

Being Dakota: Tales and Traditions of the Sisseton and Wahpeton

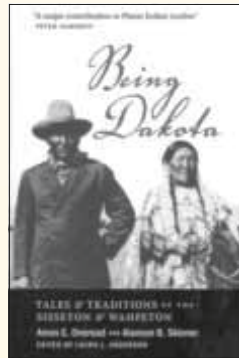
By Amos E. Oneroad and Alanson B. Skinner,
edited by Laura L. Anderson

(St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003.
215 p. Cloth, \$29.95.)

SOMETIME BEFORE 1914 a young Wahpeton Dakota man from South Dakota named Amos Oneroad walked into the American Museum of Natural History in New York, attracting the attention of museum ethnologists. Oneroad, whose Dakota name was Mahpiyasna or Jinglying Cloud, was a theology student at the Columbia University divinity school. One of the museum's assistant curators was Alanson Skinner, an ethnologist, archaeologist, and folklorist. At this time the fledgling discipline of anthropology was strongly rooted in museums. Ethnologists collected not only artifacts but other "culture traits" such as customs and folktales. One of their goals was to preserve a record of the traditional American Indian ways of life, which were believed to be rapidly disappearing. A second goal was to compare the culture traits of different tribal groups in order to reconstruct their historical relationships. Skinner had collected and compared materials from linguistically related Algonkian-speaking peoples of the Great Lakes region. He was interested in neighboring Siouan-speaking groups, such as the Dakota, in order to determine the degree to which their culture traits were influenced by the Algonkian cultures.

Oneroad began collaborating with Skinner, sharing the knowledge of pre-reservation Dakota life he had been taught by his elders. In 1914 Oneroad and Skinner traveled to the Sisseton-Wahpeton reservation, where Oneroad was able to help Skinner obtain artifacts, including religiously significant pre-reservation objects. Government policy proscribed possession and use of such relics of pagan life, so they probably would have been destroyed if not placed in museum collections.

Skinner published what he called a "sketch of Dakota ethnology," an article on the *canotidan*, or Dakota Tree Dweller, a spiritual being, and a more extensive treatment of the Wahpeton *wakan wacipi*, or Medicine Dance, the most important religious ceremonial of the Dakota, the Winnebago, and neighboring Algonkian cultures. Together Oneroad and Skinner also developed a manuscript describ-



ing Dakota culture traits, along with English versions of a substantial number of Dakota traditional stories, but Skinner's accidental death in 1925 forestalled further development and publication. Oneroad pursued his career as a Presbyterian minister among the Dakota until his death in 1937. When anthropologist Laura Anderson came across the manuscript in a California archive, she realized its value and became determined to see it published. *Being Dakota* is the fruit of her considerable efforts.

While a great deal of the ethnological information can be found in other published sources on the Dakota, this book is a valuable compilation of details about pre-reservation Dakota life. Throughout the "Traditions and Customs" section Skinner's authorship is indicated by his use of first-person pronouns, but Oneroad, who was literate in both English and Dakota, undoubtedly contributed the descriptions and Dakota names for objects, rituals, games, men's societies, social positions, and spiritual beings. Oneroad's knowledge was augmented with information collected from other Sisseton and Wahpeton Dakotas during field expeditions. Only the most elderly would have had firsthand memories of life before the 1863 removal of the Dakota from Minnesota.

The book also presents 55 Dakota stories, including 19 tales about Iktomi or Unktomi, the Dakota spider trickster. Most of them are humorous, ribald versions that would have been told only in certain social contexts. Their style reflects Oneroad's lively English oral translations. All of the stories include numerous expressions in both Dakota and English as well. A number of them relate to specific locations, and a few recount historical events. Among the most important is "The Origin of the Medicine Dance," which is central to the understanding of Dakota cosmology and ritual practice.

The publication of this manuscript, liberally annotated by the editor, makes significant pieces of the puzzle of the pre-reservation Dakota world view more readily available. None of the early academic anthropologists trained by Franz Boas at Columbia University focused on the Dakota or wrote a cultural synthesis like those that exist for other tribes. Consequently, a holistic understanding of pre-reservation Dakota culture as a world view and way of life must be reconstructed from historical texts. *Being Dakota* is an important contribution to efforts toward culturally recontextualizing Dakota beliefs and lifeways.

