

■ The Solon J. Buck award for the best article published in *Minnesota History* during 2010 has been won by Brad Chisholm, professor of film history at St. Cloud State University. His article, “Okabena: A Bank Robbery Revisited” (Winter 2010/11), reopens the question of who really committed this bold, daylight crime. In 1933, a time when robberies were distressingly frequent, the heist in this small southwestern Minnesota town was quickly blamed on a set of petty criminals believed to be responsible for many robberies in the area. The article meticulously uncovers and then examines evidence—including proof of police corruption and previously missed information—to determine whether the perpetrators were, indeed, the two men and a woman who served time, all the while protesting innocence, or the infamous Barrow Gang led by Bonnie and Clyde.

The Theodore C. Blegen Award for the best article by a Minnesota Historical Society staff member goes to Linda A. Cameron, program manager at the Minnesota State Capitol historic site, whose article, “Common Threads: The Minnesota Immigrant Experience,” appeared in the Fall 2010 issue. Drawing on recent oral history interviews as well as nineteenth-century letters, the article shows that, while time marches on and conditions appear to change, Minnesota’s recent Latino, Asian Indian, Hmong, Khmer, Tibetan, and Somali immigrants face many of the same challenges as their European predecessors.

This year’s judges were Mary Wingerd, professor of history at St. Cloud State University, and Christopher Welter, collections assistant at the Minnesota Historical Society. Each award includes a prize of \$600.

■ When the Civil War finally ended, veterans returned home and began trying to reintegrate themselves into their communities and civilian life. As James Marten shows in *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union & Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011, 339 p., cloth, \$39.95), many had a harder time

of it than has been previously understood. Aside from the physical wounds and mental scars that afflicted them, the young men who had served long years away from home found that they had missed education, training, and other opportunities that would have helped them forge a new life. Drawing on letters, diaries, journals, and memoirs of white veterans, as well as newspapers and other sources, Marten’s book vividly shows how the veterans were treated, how they lived out their lives, and how, to some extent, they lost control of their legacy, being remembered as others wanted to remember them. The book concludes that, while white Civil War veterans were generally well cared-for during the Gilded Age, the old Confederates were forever venerated for their service but Union men often faced resentment and anger as they aged and drew more heavily on public funds.

■ In just 100 pages, Minnesota historian—and historian of Minnesota—William E. Lass provides a clear and very useful “scholarly history of the history of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux in the context of its time with consideration of both the white and Dakota viewpoints.” *The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux* (St. Peter, MN: Nicollet County Historical Society, 2011, 101 p., paper, \$11.95) first sets the scene with chapters on Indian treaties in the U.S., Dakota treaties before Traverse des Sioux, and “Minnesota’s Quest for the Suland.” It then moves on to the treaty negotiations (in essence, the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands of Dakota would cede their land for a reservation along the upper Minnesota River and payments), its provisions (including the contentious Trader’s Paper), implementation of the treaty, and its legacy for both Indian and white people. Throughout, the book stresses the need for understanding the broader historical context when contemplating the treaty’s provisions and the effects of “one of the most significant events in Minnesota’s history.”

■ It was 1979 and the transformation of an old Masonic temple in downtown Minneapolis into the Hennepin Center

for the Arts was almost complete. The city had high hopes that the renovated building would be an anchor for the refurbished thoroughfare, Hennepin Avenue. And how might one soon-to-be tenant, the Minnesota Dance Theatre, contribute to opening-day festivities? Tap dancer and teacher Beth Obermeyer knew: a huge parade of tap dancers from all walks of life, clad in red, white, and blue, dancing down the avenue to “Yankee Doodle Dandy.” In *The Biggest Dance: 3600 Tap Shoes and a Miracle on Concrete* (St. Cloud: North Star Press, 2011, 208 p., paper, \$14.95) Obermeyer chronicles—with humor and some suspense—the planning and execution of this feat, which did set a Guinness world record. Along the way, the book documents the era’s local dance scene and arts community as well as civic hopes for a vibrant new downtown.

