

OUR READERS WRITE

Tom Moran's article in the Fall 2013 issue, "Upstairs on Hennepin: Tom Sewell and the Bottega Gallery," drew letters and phone calls from readers who remembered the era or the gallery—and from some who did not. Among the latter was Thomas J. Arneson of Minneapolis, who wrote:



"Over my years of collecting art by Minnesota artists I have occasionally heard references to Bottega Gallery, but I could never find any substantive information about it. So it was a delight to find . . . a well-written description of the origins and life of the gallery and how it fit into the context of a Twin Cities art scene in transition. The numerous photographs were a fine bonus. I particularly applaud creation of local history articles like this while interview information can still be obtained from persons who were part of the story. This piece honors an interesting aspect of Minnesota's rich visual arts heritage."

We also received a correction: Among the group of patrons and collectors who helped keep the gallery afloat were John and Prudy (not Trudy) Brooks.

■ The Solon J. Buck award for the best article published in *Minnesota History* during 2012 has been won by Nancy O'Brien Wagner for her article in the Spring issue, "Awfully Busy These Days: Red Cross Women in France during World War I." Using a wide array of archival and published sources ranging from personal letters, military service records, oral history interviews, and Red Cross documents to histories and memoirs, the article focuses on 15 women from the Twin Cities and Duluth who served overseas in a variety of jobs, some of them nontraditional for women. While the work of female Red Cross nurses is relatively well known, this article presents the experiences and reactions of women—often in their own words—who worked from the front desk to the front line as support staff, canteen managers, searchers, drivers, and recreation directors. As it points out, their time in France was formative; most of these women returned to Minnesota to embark on a life of tackling social and civic challenges. Nancy O'Brien Wagner is an independent historian who lives in St. Paul.

The Theodore C. Blegen Award for the best article by a Minnesota Historical Society staff member goes to Lizzie

Ehrenhalt for "The Most Satisfactory Proof: Revising an Anglo-Dakota Family History," which appeared in the Winter 2012–13 issue. Ehrenhalt's interest was piqued when, as a collections assistant (she is now the associate editor of MNopedia, the online encyclopedia of Minnesota history), she was digitizing nineteenth-century manuscript material. The papers of Lawrence Taliaferro, Indian agent at Ft. Snelling, hold many letters from well-known and powerful men. The letter that caught her eye, however, came in 1836 from a mixed-blood woman, Margaret Hess, who wrote to solicit Taliaferro's help in securing land she believed was promised to her in the fourth treaty of Prairie du Chien (1830). The letter, likely composed with help, skillfully appealed to Taliaferro's professional, personal, and moral commitments, reminding him that he knew "my Father and probably my Mother too." Beginning with this document and delving deeply into period sources, Ehrenhalt carefully pieces together what can be known of Hess's life story and larger family history, as well as the outcome of her request to Taliaferro. While we may never discover the full story, the initial correspondence raised tantalizing ques-

tions, and the pursuit of answers opened doors into pre-territorial history.

This year's judges were Anne Klejment, professor of history at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, and Bruce M. White, independent historian, consultant and director of Turnstone Historical Research, St. Paul. Each award includes a prize of \$600.

■ Disputing the characterization of regionalism as an inherently conservative, backward-looking, or nostalgic force, Michael C. Steiner has edited a new collection of essays, *Regionalists on the Left: Radical Voices from the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013, 399 p., cloth, \$39.95). Its title notwithstanding, the book's first section, containing three chapters, is "The Midwest," and that section's first essay is Julia Mickenberg's "Revolution Can Spring Up from the Windy Prairie as Naturally as Wheat: Meridel Le Sueur and the Making of a Radical Regional Tradition." All told, the book's 15 chapters present the lives and work of 16 intellectuals, authors, and artists (two are covered in one chapter) active during the 1930s and 1940s. Joining Le Sueur in the Midwest are Josephine Herbst and Joe Jones; from there, the book profiles regionalists from the Great Plains and Texas, the Northern West, and California, ending with John Steinbeck and Carey McWilliams.

■ A new look at the Greatest Generation emerges from Elizabeth R. Escobedo's *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013, 229 p., cloth or e-book, \$34.95). The era's desperate need for labor—in the defense industry, especially—created opportunities for women and minorities at the same time that population shifts forced Americans to think about race. In southern California, the setting for Escobedo's book, Mexican American women suddenly had access to more work at higher wages than ever before. Both respectable young ladies and rebel-

lous daughters, as the author points out, seized the opportunity to exercise control over their lives in the workplace, the home, and the nation, challenging social and cultural norms. In the 1940s, they were eager to serve the nation and pursue their own desires; after the war, they continued to challenge workplace inequality (aided by the new Fair Employment Practices Committee) as well as family and community resistance to their new identities and roles. Although the book does not explore the lives of Mexican American women elsewhere in the nation, it provides a solidly researched and well-written perspective that deepens our understanding of this transformative era.

■ Disaster averted: Readers looking for excitement and a happy ending may be interested in Harold Gifford's *The Miracle Landing: The True Story of How the NBA's Minneapolis Lakers Almost Perished in an Iowa Cornfield during a January Blizzard* (Kissimmee, FL: Signalman Publishing, 2013, 174 p., paper, \$13.99). On January 17, 1960, less than a year after a plane carrying

Buddy Holly and other touring musicians crashed in an Iowa cornfield, the Lakers boarded their DC-3 to fly home from a basketball game in St. Louis. The plane, with 23 passengers aboard, was cleared for take-off in "marginal weather." Shortly thereafter, the electrical system failed and the flight encountered freezing rain and then snow that iced the wings and windshield. Finally, after more than five hours in the air, low on fuel, and flying by skill and perhaps a little luck, the plane landed safely in a cornfield outside of Carroll, Iowa. This account is the center of the book; the rest details the author's—he was the co-pilot—training and provides some information on the team, the aftermath of the flight, reactions of others aboard, and a 50-year reunion.

■ In the decade after World War I, Minnesota's overwhelmingly white, Protestant population proved to be fertile organizing ground for the revived Ku Klux Klan. Through careful research in state, county, and local historical societies, interviews, and visits to still-standing

(re-purposed) Klan structures and the locations of former ones, Elizabeth Dorsey Hatle has compiled a thorough account, *The Ku Klux Klan in Minnesota* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2013, 189 p., paper, \$19.99). Beginning with the hostile postwar climate that resulted in the Duluth lynchings of 1920 and various brutal attacks on citizens, such as German Americans, not deemed to be "100 percent American," the book covers the state, offering examples of the Invisible Empire's reach into politics, state government, home, and church. At its peak in the 1920s, the KKK boasted 51 chapters in Minnesota; after its decline, known members continued their careers in the public sphere. Tracking the subterranean connections among people, places, and events, the book also shows how the Klan's careful framing of issues could appeal to citizens worried about industrialization, modernization, and urbanization. And it ends with a lesson for today, citing a 2012 study by the Southern Poverty Law Center: Minnesota has 12 known hate groups, the largest number in the seven-state region.

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