Reviewed by Carolyn R. Anderson, an assistant professor of anthropology at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. She is the author of a forthcoming ethnohistorical and ethnographic book on the Prairie Island Dakota community.

Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party

By Jennifer A. Delton

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. 226 p. Cloth, \$29.95.)

ON A LATE JULY AFTERNOON IN 1948, Hubert Humphrey, the young reform mayor of Minneapolis, strode to the podium of the Democratic National convention and boldly challenged his party to defy its segregationist southern wing and add a civil rights plank to the party platform. In what would prove to be the most famous speech of his storied career, Humphrey delivered the rhetorical preamble to an intra-party struggle that culminated in the landmark civil rights legislation of the 1960s: “To those who say that we are rushing this issue of civil rights—I say to them, we are 172 years late! To those who say that this bill of rights program is an infringement of states rights, I say this—the time has arrived for the Democratic party to get out of the shadow of states’ rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights.”

Why did Humphrey make this speech? Why did a rising politician from a state with an African American population of only 6,000 souls vigorously champion the cause of civil rights as mayor of Minneapolis? In her intriguing study, historian Jennifer Delton provides answers to these questions and more. Delton argues that Humphrey’s concern with civil rights was part of a larger approach to forging a modern liberal party in postwar Minnesota. In making her case, she provides insight into the bruising battle for control over the newly merged Democratic and Farmer-Labor parties, the rise of a new and more assertive leadership in Minnesota’s African American community, and the influence of emerging ideas from political science on the proper role of political parties in a modern democracy.

The year 1948 was pivotal in Minnesota politics. Four years earlier the once-powerful Farmer-Labor party had merged with the largely ineffectual Democrats to form the Democratic Farmer-Labor party. Whatever unity was present at the creation was short lived. By 1946 the left-wing Farmer-Labor faction led by former governor Elmer Benson had taken control of party machinery. In 1948 reform Democrats led by Humphrey were determined to wrest control from the Benson forces and their Communist party allies. More than individual careers were at stake. At the dawn of the Cold War, the two sides had very different visions of the role of the United States in the world and the shape of a new domestic order.



One key difference was the concept of what a political party should be. Delton describes the Farmer-Labor party as an expression of movement politics. Its class-based ideology held that the interests of the workers and farmers were in fundamental conflict with those of corporate America, and its party structure reflected that belief. Unions and farm organizations were actual affiliates of the party, much like in labor and social democratic parties in Europe.

In contrast, the Humphrey Democrats believed that a political party ought to respond to multiple economic and social “interests” rather than be the official expression of any one section of society. Influenced by the concept of political pluralism, the Humphrey group held that a modern liberal party ought to be issue- and interest-based but formally independent.

Delton presents Humphrey’s advocacy of civil rights in the context of this grand contest over ideas and power. First, Humphrey’s strong (and Delton assures us, *sincere*) support for civil rights provided the new liberals with needed credentials in the contest for the hearts and minds of progressives in the DFL. Secondly, Humphrey’s relationship with the African American community provided a living example of how interest-group politics could actually work at the political level. Finally, through bringing labor and business leaders together in the Mayor’s Commission on Human Relations, Humphrey demonstrated how modern liberal government could bring often-opposed interest groups together on an issue of shared public concern.

In weaving her story, Delton presents much that is fresh and new. She provides an illuminating account of the complex interconnections of union, party, and community politics within the African American community. Her account of the early work of the Fair Employment Commission ought to be required reading for officials who enforce today’s generation of civil and human rights laws. Her account of the genuine commitment of Republican governors Edward Thye and Luther Youngdahl to the human relations cause will remind readers that the species now referred to as “moderate Republicans” once flourished in Minnesota politics.

Delton is remarkably evenhanded in covering the factional wars within the newly created DFL. She credits the progressive contributions of the Farmer-Labor forces arrayed against the Humphrey camp and acknowledges the divisive impact of the politics of exclusion played by both sides in the struggle. In an especially important contribution, she explores resistance from old guard Democrats who preferred a more traditional patronage-based approach to party building and were reluctant to break with their southern colleagues over civil rights.

