

One Day for Democracy: Independence Day and the Americanization of Iron Range Immigrants

Mary Lou Nemanic

(Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007. 252 p. Cloth, \$39.95.)

In this study, Mary Lou Nemanic, an associate professor of communications, examines the distinctive character of Fourth of July celebrations on Minnesota's Iron Range. Whereas most places in the United States have historically honored the date with solemn parades and patriotic orations, Iron Range celebrations assumed a much more festive quality. Public drunkenness challenged civic oversight, while parades of costumed children (callithumpians), rowdy games, and cross-dressing clown bands created a carnivalesque atmosphere. Nemanic argues that the social inversion embodied in such activities represented a rejection of middle-class values of moderation and order. Ethnic and working-class Americans on the Iron Range used public spectacles during the Fourth of July to articulate social criticism, satire, and political parody. They saw the national holiday as a chance to forward an "alternative Americanism," thereby demonstrating resistance toward passive assimilation into Anglo-American culture.

An important aspect of Nemanic's analysis is her examination of the ways in which Fourth of July celebrations changed over time. The first chapter of the book compares Iron Range practices to those of the revolutionary war era. In Nemanic's view, this earliest recognition of the holiday and its espousal of radical principles closely match the Iron Range example. The book's remaining chapters trace the historical development of the holiday up to the present, showing that the commemoration gradually moved away from its radical roots. Even on the Iron Range, which Nemanic suggests maintained radical traditions longer because of its geographic isolation, Fourth of July celebrations eventually embraced middle-class ideologies. Nevertheless, the persistence of carnivalesque rituals there shows that mass culture did not completely subsume the local subculture. The region's population adapted mass-mediated icons and rhetoric—emphasizing consumerism, for example—to serve its own ends.

The culture of the Iron Range Fourth of July is a fascinating topic, and Nemanic has begun to elucidate its importance. She is correct in arguing that the public celebrations



fostered a regional sense of community. The Fourth of July brought together divided immigrant populations in much the same way as did union organization and civic institutions, such as schools. Residents of the region traveled between towns to participate in parades, games, and contests. In later time periods, high-school class reunions and street dances commonly occurred during the holiday. Also in later years, communities organized queen pageants that rallied the local population around a common, albeit gendered, event. The best examples of a consolidated regional identity come from recent Fourth of July celebrations. A photograph of a parade float titled "Mr. American and the Ethnics," for instance, illustrates the ways in which the region's identity is closely tied to its immigrant past.

That said, too many of the book's major contentions lack direct and convincing empirical support. Nemanic suggests in one chapter that mass media caused class interests to decline during the Great Depression. This ignores the growth of working-class movements and the popularity of leftist ideas during the 1930s, clearly seen on the Iron Range in the form of successful unionization efforts. If anything, class was more important at this time. The scarcity of direct evidence is most problematic for Nemanic's claim that Fourth of July celebrations embodied working-class radicalism. To read worker resistance into examples like a pie-eating competition is a stretch. In other cases, examples actually contradict the radicalism argument. Oral histories conducted with clown band members, for example, offer no indication of social commentary but express a desire to "have fun." Nemanic's argument is logical and compelling, but for it to be convincing, deeper research is needed.

Individuals with connections to the Iron Range may find this history of interest. In particular, the author's photographs of recent Fourth of July celebrations are a nice feature and the most powerful examples in the study. Equally strong research for earlier time periods would have strengthened the book's analysis and attracted a wider audience.

Reviewed by David LaVigne, a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Minnesota. His dissertation explores the changing significance of race, class, and ethnicity in the context of the Mesabi Iron Range, with particular emphasis on the white ethnic revival.

She's No Lady: Politics, Family, and International Feminism

Arvonne Fraser

(Minneapolis: Nodin Press, 2007.

298 p. Cloth, \$24.95.)

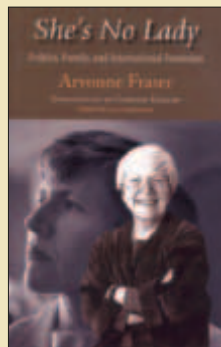
Arvonne Fraser's memoir is a lively story jam-packed with pioneering work all over the world. The book offers many insights into "how things really work" in the public sphere. Fraser illuminates her balancing act: traditional roles as a wife (a Congressional wife in Washington, no less) and mother (of six, no less) on the one hand, and trailblazing in nonprofits and government on the other. Far from the puffery of other memoirs, this one does not gloss over Fraser's sorrows and missteps, thereby making her achievements shine all the more brightly.

