "Vikings in Minnesota: A Controversial Legacy." He has a master's degree in the philosophy of science from the London School of Economics and did graduate studies in philosophy at the University of Minnesota. He retired from the Society in 2000.*

## **Fishing the Great Lakes: An Environmental History, 1783–1933**

*By Margaret Beattie Bogue*

(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000. 444 p. Cloth, \$65.00; paper, \$27.95.)

*Fishing the Great Lakes* is an ambitious book, attempting to cover commercial fishing and the related environmental history of the Great Lakes. It is well written, copiously footnoted, and well indexed. Retired history professor Margaret Bogue seeks to provide an overview of commer-

cial fishing and its impact on four important species: whitefish, lake trout, lake herring, and lake sturgeon. The book describes how “the two national governments could not reconcile the basic conflict between advocates of long-term conservative use of Great Lake fish and proponents of immediate use for short-term economic gain.” This story is readily identifiable in other contexts of natural-resource use.

*Fishing the Great Lakes* pays particularly close attention to the political battles between the fishers and those advocating greater regulation, the economic influence of early fishers and large fish dealers, and the difference between Canadian and American fishing policies. Indeed, the assumption of regulatory fish policies by the eight states on the Great Lakes and the Province of Ontario virtually insured that there would be a lack of uniformity in length of fishing season, allowable technology such as type and size of nets, and licensing.

The book’s main argument is that a pattern of overfishing repeated itself as fishers moved from the East Coast to the Great Lakes. Fish are particularly vulnerable to overexploitation because they are a “free resource,” unlike resources such as land and timber that are quickly owned and whose use is thus allocated through ownership. Here, Bogue deftly shies away from the jargon of environmental-history theory about the “tragedy of the commons” in which resources held in common (such as fish) invariably are overexploited with tragic consequences. Bogue does not solely blame fishers, their economic dilemma, or the failure of regulatory systems for the diminishment of fish populations. She convincingly demonstrates how early industrial pollution, timber production (especially sawdust settling on spawning grounds), land-use changes (particularly agriculture), and the rise of large cities greatly impacted water quality and fish productivity.

A broad environmental history such as *Fishing the Great Lakes* must inherently be selective in its focus. Ironically, though, it shows limited biological sophistication in its arguments. For example, it does not differentiate between “fat lake trout” or siskiwits and “lean lake trout,” an important distinction to biologists, most diners in this century, and sportsmen. Further, there is very little discussion about the physical and biological differences between the

lakes, their relative productivity, or the effects of the basin’s 20 smaller eco-regions.

Dr. Bogue’s overfishing argument remains very generalized. In the case of the extinction of Atlantic salmon in Lake Ontario or the near-extinction of lake sturgeon, the argument is self-evident. However, in other locations and time periods the issue of overfishing needs to be better explored. For example, the claim of overfishing should be both measurable and biologically articulated. It should, for instance, include a measure of the amount of fish that might be removed from a lake before a downward spiral in fishery reproduction begins.

*Fishing the Great Lakes* has comparatively little to say about fishing on the North Shore of Lake Superior. Indeed, the author did not consult the detailed work of Dr. Matti Kaups that appears in *Minnesota History* and in other journals. Nor is there much discussion of the “disappearance” of the legendary bluefin, once an important market fish on the North Shore. Also missing is the particular story of fishing with comparatively small boats and two-man crews, the region’s comparatively delayed settlement, and the role of early fishing as an important source of cash for Norwegian American fishers.

One of the book’s most insightful discussions focuses on A. Booth and Sons, a Chicago-based company that sought to become a monopolistic fish dealer for most of the Great Lakes. Booth and Sons had a tremendous impact on Minnesota’s North Shore and Ontario’s Thunder Bay fishing because it was the region’s primary fish dealer from the 1890s until its vessel *America* sank off Isle Royale in 1928. Bogue provides a larger context to understand Booth and Sons’ influence and nationwide scope, which affected what happened on Minnesota’s North Shore.

Readers wanting a readable overview of early commercial fishing on the Great Lakes will like this book. Its attempted synthesis of the early commercial-fishing history of all the Great Lakes is its strength and weakness. Those wishing a more nuanced coverage of, say, fishing the North Shore or a more biologically enriched argument will be disappointed.