I do have some differences with Professor Delton, however, if only in emphasis. In my view she overdraws the distinction between the movement-based Farmer Labor Party and the interest-based DFL. The FLP was an uneasy amalgam of movement radicals and more traditional interest-based

leaders. The agile Farmer Labor governor, Floyd B. Olson, understood far better than his more righteous successor, Elmer Benson, that his party was at once a coalition to advance specific organizational interests and a movement to transform society. Rather than emphasize the fundamental differences between FLP and DFL it would be just as accurate to stress the continuities. Hubert Humphrey's DFL would not have been possible without Floyd B. Olson's FLP.

In this impressive work, Jennifer Delton has provided genuine insight on both the development of civil rights and the evolution of politics in Minnesota—and the nation. I highly recommend it to readers who are interested in the past and future of Minnesota's progressive tradition.

Reviewed by Tom O'Connell, a professor of political studies at Metropolitan State University, St. Paul. He is a student of Minnesota populist and Farmer-Labor movements.

The River We Have Wrought: A History of the Upper Mississippi

By John O. Anfinson

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. 365 p. Cloth, \$29.95.)

THE TITLE OF JOHN ANFINSON'S *The River We Have Wrought* is apt. It describes how a natural river was transformed, sporadically but intentionally, by human effort into a transportation waterway. Today, most people who live near the upper Mississippi (defined as the stretch between Minneapolis and St. Louis) take river navigation for granted. No one could take it for granted 150 years ago. During very low water you might walk across the river below St. Paul and keep your knees dry. For early steamboat pilots, deep water was considered to be three-and-a-half feet.

All that would change, and that is the story Anfinson tells in this well-written book. He wants to tell us "how we got to where we are today," and he succeeds quite well. It is a complex and episodic story with changing alliances. Anfinson tells us who proposed transforming the river, why they did so, who opposed them, and how all sides framed their arguments. Although this story of change is a regional one, the author shows how it played out in a much larger context. The remaking of the upper river is very much part of a narrative about national and international transportation and commerce.

The players on the stage are numerous. Anfinson does not ignore the region's American Indian inhabitants, and he relates the experiences of early explorers like Carver,

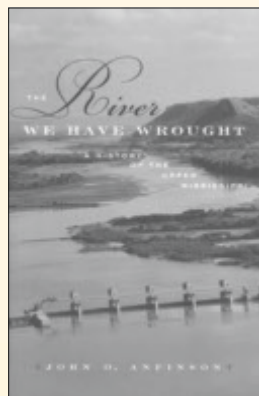
Beltrami, Pike, Schoolcraft, and others. But the main acts took place after Euro-American settlement began. One of the early actors was the Patrons of Husbandry (the Grange), a post-Civil War agricultural movement that challenged rail and agricultural elevator interests. Grangers believed that improved river transportation would create the kind of competition that would lower railroad rates for farmers. River improvements could only be accomplished by the federal government, and thus the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plays a continuous role in the story. Other federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Fisheries and Biological Survey have more recent involvement. In the story's later acts the stage is taken up by environmental organizations like the Izaak Walton League and commercial interests like the River Cities Committee.

Anfinson's detailed narrative ends in the 1940s with the completion of the nine-foot channel and the current system of locks and dams. He tells us that bringing it up to the end of the last century would "require another book or two." Even so, his epilogue describes the present situation. He wants us to understand the ongoing debate about the upper river. Current efforts to lengthen the locks might cause further change, and Anfinson feels that people who care about those changes should know more about the earlier transformations. As an historian, he comes across as evenhanded and not partisan. He knows that it not possible to take the river back to its pre-settlement condition, and he acknowledges that there is a place for the river's commercial use. But he cares greatly about the riverine ecosystem and its future.

This book demonstrates wide research and thoughtful synthesis of many sources. For the earlier chapters, Anfinson relies largely on published sources, drawing on manuscript sources such as those in the National Archives and the records of the Upper Mississippi Barge Line Company only for the later period. The notes are detailed and the book has a serviceable index.

The River We Have Wrought deserves a wide audience. It is certainly an important book for people who are active in the debate over future management of the river. It will be a useful choice for college classes in a variety of disciplines. It will also be of interest to the general reader who wants to know more about the history of how humans have altered and managed one of the world's greatest waterways.

Reviewed by Timothy Glines, who has worked for the Minnesota Historical Society for 17 years and is currently manager of outreach services in the historic preservation, field services, and grants department.