Editor and former news reporter Lori Sturdevant says, "The direct, open, generous woman I met that night [in 1978, giving an interview] is the same one readers will meet." In his foreword, Garrison Keillor writes, "She spoke directly and there was no passive-aggressive in her. . . . Arvonne skipped the big wind-up and got to the point," and "It's the first book I've read that gives a true sense of the DFL, and so it's an important document in the history of Minnesota."

Keillor refers to Fraser's "doing the hard work . . . attending the meetings, digging the potatoes." Being a digger of potatoes myself, I can vouch for the thrill of finding something useful and delicious but unknown until you've persevered for months and done the labor. Surely, founding organizations as Fraser did—the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), Center for Women and Public Policy, International Women's Rights Action Watch, and others—is more like digging potatoes than picking cherries.

The opening chapter, "From Lamberton to Timbuktu," connects Fraser's childhood on a western Minnesota farm with her later work for the U.S. Agency for International Development. In drought-stricken sub-Saharan Africa in 1978, "Beside the well, staring at us forlornly, was another grandmother, with a small child beside her. I recognized the white enameled pail with a tiny blue line around its rim beside them. We had used pails like that on our farm."

While Fraser acknowledges that she was helped by anti-depressant medicine, she also notes the healing power of



work for change: "My three Ws—WEAL, walking, and the women's movement—also helped me scale my personal mountain." It may be the connection between hard work and a powerful vision that most characterizes her distinguished career. Fraser is always interested in the far horizon. "Defying expectations, taking risks, and seeing what I could do beyond near horizons became my sport. . . . Born at home under a kerosene lamp, I sit typing emails to friends around the world. . . . It's thrilling to imagine the possibilities that await my grandchildren."

Fraser shares, helpfully, lessons learned. "Raising children . . . taught me to take the long view. Managing campaigns and offices means you don't do anything alone." In helping draft Title IX, which has dramatically improved equity in education, Fraser came to the "authorize funds" part of the form. "With great hilarity we put in thirty million dollars. What the heck," and thus the first thirty million dollars was appropriated. That experience taught her, "It never hurts to ask for what you need or want. You just might get it." Elsewhere, "Politics taught me that people with imposing titles are not always the real powers in an organization. I had to gain the respect of the informal leaders."

Fraser notes the awkwardness of a woman's life in the context of her husband's career as congressman, mayor, and more: lonely in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. She shares the pain of losing two children. And she doesn't spare herself in mentioning her smoking, being "fat," her depression. While her organizing talents always stood her in good stead, her generosity in sharing the hard times makes her real for us.

One quibble: Readers must be certain to get the errata sheet with the book, or they will miss several crucial parts of the story.

Fraser says, "The important thing about women writing history . . . is to show that ordinary women can make a difference." *She's No Lady* is a woman's life, both ordinary and extraordinary, told from the inside. It is an irreplaceable contribution to history in Minnesota and far beyond.

Reviewed by Bonnie Watkins (Bonnie@mnwomen.org), executive director of the Minnesota Women's Consortium and coauthor (with Nina Rothchild) of In the Company of Women: Voices from the Women's Movement (1996).

■ Printed maps are quickly becoming historical artifacts. We view satellite ones on our laptops, and we drive with electronic ones that chide us at every wrong turn. Yet printed maps provide us with both a representation of our landscape and a reflection of ourselves. *Mapping in Michigan and The Great Lakes Region* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007, 385 p., cloth, \$69.95) presents a loose collection of essays by noted cartographers, geographers, and historians on the importance of maps in the exploration, settlement, and development of Michigan and the surrounding area. Packaged as an historical atlas, this book is really a collection of essays that cover a broad territory geographically, chronologically, and cartographically. From eighteenth-century hand-drawn maps for Michilimackinac and early Native American mapmaking to the annual official state highway maps, *Mapping in Michigan* offers us an insightful picture of how we sought to understand our landscape before Google and GPS.

■ White caps and iceboxes: two St. Paul institutions get their due in new books from local publishers. *This Cap of White: The Story of the Mounds-Midway School of Nursing* by Daniel John Hoisington (Roseville, MN: Edinborough Press, 2007, 186 p., cloth) traces the story of the sanitarium school's education of "intelligent Christian nurses" beginning in 1907. Operating through 1983, the school graduated more than 2,000 nurses, sending them to serve hospitals, clinics, and schools across the nation. More than 200 graduates shared their stories, which enhance the copiously illustrated narrative. The book is available from the publisher: 651-415-1034; books@edinborough.com.

