

OUR READERS WRITE:



Joy Lintelman's article "A Hot Heritage: Swedish Americans and Coffee" (Spring 2013) brought a groundswell of letters. Many writers thanked her for helping them make, clarify, or reflect on their connections with grandparents, heritage, and homeland. Several correspondents also offered new information about the sometimes unexpected power of ethnicity. Emily Rosengren of Chanhassen, for example, confided:

"I'm a fourth-generation Swedish descendant (sort of . . . I'm adopted). Your article really helped me identify better with my extended Swedish family! Coffee is such an important part of ALL family gatherings. . . . My husband (also, in part, Swedish) always laughs at me when I fret about not having a cake or cookies to serve when company arrives unexpectedly. I never connected it to being part of a Swedish family but, of course, it is!

"I, personally, hate coffee. We used to keep our coffee maker in a kitchen cabinet, something my mother found inconceivable. . . . Now, when my parents come over, they bring their own coffee. When great-aunts and great-grandparents visit, my mother always reminds me to have coffee (and has been known to show up with a thermos of her own, just in case I've forgotten)."

"I raise a cup to you," concluded Peg Meier of Minneapolis, who revealed:

"My great-aunt Tillie Schulz (her maiden name was Swedish) always had the coffee pot on. And when the pot was empty, the coffee grounds served another purpose: fertilizer. When we visited her . . . it was my job as a child to take out the grounds and scatter them in the dirt among the flowers. She had good coffee and great flowers. To this day, I never put coffee grounds into the garbage. Either they go directly to the garden or to the compost bin."

From Robert Douglas of St. Peter:

"I was reminded of Ma Young's 5 cent coffee at Gustavus Adolphus College for all those years before she retired. The college lost money but kept the Swedish heritage alive."

Robert Johnson of Minneapolis, who also mentioned saucer-drinking, wrote to better identify the photo of the Swedish coffee party in Minneapolis, noting that his mother, Edith Johnson (Mrs. Axel R.), later supplied the given names presented here in parentheses.

"The photo was taken by a *Minneapolis Star* photographer and appeared on September 11, 1935. It was at the home of Mrs. Ernest Liedstrom The following are the names of the ladies

from left to right: Winifred Malmquist, Mrs. J. A. Jacobson, Mrs. Ruben (Sophie) Johnson, Mrs. Gust Carlson, Mrs. C. E. (Ethel) Anderson, Mrs. Axel R. (Edith) Johnson, Mrs. Axel Black, Mrs. Ernest (Anna) Liedstrom, Mrs. G. (Emma) Malmquist, Mrs. G. (Alice) Schroeder, Mrs. Arthur (Selma) Anderson, Mrs. Charles Brink, Mrs. M. (Alice) Nelson, Mrs. Sven (Eva) Johnson."

Ruth Ladwig, Minneapolis, was the first to write about the Willmar Saucer Drinking Society.

"If I'm not mistaken, the men in the first picture of synchronized drinking have just put sugar cubes in their mouths preparatory to drinking the coffee through the cubes. I'm told this was a common way to drink coffee in the *old days*. I've never tried it. . . . I never could understand why anybody would willingly drink coffee. Norwegian heritage notwithstanding."

And Chuck Schoen of Wayzata pointed out:

"I did notice in the Willmar street-scene photo that Minnesota Governor Orville Freeman is in a suit at the right margin, mid-level. So I suspect the photo was taken in one of his election years: 1954, '56, '58, or '60."

On a different topic entirely, Harry C. Grounds of St. Paul responded to Kevin Brown's book review of A Storied Wilderness (Fall 2012), suggesting that someone research a vanished resort in Bayfield County, Wisconsin, that "today, would be held up as a prime example of sustainable design, alas too late."

"In 1958 when I first visited the town of Delta in Bayfield County, I came upon a resort dating back to the 1930s, perhaps earlier. It was located along the west branch of the White River, about a mile or so to the west of the Delta-Drummond Road, south of County H. Finding that resort was as if I took a step back in time. The buildings were constructed of native rock and timber. Electric power was supplied solely by a small concrete dam and a single turbine generator. The lake, backed up by the dam, provided water for channels that passed close by each of the cabins and then emptied back into the river below the dam. Today that resort would be considered to be among the best of environmentally friendly designs.

"Sometime in the late 1960s or early 1970s some agency decided that the resort should be razed and the site returned to 'pristine' condition. What a shame. Even the beaver protest by frequently attempting to construct a dam in the same location as the demolished concrete dam."

■ Transition and survival—or perhaps, rebirth—are key concepts in Steve Glischinski’s handsome new book, *Minnesota Railroads: A Photographic History, 1940–2012* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012, hardcover, 298 p., \$39.95). Its four chapters cover the years of transition (1940–60), struggle for survival (1960–80), revival and rehabilitation (1980–2000), and twenty-first century developments. The short but informative essays are illustrated with copious photographs, many of them by the author himself. Shops, depots, crowds, locomotives, and trains on the move throughout the state are all represented, as appropriate, in black-and-white or color. The book is well indexed, contains a helpful bibliography, and offers a telling appendix with two lists: railroads by name (excluding small industrial lines and street railways) in 1940 and 2012.

■ The Ramsey County Historical Society has reprinted John B. Sanborn’s *Speeches and Addresses* (St. Paul, 2012, 303 p., hardcover, \$44.95, paper, \$24.95), originally published by Sanborn

himself in 1887. These ten pieces cover several aspects of Sanborn’s family history and career—mostly his Civil War and Indian treaty-making experiences. Born in New Hampshire in 1826, he had trained as a lawyer and moved to Minnesota Territory in late 1854, seeking opportunity in this “promising region of the country.” He went on to many things, serving in both houses of the state legislature, commanding the Fourth Minnesota Infantry in the campaign against Vicksburg, and working as a congressional peace commissioner to the Great Plains tribes after the Civil War. John M. Lindley’s helpful introduction to this volume provides a biographical sketch of Sanborn and places his speeches in historical context.

■ *Red Earth, White Road*, a 22-page booklet by Janet Timmerman, presents the multigenerational story of the LaFramboise family as a lens for understanding the complex and changing lives of Minnesota’s mixed-blood people in the nineteenth century. Though the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 is the climax of the

tale, Timmerman’s account begins much earlier and concludes by quoting a 1900 interview with Joseph LaFramboise, then living on the Lake Traverse Reservation in South Dakota. The booklet, published in 2012, is available from its publisher, the Society for the Study of Local and Regional History, PO Box 291, Marshall, MN, 56258 for \$5.00 plus \$1.50 postage.

■ Although the Northwest Ordinance in 1787 banned slavery in the United States’ new Northwest Territory, enslaved African Americans were present in the region through the end of the Civil War. In *Slavery in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1787–1865: A History of Human Bondage in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011, 222 p., paper, \$45.00) Christopher P. Lehman examines how and why the peculiar institution came to free territory and managed to persist. Overview and concluding chapters on the national scene and politics bookend chapters devoted to each of the four states listed in the book’s subtitle. Most slaves in the Midwest were brought there by political appointees, soldiers, or vacationing southerners. While they suffered all of the tribulations of their southern counterparts, they were few in number and did not play a substantial part in the region’s economy. Because their numbers were small in Minnesota, that chapter focuses largely on the biographies and careers of the few slaveholders (and of the slaves, where possible), addressing the hows and whys of slavery but in a somewhat anecdotal manner. Minnesota’s most famous slave appears later, in another chapter, “Dred Scott and the Boom in Upper Mississippi Slavery.”

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