Fire & Ice: The History of the Saint Paul Winter Carnival

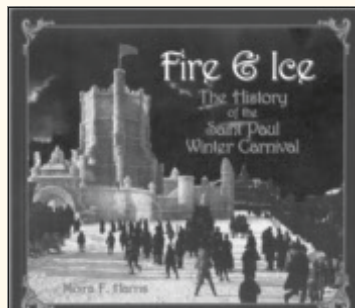
By Moira F. Harris

(St. Paul: Pogo Press, 2003. 153 p. Paper, \$19.95.)

THE ST. PAUL WINTER CARNIVAL OF 2004, with its majestic ice palace and shimmering ice sculptures, filled downtown streets with hundreds of merry-makers, infusing St. Paul's annual celebration with a vitality it hasn't seen in many a year. The treasure hunt, perennially the carnival's most popular event, kept folks chasing about city parks with rakes and shovels until the last clue was published, creating a mad dash for the coveted medallion. More than any carnival in recent memory, this year's extravaganza evoked the joyful civic celebration of years gone by. Thus, Moira Harris's history of St. Paul's beloved carnival appeared at a most timely moment. As St. Paulites hunker down to wait out the rest of the long winter, paging through this colorful volume will warm chilly hearts with memories of frozen fun.

The tradition of the carnival dates back to 1885, when St. Paul boosters, eager to dispel Minnesota's arctic reputation, set out to show the world that winter in the city was the best rather than the worst of seasons. In fits and starts, with interruptions for economic downturns and war, the legend of King Boreas, Vulcanus Rex and his crew, the parades, and a mind-boggling array of events have carried on to the present day. *Fire & Ice* is a visual treat, providing dozens of wonderful photos and drawings that once again bring to life the zest and pageantry of past carnivals. The photos alone are worth the price of the book.

Unfortunately, the text is less satisfying. Though Harris has meticulously researched each year's calendar of events,



the spirit of the carnival is curiously missing. Some of this is due to the thematic organization of the book. Discrete chapters are devoted to carnival royalty, ice sculptures and palaces, parades, carnival ephemera, and events. The narrative often seems a chronological jumble as it bounces from decade to decade and back again, leaving the reader with a catalog of facts but without a sense of the character of any particular era. As a result, when fascinating tidbits pop up they are seldom provided a cultural context. For instance, when the carnival was revived in 1916 after a 20-year hiatus, the nineteenth-century marching social clubs were replaced by business-sponsored marching units, but Harris offers no comment or explanation for this transformation. Nor is the taming of the Vulcans' antics connected to the emerging women's movement of the 1970s.

More disappointing, however, is the absence of the voices of carnival participants, the personal stories that capture the excitement and fun of the celebration. Harris relies heavily on material from carnival organizers. Only rarely do reminiscences or anecdotes appear either from those who played roles in the pageant or from ordinary revelers. This is a surprising omission since sources are abundant: Every treasure hunter has a story (the carnival equivalent of "the one that got away"); numerous former queens, kings, and Vulcans are readily accessible; and the Minnesota Historical Society has a wealth of diaries, letters, and other material dating back to the carnival's origin. A few of these anecdotes from ordinary citizens would go far in summoning the dash and vitality of the carnival spirit.

Nonetheless, *Fire & Ice* is a useful resource for facts about the history of the carnival, and its visuals provide a delightful glimpse at the spectacles St. Paulites created to celebrate the glories of our northern winter. It may even induce readers to venture outdoors before the seasons change.

Reviewed by Mary Lethert Wingerd, a historical consultant and the author of Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul.

■ The stature of a contemporary Minnesotan as one of the world's leading painters is richly documented in *James Rosenquist: A Retrospective* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2003) by Walter Hopps and Sarah Bancroft. The oversize book outlines Rosenquist's Minnesota experiences as fundamental to his artistic growth: his Minneapolis boyhood, work as a billboard painter across the Midwest, studies with Cameron Booth at the University of Minnesota, and his departure, at Booth's behest, for New York and Pop Art fame. In addition to 271 superb color plates, the book includes period photographs covering all aspects of Rosenquist's 50-year career. —*Thomas O'Sullivan*

■ An illustrated history of the Blake School (the former Blake, Northrop, and Highcroft schools) tells the 100-year story of these small Minneapolis-area institutions. *Expecting Good Things of All* (Minneapolis, Hopkins, and Wayzata: The Blake School, 2002, 250 p., cloth, \$65, paper, \$40) by Janet Woolman digs deeply into the prep schools' archives and examines issues that confronted the institutions as the world around them changed. Hundreds of photos and a wealth of ephemera make the volume enjoyable browsing, while readable text looks at topics ranging from the need for evolving curriculum and diversity to the expelling of a student with long hair in the 1960s. Order from the school's website: www.blakeschool.org.