Across town stood the Seeger Refrigerator Company, chronicled in *From Arcade Street to Main Street: A History of the Seeger Refrigerator Company* by James B. Bell (St. Paul: Ramsey County Historical Society, 2007, 234 p., cloth, \$29.95). Founded in 1902, this family-owned corporation was known for cabinetmaking and icebox, refrigeration, and freezer manufacturing. It flourished

until 1955 and remained an East Side institution into the 1980s. This volume, its pages filled with photographs and line drawings, explores "how Seeger made Whirlpool an appliance giant."

■ *Scott House Souvenirs* (Duluth: Dovetailed Press LLC, 2007, 80 p., paper, \$12.95) offers a glimpse into the life of a house and its former occupants. The Scott house was a homestead on Lac La Belle in northern Minnesota's Carlton County. Built in the late 1860s, it was first used as an inn for travelers on the Point Douglas to Superior Military Road, then transformed into a family home, and finally renovated to its present use as an events center. This book presents the stories of those who called the house home through letters, photos, and even recipes. James Sheetz, a coauthor (with Marlene Wisuri) and present proprietor, relates his memories of growing up in the house and tells how his family came to be one of the owners of the property. The book is available from the publisher; 218-525-3924 or www.dovetailedpress.com.

■ Longfellow's "The Song of Hiawatha" was inspired by the writings of Schoolcraft—Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, that is. Her husband, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, has long been credited for what in essence are digested versions of her stories and translations of traditional Ojibwe narratives. Now a new volume, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*, edited by Robert Dale Parker (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007, 292 p., cloth, \$34.95), collects all of her known writings and offers a cultural and biographical history of this remarkable woman, the first known American Indian literary writer.

Writers nearly contemporaneous with Schoolcraft are among those celebrated in *To Sing Along the Way: Minnesota Women Poets from Pre-Territorial Days to the Present*, edited by Joyce Sutphen, Thom Tamaro, and Connie Wanek (Moorhead: New Rivers Press, 2006, 245 p., paper, \$17.95). This first-ever comprehensive anthology showcases more

than 100 poets whose works are connected by universal themes and together reflect the diversity of Minnesota women's voices from 1849 through today. Poems by Harriet Bishop, Candace Black, Frances Densmore, Elaine Goodale Eastman, Mary Eastman, Louise Erdrich, Diane Glancy, Patricia Hampl, and many others fill the pages of this handsome volume.

■ Attractively illustrated and small enough to fit the hand or a backpack, *Red Wing: A Portable History* is an engaging guide to the historic river town. Historian Frederick L. Johnson approaches his topic mostly by locale, but the book's seven chapters also include "Historic Homes & Their Owners" and "Red Wing's 'Stone Age.'" While there are maps and suggested walking or driving tours, this is more than a guidebook, as Johnson supplies the history behind the buildings and sites. A chronology, a short appendix, "Preserving Red Wing Heritage," and a note on sources round out this 118-page wire-bound paperback, published in 2007 by Red Wing's Heritage Preservation Commission for the city's sesquicentennial. It is available for free, preferably to residents and former residents of Red Wing, from Steve Kohn, City of Red Wing; 651-385-3622. Library copies are in the Minnesota Historical Society, Goodhue County Historical Society, and other Red Wing libraries.

■ Back in print again, *The Hiawatha Story* by Jim Scribbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, 267 p., paper, \$29.95) recounts the story of the beloved, streamlined Milwaukee Road rail fleet that connected Chicago to the Twin Cities and points west from 1935 until 1970. First published in 1970, the book is fact packed and heavily illustrated, concluding with a roster of rolling stock.

Another classic back in print from the University of Minnesota Press is Paul de Kruif's *Seven Iron Men: The Merritts and the Discovery of the Mesabi Range* (2007, 241 p., paper, \$17.95). High melodrama



and florid prose mark this telling, originally published in 1929, of how the seven brothers found ore, only to lose their future fortune to John D. Rockefeller: "The whites of their eyes turned blood-shot red, and yet they seemed to need no sleep; when their bellies gnawed at them in nature's insistent proclamation of hunger, they ate, wolfishly, not knowing what they ate at all; and, wiping their mustaches with the backs of their hands, they hurled themselves at their shovels, picks, and windlass handles" (p. 138).

■ Written for young readers, the visually vibrant *Latino Minnesota* by Leigh Roethke (Afton, MN: Afton Historical Society Press, 2006, 128 p., cloth, \$24.00) chronicles the state's diverse community that began when Mexican oboist Luis Garzón settled in 1886 and grew through later migration from Mexico and Central and South America. The book touches on topics including immigration, work, food, art, family life, and celebrations. It concludes with suggested activities (make a timeline; research your neighborhood) and a useful bibliography of far-reaching sources.

