

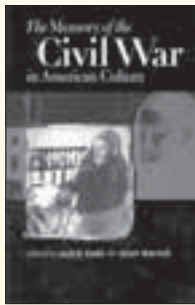
The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture

Edited by Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. 286 p. Cloth \$59.95; paper \$19.95.)

THE CIVIL WAR HAS HAD AN ENDURING PRESENCE in American society. Remembrance of the conflict, starting with memoirs, histories, and popular fiction published in the years immediately after it, has continued through observances, historic preservation, reenactments, movies, televised documentaries, and other commemorations. For the generation that lived through the Civil War, personal memories provided inspiration to sustain or challenge publicly its consequences in American society. Subsequent generations often invoked, created, and manipulated popular memories and perceptions to promote political, social, or cultural agendas.

With their collection of ten short, well-written, scholarly studies, Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh convey in broad and narrow slices how memory of the Civil War has influenced American culture and politics. Waugh explains how President Ulysses S. Grant wrote his memoirs to counteract the post-Reconstruction era trend to discount the prowess of Union armies and disregard the North's war aims of securing civil rights for African Americans. Gary W. Gallagher reviews the efforts of southern writers to exalt the generalship of Robert E. Lee and to perpetuate the Lost Cause interpretation of the war: that the South's superiority in righteousness and military leadership succumbed to the North's superiority in material resources. James M. McPherson relates how officials in southern states, abetted by northern indifference, imposed a pro-South portrayal of the Civil War in textbooks that shaped perceptions of school children in the region and elsewhere for generations. Fahs analyzes how the tone of children's literature shifted over time from righteousness of the Northern cause to moral equivalency of both sides. David W. Blight traces the origins of Memorial Day to three distinct sources—African Americans, northern whites, and southern whites—each commemorating a different tradition and purpose. Thomas J. Brown provides an account of unheralded efforts by women's groups in Charleston to build a monument to John C. Calhoun, the South Carolinian whose arguments for states' rights provided the intellectual basis for secession. J. Matthew Gallman recounts the story of Anna Dickinson, a prominent advocate of civil rights for African Americans and women, who broke ranks with the Republican Party in 1872 to support Horace



Greeley for president against Grant. Patrick J. Kelly analyzes how the Republican Party in the presidential election of 1896 redefined the legacy of the Civil War primarily in terms of national unity rather than civil rights, thereby acquiescing to the establishment of racial segregation and second-class citizenship for African Americans. LeeAnn Whites uses the history of a Confederate marker on a university campus to demonstrate how the nature and purpose of memorials to the war have changed with shifts in fortune of certain groups in American society. Jon Wiener writes how the imperative of national unity during the Cold War led to a de-emphasis of the fundamental conflict over slavery and civil rights during the Civil War centennial commemoration.

Minnesotans have a noteworthy place in two of the essays. Kelly's piece on the election of 1896 features the efforts of Archbishop John Ireland and James J. Hill to support William McKinley for president. Blight's piece on Memorial Day cites the views of several Minnesotans on the observance. Absence of geographic references in the index, unfortunately, make place-related entries difficult to locate.

In the book's epilogue, Stuart McConnell discusses memory as an approach to understanding the meaning of the Civil War and other historic events. Memory, he contends, is what an historic event means to individuals through their own expressions and acts of commemoration, not what an event means to intermediaries such as the popular media or scholars. The study of memory, therefore, is highly democratic. Unalloyed memory, however, can contain inaccuracies, distortions, and myths. Insights from studying it are insights about the people who hold the memories rather than insights about events themselves. If anything, studying memory of the Civil War underscores the imperative for scholarship that seeks accuracy, clarity, and truth about the conflict and its meaning.

Reviewed by Mitchell Rubinstein, St. Paul, who holds a Ph.D. in history and is secretary-treasurer of the Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable.

Handling the Sick: The Women of St. Luke's and the Nature of Nursing, 1892–1937

By Tom Olson and Eileen Walsh

(Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004. 225 p. Cloth, \$49.95; CD, \$9.95.)