■ Iconic, red-jacketed Mounties get their due in Karal Ann Marling's *Looking North: Royal Canadian Mounted Police Illustrations* (Afton: Afton Historical Society Press, 2003, cloth, \$35.00, paper, \$27.95). Reproduced are more than 100 illustrations commissioned between 1931 and 1970 by the Northwest Paper Company of Cloquet to boost sales during the Great Depression. Marling's always lively text explores how the Mountie advertising campaign demonstrated the high quality of Northwest's paper. Not incidentally, it also played upon nostalgia for the vanishing wilderness and manly

virtues as Americans increasingly settled into suburban lives. The original paintings by 16 well-known commercial illustrators including Arnold Friberg are now at the Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota, Duluth.

■ Minneapolis civil rights leader Harry Davis—a polio survivor, amateur boxing coach, churchman, banker, Urban Coalition founder, school board member, and Minneapolis's first black mayoral candidate—has helped transform life in Minneapolis and the nation. Two books from Afton Press focus on this remarkable bridge-builder and rely on his own engaging and humble words. *Overcoming: The Autobiography of W. Harry Davis* (2002, 312 p., cloth, \$28.00), edited by Lori Sturdevant, tells a fascinating story of one man's determination to overcome poverty and make a difference in the lives of the people of his city. Familiar figures ranging from Hubert H. Humphrey to the musician Prince people his account.

Changemaker: W. Harry Davis (2003, 136 p., paper, \$17.95), also edited by Sturdevant, is a book for young readers (age 10 and older) about Davis and an account of the civil rights movement in Minnesota. It focuses on his diverse family, the hardships of his youth, the boxing program that brought him to local prominence, and his role in breaking down racial barriers in politics and in the city's public schools. Many photographs enrich each book.

■ The Beaux Arts mural movement is the focus of Bailey Van Hook's *The Virgin and the Dynamo: Public Murals in American Architecture, 1893–1917* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003, 240 p., cloth, \$44.95). Influenced by the City Beautiful movement, young European-trained architects and artists determined to make American art more thematically cosmopolitan and technically accomplished. Cass Gilbert's Minnesota state capitol, a Beaux Arts showcase for accomplished muralists including Edwin Blashfield and John La Farge, receives particular discussion. The author illuminates the unique energy of the movement

and how its ideals of classicism and decorative harmony were eventually found outmoded and pedantic by a new generation of muralists.

■ The Menominee have lived in the region now called Wisconsin longer than anyone else. *Siege and Survival: History of the Menominee Indians, 1634–1856* by David R. M. Beck (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002, 280 p., cloth, \$49.95) draws on interviews with tribal members, stories recorded by earlier researchers, and deep archival research to give a full account of the Menominee's early history until the time they were confined to a reservation. Beck examines events from an ethnohistorical perspective and shows how numerous individuals and leaders in the trading era and later worked to survive, some by encouraging radical cultural change while others advocated maintaining traditions.

■ Winona's Republican congressman James A. Tawney plays a significant role in Michael L. Bromley's *William Howard Taft and the First Motoring Presidency, 1909–1913* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2003, 447 p., hardcover, \$49.95). Powerful chair of the House appropriations committee, Tawney had been at loggerheads with Theodore Roosevelt and thus welcomed Taft to the presidency. Tawney supported Taft's plan to take a 13,000-mile road trip (with a quick stop in Winona) to introduce himself to America. In office, Taft acquired a car, built the first White House garage in 1909, and supported development of the automobile industry as a potentially great source of national wealth. Tawney worked closely with Taft to advance budget cutting and government efficiency.