*Reviewed by Tim Cochrane, superintendent of Grand Portage National Monument. He is co-author of A Good Boat Speaks for Itself: Isle Royale Fishermen and Their Boats (2002).*

## NEWS & NOTES

PATTY DEAN'S article, "‘It Is Here We Live’: Minneapolis Homes and the Arts and Crafts Movement," published in the Spring 2001 issue of this magazine, has won the David Stanley Gebhard Award for the best article on an historical aspect of Minnesota's built environment. Given by the Minnesota chapter of the Society for Architectural Historians, the award considered articles published between July 1999 and June 2001. Dean, whose article "PunkFunkRockPop" appears in this issue of *Minnesota History*, is supervisory curator in the museum collections department of the Minnesota Historical Society.

SEEMINGLY UNRELATED cultures and places inform Rachel Buff's look at the meaning of home and citizenship in *Immigration and the Political Economy of Home: West Indian Brooklyn and American Indian Minneapolis, 1945–1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, cloth, \$48.00, paper, \$18.95). Through the lens of public festivals—West Indian American Day Carnival in Brooklyn and powwows in Minneapolis—Buff examines the meanings and implications of citizenship and what she calls "denizenship": the ways in which inhabiting a place lead people to make claims on it. Powwows, for example, are analyzed as events wherein Native participants build and display identity and define or construct a sense of home away from their ancestral lands. Beyond the two groups that are its basis, the book comments insightfully on identity building and the nature of metropolitan culture in post-war America.

MORE THAN the story of men in a particular regiment, *A Perfect Picture of Hell: Eyewitness Accounts by Civil War Prisoners from the 12<sup>th</sup> Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001, 337 p., cloth, \$42.95, paper, \$19.95) paints a grim

picture of conditions in southern military prisons as the war dragged on and the Confederacy grew increasingly weak. Between April 1862 and July 1864, the men of the 12<sup>th</sup> were captured at Shiloh, Corinth, Jackson, and Tupelo and were incarcerated in nearly every famous southern prison, including Andersonville, Libby, Belle Isle, Macon, and Cahaba. Editors Ted Genoways and Hugh H. Genoways succinctly introduce and annotate accounts from letters, diaries, speeches, newspaper articles, and memoirs, pointing out the difference in tone and content between letters home and to official sources or between prison diaries and reminiscences composed many years later. Arranged chronologically, the accounts chart not only degenerating conditions in the prisons but also changing attitudes, as old soldiers sought to preserve the sectional harmony that evolved many years after the war.

A NEW EDITION of *Saving the River: St. Croix River Association, 1911–2001* (St. Paul: The Association, 2001, 72 p., paper, \$15) not only updates the earlier edition, published in 1986, but also adds newly found material to the first history of this nonprofit, nonpolitical community organization. Eminent area historian Helen McCann White, steeped in the history of the St. Croix valley, has brought the book up to date with discussions of such late-twentieth-century topics as the invasion of zebra mussels, the Stillwater-Houlton bridge controversy, no-wake zones, and prospective gas pipelines. She also fleshed out veteran author James Taylor Dunn's original story with new material from the association's minute book (1928–1951) that surfaced after the first edition had been published. This attractively designed, handsomely illustrated new volume is a fitting testament to the association that for 90

years has affirmed a commitment "to save for our children the uses and beauties of our river and valley."

BEAUTIFUL to look at, *Joel E. Whitney, Minnesota's Leading Pioneer Photographer: Catalog of Cartes de Visite* is also informative to read and a priceless tool for research. Compiled and published in 2001 by the Minnesota Historical Photo Collectors Group, this 130-page, large-format paperback presents 350 images from various collections grouped by subjects as specific as "Indians, Sioux," St. Paul, and Suspension Bridge, or as general as geological features, river scenes, and northern Minnesota. Each carte de visite, a playing-card-sized photo that became extremely popular in the 1860s because consumers could afford to buy multiple copies, is reproduced at actual size. Bonnie Wilson and Alan Woolworth's brief history of Whitney and his business introduce the volume, and Curtis Dahlin's "Backmark Analysis and Establishment of a Timeline," followed by pertinent illustrations, shows how patient sleuthing and analysis provide invaluable historical information.