MORE THAN 838 WOMEN CAME with “two or three gingham dresses” to St. Luke's Hospital Training School for Nurses in St. Paul between its opening in 1892 and its demise in 1937.

Founded in 1857, St. Luke's was a typical church-affiliated general medical and surgical hospital whose history spanned a century of significant change in both the city and in medicine. Like most hospitals of its time, St. Luke's established a three-year training program to keep its wards staffed with "apprentice nurses." It is St. Luke's very ordinariness—and its rich records held by the Minnesota Historical Society—that motivated nursing professor Tom Olson to examine the historical nature of nursing through the experiences of the women who trained at St. Luke's.



Olson and historian Eileen Walsh argue that the historical roots of nursing lie as much in the craft tradition of manual skill acquired through apprenticeship as in the story of professionalization based on rising educational standards. This book explores the relatively neglected history of "average nurses," the vast majority of whom graduated from hospital training programs as opposed to university baccalaureate-degree programs. Application letters and admission decisions demonstrate that St. Luke's students were chosen for their common sense, practicality, moral character, and physical fortitude more than for any educational qualifications. The young women came from rural and skilled working-class backgrounds, and many had been employed previously in one of the limited skilled occupations open to women, such as dressmaking. They shared an implicit consensus with their instructors about the qualities of hard work, sense, and attention to detail necessary for nursing. Even as "theory" and classroom education took on new weight in the accreditation of training schools after the 1920s, St. Luke's program continued to emphasize the hours spent mastering practical procedures and measured the quality of the apprentice as a "good nurse" by the "finished appearance" of her work, her patients, and her ward. The women's pride in their skill comes out in the reports of nursing supervisors, the nurses' letters to the school, and the handful of oral histories Olson gathered.

The best parts of this book are the places where the voices of the women themselves emerge. We are offered a picture of women who wore their hair unbobbed as a sign of their good moral character and lack of flightiness. They came as independent women by horse and sled, train, and streetcar to the doors of St. Luke's. Some quit in a huff, while others were forced to leave school to care for sick family members. Some were seen smoking with men in drugstores and reprimanded, some reveled in praise from their patients and supervisors, and some died in epidemics of typhoid and influenza as a result of their work. More than one-third

of the women who entered St. Luke's dropped out, many due to the physical demands of the work or to inability to master the practical aspects of nursing. The authors found that St. Luke's was not quick to dismiss students for minor infractions of its strict regulations, but did so more often for substantive problems such as out-of-wedlock pregnancy or mistakes that endangered patients' lives.

This book should be seen in the context of ongoing debates about the past and future of nursing. Health-care policymakers, hospital-trained nurses, and academic nurse leaders continue to wrangle over the knowledge, skills, and academic qualifications necessary to become a nurse. The language of training versus education and of handling and controlling patients versus caring and nurturing reflects the authors' belief in the historical roots and continued importance of the craft nature of nursing. They present a corrective to what they perceive to be the traditional historiography of nursing as a story of hardship, exploitation, female essentialism, and constant struggle for professional status. Instead, they offer a well-documented, representative account that places more emphasis on the benefits and opportunities of hospital training for women and their satisfaction and pride in the practical skills they acquired. These two stories are not mutually exclusive. Unfortunately, in the process of refuting the historiography, Olson and Walsh occasionally make straw men and simultaneously distract the reader's attention from the stories of the extraordinary, average women who became skilled nurses at St. Luke's.

Reviewed by Jennifer Gunn, Ph.D., assistant professor of the history of medicine at the University of Minnesota who is writing a book on the history of rural medical practice and health in the Upper Midwest, 1900-1950. She asks readers with family diaries, memoirs, or records related to this topic to contact her at gunnax005@umn.edu or 612-624-1909.

Currents of Change: Art and Life Along the Mississippi River 1850-1861

By Jason T. Busch, Christopher Monkhouse, and Janet L. Whitmore

(Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2004. 190 p. Paper, \$34.95.)