■ A new illustrated history tells the story of the devastating 1918 fall forest fires that swept through northeastern Minnesota's St. Louis, Pine, and Carlton counties, including the towns of Cloquet, Duluth, Moose Lake, Kettle River, and Automba. Christine Skalko and Marlene Wisuri's *Fire Storm: The Great Fires of 1918* (Cloquet: Carlton County Historical Society,

2003, 128 p., paper, \$18.00), which is suitable for young readers and up, features many photographs, maps, newspaper articles, and fascinating first-person accounts of escaping the blaze. The fires remain the state's worst disaster in terms of lives lost (453 with another 106 succumbing to flu and pneumonia) and property destroyed (three dozen towns and 1,500 square miles). Because the nation was struggling with the influenza pandemic, the refugees received scant organized aid. Order from the Carlton County Historical Society by phoning 1-218-879-1938.

■ Plans to reroute Highway 55 through a south Minneapolis neighborhood in 1998 brought neighborhood residents, environmental activists, preservationists, and law enforcement officers face to face in a standoff that lasted for more than a year. Contentious issues—including the claim that the area was historically significant and sacred to the Dakota—motivated the diverse group to protest,

drawing much more than local attention to the conflict. In *Our Way or the Highway: Inside the Minnehaha Free State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, 231 p., paper, \$16.95) Mary Losure, an environmental reporter for Minnesota Public Radio, explores the roots and implications of the protest as she chronicles its progress. The book is a sympathetic and reasoned look at the issues and, beyond them, the power and nature of citizen activism.

■ *Chinese in Minnesota*, the latest in MHS Press's People of Minnesota series (St. Paul, 2004, 102 p., paper, \$13.95) spans more than a century of migration, settlement, and achievement. Updating an essay by Sarah Mason published some 20 years ago, author Sherri Gebert Fuller has added much valuable information about the past as well as the contemporary era. Especially compelling are the voices and personal experiences of a wide range of Chinese Minnesotans.

■ Readers intrigued by the events of this summer's commemoration of the Grand Excursion of 1854 may also enjoy the 2003 reprint of Walter Havinghurst's 1964 book, *Voices on the River: The Story of the Mississippi Waterways* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, 309 p., paper, \$15.95). The lively volume sweeps through two centuries of river history and lore, covering, among its topics, the displacement of Native Americans, famous steamboats and their pilots, passengers and roustabouts, speed races, boating disasters, changes to the river's channels, commerce, adventurers, and immigrants. Also included in this illustrated chronicle are the mighty river's two main tributaries, the Ohio and the Missouri.

■ Robert F. Boszhardt's *A Projectile Point Guide for the Upper Mississippi River Valley* is a useful reference tool, meant for "avocational" archaeologists and professionals alike. The well-indexed 91-page paperback (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003, \$14.95) includes drawings by the author along with descriptions, alternate names, and distribution ranges for the points, which are arranged in chronological chapters. The guide covers the area stretching roughly from Rock Island-Moline to the Falls of St. Anthony.

■ *Florence: The True Story of a Country Schoolteacher in Minnesota and North Dakota* by Audrey K. Wendland (self-published, 2003, 335 p., paper, \$15.00) relates the hard work and rewards of her mother, who worked in a variety of ungraded schools between 1912 and 1918. The close author-subject relationship allows Wendland to infuse her story with vivid detail, making the book a lively portrait of a vanished era. Order from www.awendland.com or from the author at 400 Bay Drive #1013, Niceville, FL 32578; include \$4.50 for shipping and handling.

MINNESOTA HISTORY

Publisher, *Gregory M. Britton*; Managing Editor, *Anne R. Kaplan*; Editor, *Marilyn Ziebarth*; Design and Production, *Percolator*

Minnesota History is published quarterly and copyright 2004 by the Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. West, St. Paul, MN 55102-1906; www.mnhs.org. Membership in the Society includes a subscription to *Minnesota History*. Basic individual memberships are \$55.00; for information, write the Membership Office at the address above or at membership@mnhs.org. Subscriptions to *Minnesota History* are \$20.00 per year. Back issues are \$5.00 each plus tax and \$2.75 postage; add 50¢ for each additional copy. Magazine text is available in alternative format from the editor.

Minnesota History welcomes the submission of articles and edited documents dealing with the social economic, political, intellectual, and cultural history of the state and the surrounding region. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

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Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN. Postmaster: Send address changes to Membership Office, 345 Kellogg Blvd. West, St. Paul, MN 55102-1906. Publication number 351660.

Printed on recycled paper with soy ink.



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