■ Two recently published books address aspects of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Fictional characters join the cast of historical actors in Dean Urdahl’s newest novel, *Pursuit* (St. Cloud: North Star Press, 2011, 266 p., \$14.95). The third in his Uprising series centered on the war, *Pursuit* vividly portrays the bloody aftermath of the conflict. Beginning on December 27, 1862, the day after 38 condemned Dakota men were hanged in Mankato, it details the subsequent Sully and Sibley expeditions as well as the brutal living conditions that the Dakota prisoners endured at the Fort Snelling internment camp and then in exile at the desolate Crow Creek reservation in Dakota Territory. The book draws on solid historical sources; as historian Hy Berman notes in the preface, “The fictional approach . . . does not diminish the power of its historical truths.” Maps help the reader visualize the military campaigns, and a list of sources invites further reading on this tragic chapter of Minnesota history.

The white victims of the 1862 war are emphasized by historian Gregory F. Michno in *Dakota Dawn: The Decisive First Week of the Sioux Uprising, August 17–24, 1862* (New York: Savas Beatie,

2011, 476 p., cloth, \$32.95). In his introduction, Michno states: “I wrote this book for a selfish reason—I wrote it for me.” Evidently, to satisfy his own curiosity about the war, he chose to write chapters that are virtual litanies of the conflict’s white casualties.

Through his extensive use of postwar settler claims for war losses, submitted to the Sioux Claims Commission, Michno provides new details about the pioneers and the nature and extent of their property. In this respect, the book should prove to be of particular interest to genealogists and others seeking information about the estimated 400 to 500 settlers killed during the war.

■ Readers who enjoyed Maud Hart Lovelace’s fictional *Gentlemen from England*, set near Fairmont, Minnesota, might also relish the newly available reprint of Curtis Harnack’s 1985 history, *Gentlemen on the Prairie: Victorians in Pioneer Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011, 254 p., paper, \$24.00). In the 1880s, a well-connected Englishman hatched a plan to bring wealthy

second sons from England to the fertile acreage of northwestern Iowa, setting up a British colony in Le Mars (and later, Pipestone, Minnesota). Unprepared for the sometimes severe weather and the lack of hired help and suitable women, the Englishmen and their transplanted British culture—fox hunts, polo, balls—flourished for a while, until the financial depression of the 1890s scattered many to other countries in the British commonwealth.

■ A coming-of-age memoir set in the 1940s, *Walking a Good Pigeon Toe* (St. Paul: JCWDB Press, 2010, 145 p., paper, \$15.00) is told in the 18-year-old voice of Jane Wyman Birks, who was then a freshman at the University of Minnesota. Jane, her two sisters, and their recently divorced mother have some adjustments to make—their circumstances have changed, and the country has transitioned from depression into world war. But Jane is, above all, a teenager, and she is as concerned with looking good, meeting people, and walking with style as she is with her own future. This memoir candidly captures the

perspective of a young woman in the process of becoming an adult.

■ *Robert Bly In This World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Libraries, 2011, 298 p., cloth, \$34.95) is the outcome of a 2009 conference held at the University of Minnesota to celebrate the Elmer L. Andersen Library’s acquisition of the archives of this world-famous Minnesota poet-translator-teacher-storyteller. Edited by Thomas R. Smith with James P. Lenfestey, the volume is a collection of 15 essays and appreciations by a variety of authors, each focused on an aspect of Bly’s multifaceted career.

■ Knitting together two case studies, historian Donald Harman Akenson’s new book, *Ireland, Sweden, and the Great European Migration, 1815–1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011, 293 p., cloth, \$65.00 [U.S.]) is a transnational study of what determines the “physics” of a diaspora. The author argues that the perspectives of economic historians as well as socio-cultural historians must be accorded equal voice in order to explain the complexity of these great nineteenth-century population movements. This is not a book for the casual reader, but its balance of statistical/empirical and social history and provocative assertions will interest scholars of migration and ethnic history.

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