Published as the catalog to an exhibition that gathered spectacular objects and artworks from the length of the Mississippi at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, *Currents of Change* bears the burden of re-



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ducing the nonlinear, unruly experience of exhibit-going to the confines of a book. Its three essays deliver mixed results.

Janet L. Whitmore's opening essay on landscape painting frames the catalog with concise remarks on historical issues bearing on the artists' presence and pictures. "This river mythology was founded on issues of water management," she notes in linking artistic renderings to the Corps of Engineers' 1850–61 Delta Survey, made with flood control in mind. But this kind of insight quickly gives way to commonplaces (the frontier, romanticism, commerce) as catch-alls for varied artworks.

Whitmore's pronouncements pass unhindered by contrary evidence found in the very images under discussion. In *Prairie Opposite Nauvoo* by Seth Eastman (whom she identifies as a "topographical engineer"), she sees "a trackless expanse of space" despite the prominence of a broad path, complete with wagon ruts, and three fenced fields with adjacent cabins. Identifying S. Holmes Andrews's painting of St. Paul as "an overview of the growing city on the west bank" betrays a disregard for Mississippi conventions that the author or editors might have fact-checked from numerous sources (including standing on the West Side bluffs to confirm the view).

Such slipshod geography prompts deeper skepticism of Whitmore's ethnographic musings. Austrian Franz Hölzlhuber's *Spring Festival of Chippewa and Winnebago Indians*, for instance, is termed "a realistic rendering of clashing cultures utilizing the Mississippi in distinctly different contexts." A less fanciful reading would disclose stock figures, crudely drawn, with a steamboat and schooner out of scale on the horizon.

The essay is oddly ambivalent on artistic matters. While Whitmore provides some formal analysis of recognized masterworks like Ferdinand Reichardt's *View of the Mississippi River* or Hippolyte Sebron's *Giant Steamboats at New Orleans*, she ignores the fact that many lesser works are awkward in perspective and clumsy in color, if not simply incompetent. This tendency to celebrate fine paintings while uncritically accepting clunkers as historical documents is a sadly familiar art-historical approach that ill serves a new publication of this material.

Jason T. Busch's wide-ranging essay on design arts and taste-making, on the other hand, brings fresh insights to the Mississippi's art history. Ostensibly a study of decorative arts, this effectively ordered essay approaches economic contexts and artistic styles with a keen eye to the people of the Mississippi valley who made, sold, purchased, and used these luxurious goods.

Busch presents the steamboat as a "floating design emporium" that epitomized river architecture, furnishings, and

subject matter even as it literally linked regions. The vessels are omnipresent in photographs and lithographs, domesticated on painted china, and engrossingly documented in an 1861 picture of a grand steamboat's interior. The author integrates portraiture with furnishings, china, and silver to treat design choices, patronage, and European influences through a sense of families rooted in places and traditions, rather than faceless generalities.

While the most notable examples are drawn from more mature centers like St. Louis and New Orleans, Minnesota is well represented by St. Paul, Hastings, and other river towns. Busch keeps within the chosen time frame to give depth to his enunciation of the 1850s as a pivotal decade on the Mississippi. A section on prewar art collecting and exhibitions along the river, seemingly extraneous at first glance, serves to illuminate not just the tastes of period and place but the nationwide interactions that would soon be ruptured.

The final essay on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and the Mississippi River by Christopher Monkhouse diverts *Currents of Change* into poetry, pop culture, and the twentieth century. Monkhouse observes that the poet's epic works *Evangeline* and *Song of Hiawatha*, with their respective Lower and Upper Mississippi locales, "helped move the center of gravity for American landscape painting away from the Hudson River and the White Mountains to points farther west." His essay uses the Mississippi less as context than as a pretext for witty flights of interpretation. Monkhouse recruits paintings and sheet music, statuary and ships, and literary Indians in a search for "national identity," an effort that is noteworthy for its departures from the Mississippi as subject or focal point. Like the great river in its antebellum state of nature, the essay runs a mile wide but often not quite deep enough for its cargo.

