

## OUR READERS WRITE:



Shortly after the Winter 2012–13 issue was mailed, William Soderlund of Northfield responded to Paul D. Nelson's article, "Early Days of the State Reform School." Knowing that the inmates' stories were compelling, Nelson had compiled a spreadsheet from school records, detailing what was known about each boy. This resource is posted at <http://people.mnhs.org/reformschoolroster.pdf>.

Mr. Soderlund decided to see if he could discover more of "what became of some those individuals after their release. Two of the boys mentioned, Theodore and Charles Oakes, were the sons of a deceased Civil War soldier," he wrote. Nelson's article gave the name of the boys' mother, Rosanna, and the spreadsheet noted the father's name, David, and the fact that the boys were committed in 1871 and discharged three years later, with Theodore working for a time in the school's tin shop.

Soderlund found that Lt. David Oakes, Co. F, Fifth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment, died at the Battle of Farmington (part of the Siege of Corinth, Mississippi) in May 1862, shortly after enlisting. His son Theodore would have been about two years old then and Charles, four.

The biography that Soderlund found on <http://civilwartalk.com/threads/lt-oakes-short-term-of-enlistment.72508/> also contains snippets updating the family's story long after David Oakes' death and the reform school lost track of his boys. Theodore was living in St. Paul in 1880 but by 1900 was a resident at the Rochester State Hospital, a facility for the mentally ill. Charles, it seems, did learn a useful trade at reform school. Both the 1900 and 1910 censuses found him working as a tinsmith at the South Dakota Hospital for the Insane in Yankton.

In the same issue, Peg Meier's *EyeWitness* feature, a look at two youngsters and their dogs on the stoop of a Northfield home, elicited surprising news from Chris Ash, the house's current owner. His letter does indeed "solve the mystery of the ugly Pug."

"I have done quite a bit of research in the MHS archives to find photos of our house. There are several out there! I've seen the photo of the kids and dog that you used. . . . Ready for this? That ugly Pug in the photo is a porcelain dog! It can be found in several other photos at the MHS. The first photo I saw of that dog caused me to have the same reaction—What the!?!—but then I started to see him pop up in other photos, always in the same pose. So, not only did the photographer seem to have fun with the kids' outfits but also with the props. I am happy to report that the Newfie is real and can be found in other photos of the house."

Porcelain pugs were common ornaments in the nineteenth century. For a view of this dog in two lovely interior rooms, visit [www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org), select Collections Online, and enter GT2.21 r117 or GT2.21 r118.

■ Carefully researched and written, Bruce A. Kohn's *Dakota Child, Governor's Daughter: The Life of Helen Hastings Sibley* (Mendota, MN: Friends of the Sibley Historic Site, 2012, 173 p., paper, \$14.95) presents a well-rounded picture of the short life of Henry H. Sibley's Anglo-Dakota daughter—without ever overreaching available facts. The difficulties of documenting mixed-race daughters of prominent Anglo Americans in early Minnesota are well known. Mining manuscript collections (including many personal letters), government documents and church records, period newspapers, and unpublished manuscripts as well as secondary sources, the author adds much detail to the previously known outline of Helen H. Sibley's life: her birth and early years; upbringing by the Anglo family whom Sibley paid to raise her and who loved her dearly; relationship with her famous father, who visited publicly with her but never acknowledged paternity on written documents; her apparent assimilation into Anglo society, including Christian piety and marriage to physician Sylvester Sawyer; and her death in 1860 of scarlet fever, at the age of 19, shortly after childbirth. Kohn also tells the aftermath of her death, including efforts years later to obtain the scrip she was awarded as a mixed-blood in the Treaty of Prairie du Chien.

■ For the 2013/2014 academic year, the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) will award up to ten stipends of \$1,000 each to support original research and interpretive writing related to the history of Iowa or Iowa and the Midwest. Preference will be given to applicants proposing to pursue previously neglected topics or new approaches to or interpretations of previously treated topics. SHSI invites applicants from a variety of backgrounds, including academic and public historians, graduate students, and independent researchers and writers. Applications will be judged on the basis of their potential for producing an annotated manuscript appropriate for publication in *The Annals of Iowa*, SHSI's scholarly journal.

Applications must be postmarked by April 15, 2013. Download guidelines from [www.iowahistory.org/publications/the-annals-of-iowa/research-grants-for-authors.html](http://www.iowahistory.org/publications/the-annals-of-iowa/research-grants-for-authors.html) or request them or further information from Research Grants, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Ave., Iowa City, 52240-1806; 319-335-3931 or [marvin-bergman@uiowa.edu](mailto:marvin-bergman@uiowa.edu).

■ For a century and a half, the lower Great Lakes region, or Northwest Territory, was a place of both international conflict and interethnic interchange. *Contested Territories: Native Americans and Non-Natives in the Lower Great Lakes, 1700–1850* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012, 223 p., hardcover, \$39.95) presents this period of instability and change in seven essays by younger scholars. Editors Charles Beatty-Medina and Melissa Rinehart have assembled articles ranging from Daniel Ingram’s “A Year at Niagara: Negotiating Coexistence in the Eastern Great Lakes, 1763–1764” to James Buss’s “The Politics of Indian Removal on the Wyandot Reserve, 1817–1843.”

■ Taking a fresh look at a popular topic, Linda Scarangella McNenly’s *Native Performers in Wild West Shows: From Buffalo Bill to Euro Disney* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, 254 p., hardcover, \$34.95) examines this unique American genre of entertainment from a Native American perspective. McNenly’s interviews with current performers (in the U.S., Canada, and at Euro Disney) and the descendants of twentieth-century performers add much to the historical/archival record. The book reveals how some performers use or have used Wild West shows to express their own identities and advance their own goals. While none would deny the effects of colonialism, the author shows that some performers from the nineteenth century to the present have resisted exploitation, demonstrating resilience, agency, and cultural continuity.

■ Roads not taken: In *Crooked Paths to Allotment: The Fight over Federal Indian Policy after the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012, 228 p., hardcover, \$39.95) author

C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa examines the efforts of Native American reformers and their white allies to oppose federal assimilationist policies from the era of Reconstruction through the Gilded Age. Focusing on activists such as Tonawanda Seneca Ely S. Parker, the book highlights the political agency of Indian people in their ultimately unsuccessful opposition to coercive mandates such as allotment, elimination of traditional cultural practices, mandatory boarding-school education for children, and participation in the market economy.

■ Minnesota takes center stage in a new book in the Landmark Law Cases and American Society series. *Fighting Foreclosure: The Blaisdell Case, the Contract Clause, and the Great Depression* by John A. Fliter and Derek S. Hoff (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012, 222 p., hardcover, \$34.95, paper, \$19.95) presents the history of the case and then goes on to analyze the landmark 1934 Supreme Court decision, still poignantly relevant 80 years later. By a 5–4 vote, the Court upheld the Minnesota Mortgage Moratorium Act, which offered relief to citizens struggling to keep their farms and homes but caused an uproar among bankers and conservative legal theorists who argued that the decision violated the contract clause of the Constitution and interfered with the free market.

■ Neighborhoods, buildings, and businesses in Sioux Falls get affectionate attention in *North of Twelfth Street: The Changing Face of Sioux Falls Neighborhoods* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2012, 98 p., hardcover, \$34.95). Author-photographer Tom Dempster, a former South Dakota state senator, divides his hometown into districts; each gets a chapter that begins with a map and brief overview and proceeds with color photographs and explanatory captions. A historical overview by Gary D. Olson also includes old photos, which provide an interesting point of contrast to the bulk of the book.

## MINNESOTA HISTORY

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