A data table gathers all of the important information in one place, and an index makes the attractive book even easier to use. Printed in a limited edition, the book can be purchased for \$25 at the MHS museum store or from Kramer Gallery, 800 LaSalle Avenue, Suite 240, Minneapolis 55402; (612) 338-2911.

"THIS IS the story of a fight," begins Stephen J. Gross's article, "The Battle over the Cold Spring Dam: Farm-Village Conflicts and Contested Identity among Rural German Americans," published in the Fall 2001 issue of the *Journal of American Ethnic History*. In it, Gross explores the disagreements in one thoroughly German area of central



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Minnesota between “a group of area farmers and a clique of young and ambitious merchants from Cold Spring.” Gross, who teaches history at the University of Minnesota, Morris, based this well-researched piece of rural and ethnic history on his dissertation, “Family, Property, Community: Class and Identity among German Americans in Rural Stearns County, Minnesota, 1860-1920” (University of Minnesota, 1995). A copy of the article is in the MHS library.

TWO HIGHWAY COMPANIONS will interest armchair and actual travelers. *Wisconsin Travel Companion: A Guide to History Along Wisconsin’s Highways* (328 p., paper, \$19.95) by Richard Olsenius and Judy A. Zerby is a handsome reissue that organizes a wealth of historical photos and information by route number (e.g., I-94 from the Illinois border to Hudson or Route 14 from Madison to La Crosse). *Minnesota Marvels: Roadside Attractions in the Land of Lakes* (336 p., paper, \$15.95) by Eric Dregni offers a personal guide to offbeat and bizarre monuments including fiberglass statues (Frazee’s World’s Largest Turkey), unusual museums (Kellogg’s Lark Toy Museum), and celebrations (Waterville’s Bullhead Days). Both 2001 books are from the University of Minnesota Press.

WISCONSIN INDIAN history is the focus of Patty Loew’s *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001, 148 p., cloth, \$39.95, paper, \$21.95). Short chapters trace the history of the state’s Ho-Chunk, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Oneida, and other tribes to the present day.

Mark Diedrich’s *Ho-Chunk Chiefs: Winnebago Leadership in an Era of Crisis* (Rochester: Coyote Books, 2001, 200 p., paper, \$29.95) examines in depth what is known about the Wisconsin group’s most famous leaders and leader families from the 1700s through the late 1800s. Included are essays on the Caramanis, the Decoras, the Winnebago Prophet, Red Bird, Dandy, Yellow Thunder, Winneshiek, Little Priest, and Little Hill.

*HARDWOOD HEROES—Celebrating a Century of Minnesota Basketball* (Minneapolis: Nodin Press, 2001, 216 p., cloth, \$24.95) by Ross Bernstein looks at teams from the Minneapolis Lakers to the Timberwolves and from the Lynx to the Gophers. More than 500 pictures and a wealth of stories and anecdotes will entertain readers interested in the individual players and teams of bygone days.

## STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

Publication title, *Minnesota History*; publication number, 0035-1660; filing date, September 20, 2001; frequency, quarterly; no. of issues published annually, 4; annual subscription price, \$20.00 or \$45.00 with membership in the Minnesota Historical Society; publisher, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906; editor, Marilyn Ziebarth, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906; managing editor, Anne R. Kaplan, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906; owner, Minnesota Historical Society.

No. Copies issue nearest filing date, 18,535; paid or requested outside-county, mail subscriptions, 17,385; paid in-county subscriptions, 0; sales through dealers, carriers, counter-sales (non USPS), 508; other classes mailed USPS, 0; total paid circulation, 17,893; free distribution by mail, 47; free nonmail distribution, 75; total free distribution, 122; total distribution, 18,015; copies not distributed, 520; percent paid circulation, 99%.

Average no. copies preceding 12 months, 18,488; paid or requested outside-county mail subscriptions, 17,287; paid in-county subscriptions, 0; sales through dealers, carriers, counter sales (non USPS), 557; other classes mailed USPS, 0; total paid circulation, 17,844; free distribution by mail, 33; free nonmail distribution, 86; total free distribution, 119; total distribution, 17,963; copies not distributed, 525; percent paid circulation, 99%.



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