

OUR READERS WRITE:

Anna Marie Peterson's article in the Winter 2011-12 issue, "Adding a Little Suffrage Spice to the Melting Pot: Minnesota's Scandinavian Woman Suffrage Association," prompted Pat Sierzant of Malvern, Pennsylvania, to ask a question that had also occurred to this editor—and, doubtless, to other State Fair fans among our readers.

"I just read the article in *Minnesota History* about the SWSA. It mentions the Woman Citizen Building at the State Fair. Is that building still standing? (I moved from Minnesota more than 30 years ago. I get back occasionally but haven't been to the State Fair for many years.)"

A footnote in Barbara Stuhler's 1995 book, Gentle Warriors: Clara Ueland and the Minnesota Struggle for Woman Suffrage, provided the answer. As Peterson's article showed, the SWSA raised the funds for the building but turned them over to the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association. In 1919, with the suffrage amendment finally passed, the statewide suffrage organization gave the building to the Minneapolis Council of Americanization, and it was renamed the American Citizen Building. (Given SWSA president/MWSA member Nanny Mattson Jaeger's abiding interest in Americanization, this donation makes perfect sense.) At a later date, according to an interview with a current State Fair official, the building was sold and, eventually, razed.

■ Back in print: John Madson's *Up on the River: The People and Wildlife of the Upper Mississippi* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011, 276 p., \$19.95). The book humorously relates Madson's encounters, observations, and experiences traveling the river, mostly by canoe and johnboat, between St. Paul and St. Louis.

■ "What exactly is a wilderness? How should it look? Who belongs there?" These questions are at the heart of Amalia Tholen Baldwin's small book, *Becoming Wilderness: Nature, History, and the Making of Isle Royale National Park* (Houghton, MI: Isle Royale and Keweenaw Parks Assn., 2011, 90 p., paper). As other recent works have pointed out, "wilderness" is an evolving—and often highly controversial—concept. This island in Lake Superior was authorized to become a national park in 1931, although the park itself was not actually established until nine years later. Baldwin's book, which began as her master's thesis, examines the complex cultural, social, and political story of how the country's first wilderness national park was trans-

formed over the years from a place with white and native residents, logging and mining operations, and rustic resorts to its present status: 99 percent federally designated wilderness. In some measure, its story is applicable to all federally protected wilderness areas. *Becoming Wilderness* can be ordered for \$12.95 plus \$5.00 shipping and handling from the Isle Royale and Keweenaw Parks Assn., www.irkpa.org or 800-678-6925.

■ *Winning the West with Words: Language and Conquest in the Lower Great Lakes* by James Joseph Buss (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011, 336 p., cloth, \$34.95) examines the idea that the process of Indian removal was not accomplished by physical force alone but that the language and rhetoric of the pioneers played a significant role, as well. Indians were spoken and written about in the past tense even though they were still present. The land in the Midwest was referred to as "empty," though Indian populations dotted the landscape. Treaties often contained promises that were forgotten or were outright lies.

Buss examines a wide range of sources—journals, treaties, newspaper editorials, and local histories—to show how the language of white Americans accomplished a symbolic removal of the native peoples of the lower Great Lakes region.

■ In the political spectrum, South Dakota usually runs in the red. However, *The Plains Political Tradition: Essays on South Dakota Political Culture*, edited by Jon K. Lauck, John E. Miller, and Donald C. Simmons Jr. (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2011, 400 p., paper, \$19.95) aims to demonstrate that the state's Republican tendencies are more nuanced than just following a party line. This collection of essays uses history, politics, art, literature, and other influences to give depth to the political culture of the Mount Rushmore State.

■ In the aptly titled *Sports and All That Jazz: The Percy Hughes Story* (Minneapolis: Nodin Press, 2011, 142 p., paper, \$19.95), author Jim Swanson recounts the biography of the Twin Cities jazz legend who was a mail carrier by day and an accomplished athlete in the bargain. Working with big bands and smaller ensembles, Hughes was a popular and busy sax player and band leader for decades, part of a vibrant jazz scene from the 1950s through 1970s. He has also been a dedicated tennis coach, working with seniors and youth. This book, based largely on oral interviews with Hughes and other members of the local jazz community, comes with a CD of Hughes and the Red Wolfe quartet playing classics including "Mac the Knife" and "Perdido."