■ As one way to celebrate a landmark event, Minnesota's oldest arts organization delved into its archives and reached out to its community to compile *The Schubert Club 125th Anniversary: Musings and Memories* (Minneapolis: Nodin Press, 2007, 232 p., paper, \$25.00). Editors Sharon Carlson and Holly Windle present a collection of essays by Mary Ann Feldman, Patricia Hampl, Judith Kogan, Michael Steinberg, Jane Jeong Trenka, and Margaret Wurtele, as well as shorter pieces by a host of other contributors. Beginning with a "backward glance" to events in 1882, the book proceeds topically with chapters ranging from concerts through education, museum, administration, finance, and community connections to a final list of commissioned works. Photos of musicians, students, staff, and patrons as well as programs, tickets, and posters evoke the range of activities of this vital player on the Twin Cities cultural scene.

■ In *American Indians and State Law: Sovereignty, Race, and Citizenship, 1790-1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007, 340 p., cloth, \$55.00) Deborah A. Rosen examines the history of policies, laws, and judicial decisions to show that states and U.S. territories overrode federal authority for those 90 years. Although national in scope, the book makes points through case studies, including "Debating Race in Antebellum Minnesota."

■ Growing out of the nineteenth-century Protestant Sunday School movement and other organizations, the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches formally coalesced in the early 1900s to address local issues

and problems confronting youths in St. Paul. John M. Lindley's *A Powerful Catalyst for United Action: The History of the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches, 1906-2006* (St. Paul: Ramsey County Historical Society, 2007, 213 p., paper) chronicles the council's growth and evolution, as it maintained its focus on youth but stayed abreast of changing needs. As the century progressed, council programs began to address poverty, malnutrition, homelessness, broken families, and legal confrontations. This book is a quiet but powerful testimony to the importance of advocacy by nonprofits and faith-based institutions. It is available at no cost from the Ramsey County Historical Society (651-222-0701; www.spacc.org).

MINNESOTA HISTORY

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

Minnesota History is published quarterly and copyright 2008 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; call 651-259-3202 or 1-800-647-7827. 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.

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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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Permanent Wave Kits, 1940s



UNDER THE WATCHFUL eye of a male supervisor, women at Raymond Laboratories in St. Paul sit elbow-to-elbow packing the curlers, chemicals, and papers that went into home-permanent kits. At the center, a woman sports the waves so sought after in that era. The workers wear respirators but no gloves as they handle the toxic chemicals that could burn skin and cause respiratory problems. By 1940 some regulations regarding exposure to chemicals were in force, but health conditions of both workers and consumers were a major concern.

Women had long been interested in artificially waving and curling hair, but older methods did not use chemicals. Applying a setting substance and winding hair over some sort of curlers (early Egyptians used mud and sticks) and using heat to set curls were the most popular methods of treating straight hair until the end of the 1930s. The first chemical treatment, patented the early 1900s, involved dousing long hair with a strong sodium-hydroxide solution and then wrapping it around heavy rods connected to a machine that supplied heat. By the 1930s, professionally trained beauticians were offering these machine perms in their beauty shops, but the process could take a full day and cost \$50.

Then, in 1938 Arnold Willat developed the “cold wave” method—milder chemicals, no heat, and



MHS COLLECTIONS

sued to the era’s fashionable short hairstyles—leading to the popularity of home-permanent kits. For a few dollars, women could set waves themselves. Some magazines called the new products “toxic permanents.” By 1946 *Good Housekeeping* still did not endorse them and three years later only grudgingly recommended “some” cold waves.

While Raymond Laboratories’ cold-wave kits never became a household word, hometown rival Toni Permanent Wave Company’s did. Both manufacturers sold similar products using ammonium thioglycolate, which, they claimed, was a perfectly safe solution. An advertizing blitz

that asked, “Which Twin has the Toni?” convinced millions of women that they could replicate at home the expensive, time-consuming effect once obtained only in beauty shops. By 1948 consumers were buying almost a million kits a month, making Minnesota the home-permanent kit capital of the country and leading the Gillette Company to buy Toni for \$20 million.

—JOAN M. JENSEN

Joan Jensen, professor emerita at New Mexico State University, is the author of many articles and a dozen books on U.S. and women’s history, including Calling This Place Home: Women on the Wisconsin Frontier, 1850–1925 (2006).