Despite its unevenness, *Currents of Change* is a useful addition to the Mississippi's literature. Its illustrations are masterfully reproduced. Busch's essay brings an especially keen sense of the south-north orientation of travel, taste, and goods, a point easily forgotten in the westward course of most art-historical approaches. As the twenty-first century's first treatment of themes previously documented in the St. Louis Art Museum's *Mississippi Panorama* (1950) and the Walker Art Center's *The River: Images of the Mississippi* (1976), *Currents of Change* proffers some new scholarship and freshly discovered objects while revealing the persistence of old assumptions.

Reviewed by Thomas O'Sullivan, a St. Paul curator and writer, who was formerly curator of art at the Minnesota Historical Society.

■ A hearty thank-you to all who completed the reader survey in the previous issue of *Minnesota History*. Your responses far exceeded the industry standard, both in number of surveys returned and in readers who took the time to include comments. We are now tabulating, transcribing, and analyzing the results and will keep you posted on our findings.

Meanwhile, the winner of the \$100 gift certificate to the Minnesota Historical Society museum store is E. Jean Hilfer of International Falls, who has been an MHS member for ten years. Congratulations! And, again, thanks to all for participating. It is a pleasure to have such an involved audience.

■ *Our Readers Write: Douglas Henry Daniels's article on jazzman Lester Young in Minneapolis (Fall 2004) prompted Robert E. Baker, "an old lover of jazz," to respond:*

"I enjoyed very much your article about Lester Young. I was born in 1923, so I missed his early days in the Twin Cities, but I did see him later with Basie and in New York. He was really a treat to see and hear.

"In the Fall of 1940 I was a freshman . . . and was part of a group that formed the 'University of Minnesota Boogie Woogie Club.' It was recognized by the 'U' and we had many small and not so small concerts during the following year in the brand new Student Union. Many fine local musicians and some traveling national greats joined in the fun. Among them, Rook Ganz, Harold Booker, Ira Pettiford and his little brother Oscar, Ray McKinley, Billy Maxted, Doc Evans, and on and on. It was just before World War II started, and it was a wonderful time.

"I tried to play the piano with the group and had a good time with limited ability. Others took over and kept it going for a while, but the club was doomed and ended as the war began. . . . We had so much fun with great music. . . .

"Congratulations on a fine article about a superb musician."

■ The history of Itasca County's lumbering industry is related in *Timber*

Connections: The Joyce Lumber Story by Susan Hawkinson and Warren Jewett (Grand Rapids: Bluewaters Press, 2003, 335 p., \$40 cloth, \$30 paper, \$3 shipping). Three generations of the Joyce family constructed a lumber empire in the Bigfork Valley; their business enterprises, both mill and railroad, intertwine significantly with the county's early history. Based on extensive interviews, the stories of these lumber barons as well as of local homesteaders and lumberjacks are livened with 90 illustrations and fortified with notes and bibliography. Order direct from the authors: 37679 Doan Lake Road, Grand Rapids, MN 55744; 218-327-2533.

■ For decades, Minnesota's northern wilderness was accessible only by small seaplane. In *Bush Pilots: Legends of the Old and Bold* (Cambridge, MN: Adventure Publications, Inc., 2003, 192 p., CD, paper, \$15.95), journalist Bob Cary and former pilot Jack Hautala immortalize the nifty and innovative pilots who flew the region with few or no instruments and in all types of weather. Their fierce spirit is depicted through tales of adventures, wrecks, and rescues. A companion CD contains more than a dozen new stories about bush piloting as well as fire fighting and the blowdown of 1999, the latter told by current Forest Service pilots, better described as "the young and the daring."

■ Younger readers will enjoy the story of Emma Altenberg, told in the novel *A Long Year of Silence* by Kathryn Adams Doty (Minneapolis: Edinborough Press, 2004, 197 p., paper, \$14.95). The life of 16-year-old Emma, a minister's daughter who lives in New Ulm, turns upside down when the United States enters World War I. Against a rising tide of anti-German American sentiment, she struggles through changing relationships with her parents and peers. Inspired by the author's own parents and enriched by interviews with those who lived through the period, this novel contributes to our understanding of the war and the unique challenges that faced the very German town of New Ulm.