■ Ralph Plaisted, a Minnesota businessman, and his three companions—Walt Pederson, Gerry Pitzl, and Jean-Luc Bombardier—are regarded by most polar authorities as the first to succeed in a surface conquest of the North Pole, achieving their goal on April 19, 1968. *First to the Pole* (St. Cloud: North Star Press, 2011, 256 p., paper, \$16.95) is the exciting true story of their adventure, told in a dramatic style. Authors C. J. Ramstad and

Keith Pickering pieced together the story through interviews and the diaries of the men who lived it and their loved ones, adding in conversations as storytelling devices without impinging on the facts.

■ Volume 36 in the long-running *Norwegian-American Studies* series (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 2011, 195 p., cloth, \$34.95) offers essays on historical, cultural, and literary topics. Chapters range from a study of early Norwegian church architecture in the Upper Midwest (“American, Norwegian, or Lutheran?”) to immigrants and their work clothing and from a look at Norwegian American historian Paul Knaplund to volume editor Todd Nichol’s introductory “Anticipating Beret,” which precedes O. E. Rolvaag’s short piece, “Grandma and Her Story.” The volume is available from the publisher, 1520 St. Olaf Ave., Northfield 55057 (NAHA@stolaf.edu); please include \$3.00 handling.

■ “History is the real stuff—the real adventure, the real discovery, and the

real stories.” So begins Jay D. Vogt’s short contribution to *Why We Love History*, the South Dakota State Historical Society Press’s 25-page chapbook (Pierre, 2011, \$3.00), drawn from blog entries by its authors and illustrators. On its final page, “Join in the Discussion,” the book’s editor, Martyn Beeny, invites readers to comment: www.sdshspress.wordpress.com.

■ The Fall 2011 issue of *Upper Midwest Jewish History* (journal of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest, volume 6) is, simply put, a gem. *Who Knew? Stories Unearthed from the Archives* is a riveting and engaging collection of first-person accounts that should serve as a model for how to use archival material. With the power and immediacy that only a personal story can deliver, the many short entries merge to tell a larger story—and show that no community speaks with one voice. Editor Linda Mack Schloff has arranged these highly diverse pieces into seven chapters that allow for a wide range of topics: Privileged and Not So Privileged, Greater Minnesota, The Dakotas, Urban Neigh-

borhoods, Creating Community, Contesting Community, and Community Responses to Outside Forces. Her clear and informative introductions to each entry provide the context that enables readers with no knowledge of the speaker or topic to follow along. Although the issue is sold out, it can be downloaded for free from the organization’s website: www.jhsum.org/shop/.

■ While most studies of the post-Civil War period of Reconstruction focus on the South, historian Hugh Davis looks elsewhere in “*We Will Be Satisfied With Nothing Less*”: *The African American Struggle for Equal Rights in the North during Reconstruction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011, 209 p., cloth, \$45.00). The book concentrates on two major efforts throughout the region: the campaign for black male suffrage and equal access to the public schools. Minnesota makes a cameo appearance in both.

■ The genesis of one of the most important church buildings of the twentieth century, the soaring concrete abbey church at St. John’s University in Collegeville, is recounted with clarity and wit in *Marcel Breuer and a Committee of Twelve Plan a Church: A Monastic Memoir* by Hilary Thimmesh, OSB (Collegeville, MN: Saint John’s University Press, 2011, 126 p., paper, \$19.95). By 1950 the nineteenth-century church had clearly become too small to accommodate the monks and university students. The brethren thus engaged Breuer, a Hungarian-born, Bauhaus-trained architect, to create a building that bespoke not only their beliefs but also their contemporary setting. Thimmesh, as the committee’s junior member and secretary, recorded the sometimes rocky path to discovering—and then finalizing—their vision. Divulging the author’s personal experience as well as the nuts and bolts of the creative process, the book ultimately documents a glorious example of Breuer’s maxim, “In architecture, you buy something that doesn’t yet exist.”

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