■ Herbert S. Schell's definitive work, *History of South Dakota* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2004, 425 p., paper, \$24.95), returns in a fourth, revised edition. Long out of print, this valuable single-volume treatment traces the region's history from the earliest Native American settlers through the birth of progressive politics and residents' experiences during the world wars. The fourth edition contains new chapters covering the economic, political, and social changes after World War II as well as an updated bibliography, all contributed by John E. Miller, professor emeritus of history, South Dakota State University. To order, contact the press at 605-773-6009 or sdshspress@state.sd.us.

■ The life and times of a Swedish immigrant-turned-minister are carefully rendered in *Pioneer Missionary: Lars Petter Lundgren and Wife Alma*, compiled and written by grandson Bruce W. Anderson (Kalamazoo, MI: the author, 2004, cloth, 282 p. \$22.50 plus \$3.50 shipping). More than homage to his ancestor, the book includes information about the 12 churches in northwestern Minnesota, North Dakota, and Canada that the circuit rider organized and the 5 he reorganized between 1892 and 1923; local parishioners; landscape; living conditions; and the "Swedishness" of the region. Order from the author, 1213 Lykins Ln., Niles, MI 49120; andersbj@mindspring.com.

■ *Paddling Across the Peninsula: An Important Cross-Michigan Canoe Route During the French Regime* by Timothy J. Kent (Ossineke, MI: Silver Fox Enterprises, 2003, 63 p., paper, \$9.95) rediscovers the early water highway used for centuries by those who crossed Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Native American travelers taught French traders the passages, and between 1656 and 1744, the French recorded the routes in at least five maps, which are redrawn here. Twenty photographs with text show the author and his family recreating traditional ways of travel with birchbark canoes. Order from Silver Fox Enterprises, PO Box

176, 11504 U.S. 23 South, Ossineke, MI, 49766; include \$2.50 for shipping.

■ In *Sky Crashers: A History of the Aurora Ski Club* (Red Wing: Goodhue County Historical Society, 2003, 137 p., paper, \$12.95) Frederick L. Johnson provides the detailed story of one of the first ski groups in the United States, founded by Norwegian immigrants in 1886. From novice “ski riders” who lashed their feet to barrel staves with old harness leather to the nationally famous athletes Mikkel and Torjus Hemmestvedt, early skiers in the Upper Midwest banded together to build ski jumps and organize competitions. They also struggled with questions of professionalism, with competition with the new sport of basketball for recruits, and with their neighbors’ pronunciation

of “ski” (not “sky” or “she”). The Aurora club’s active operations had stopped by the 1950s; this book, with annotation, bibliography, and index, was commissioned after its dissolution in 2002.

■ Following the success of the best-selling *America 24/7*, a new, large-format (10" x 13") album titled *Minnesota 24/7* (New York: DK Publishing, 2004, 160 p., hardcover, \$24.95) showcases compelling color photographs taken by some 150 amateur and professional photographers. Their assignment: to capture one week in their life, their community, and their state through the viewfinders of their cameras.

Framed by an essay by the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune’s* Nick Coleman, *Minnesota 24/7* looks at Minnesotans from

Afton to Wykoff, from Blue Earth and Red Lake to the Twin Cities. Powerful and intimate photos capture accordion players and yoga students, graduation and Botox parties, urban gardening and wind farming, Red Hat women acting their age and Hmong teens primping for a prom.

Editors Rick Smolan and David Eliot Cohen released the book along with 49 similar state books on the same day in September 2004, making this the largest simultaneous publication venture launched by a trade publisher. The book was a fascinating all-digital project prompted by the fact that in 2003 digital camera sales overtook film camera sales. Book buyers may upload their own digital image to be printed on a book dust jacket that will be mailed to them.

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