

## OUR READERS WRITE

*Brad Zeller's photo feature in the Winter 2013-14 issue piqued the curiosity of Jeff M. Sawve, associate college archivist and associate Norwegian American Historical Association archivist at St. Olaf College in Northfield.*



“As a reader of *Minnesota History*, I am particularly drawn to the unique, nearly forgotten storylines, such as the case of Mr. Harley Davidson featured in Brad Zeller’s recent EyeWitness, ‘Speed Skater.’ Readers like myself might have wondered, ‘So who was this Harley Davidson fellow?’

“A son of a St. Paul newspaperman, Davidson, a talented and versatile athlete, excelled at competitions from the mid-1880s through the 1910s. He earned many local, national, and world titles in bicycling, swimming, ice and roller skating. Newspapers of the era called him one the ‘greatest athletes that ever lived,’ and his record surely proved it. In a 1919 interview with the *Atlanta Constitution*, Davidson stated that he had started 4,682 athletic events in his lifetime, winning 3,036. Jim Thorpe? Who?”

*And a note from author Sue Leaf, whose article on Emma and Thomas Roberts was published in the Summer 2013 issue:*

“A Tale of Two Siblings’ mentioned the portfolio of watercolors of Minnesota wildflowers painted by Minneapolis artist Emma Roberts in the 1880s. Presented to her brother, Dr. Thomas Sadler Roberts, as a gift in 1883, the paintings hung in the Minnesota Building at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The information in the article was based on paintings held in the Bell Museum of Natural History on the University of Minnesota’s Minneapolis campus, but recently many more paintings have been found in the archives of the university’s Landscape Arboretum in Chaska.

“The find includes 115 watercolors by Emma Roberts and 161 by Agnes Williams Roberts, who would wed Thomas in 1937. Both women collected, identified, and painted these botanically correct works between 1883 and 1885. Emma produced few paintings after 1885, but Agnes continued to paint through 1905. The collection also includes seven newer sketches (1938-40) that Agnes made after she became Dr. Roberts’ second wife at age 77 and moved to Minneapolis.

“Emma’s work documents the presence of non-natives (red clover and dandelions) and also many prairie plants, like blazing star and wild bergamot, that grew on the oak savannah surrounding Minneapolis.”



Left: Water Lily (*Nelumbium luteum*). Above: Prairie Smoke (*Geum triflorum*). Courtesy Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

■ In *Terrible Justice: Sioux Chiefs and U.S. Soldiers on the Upper Missouri, 1854-1868* (Norman, OK: Arthur Clark, 2012, 408 p., cloth, \$39.95) author Doreen Chaky explores not only Indian-white relations but also relations—not always harmonious—between the Upper Missouri, Minnesota, Oglala, and Brulé Dakota (referred to as Sioux). The author delved into soldiers’ letters and journals, military and other official communications, and the speeches of Dakota leaders to try to answer a large question: “What did these Upper Missouri Sioux and the mostly volunteer soldiers they encountered intend both for themselves and for their respective people, nations, and progeny?”

■ “Scott Fitzgerald’s *Thoughtbook* is perhaps most interesting because of its mood and voice: upbeat and almost completely without guile.” So begins Dave Page’s afterword to the University of Minnesota’s reprint facsimile edition of the 14-year-old’s 27-page diary, *The Thoughtbook of F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Secret Boyhood Diary*. The slender paperback (Minneapolis, 2013, 70 p., \$12.95) includes a new introduction and afterword by Page, who has edited or co-authored previous works on Fitzgerald.

■ Two from History Press of Charleston: Kristal Leebrick’s homage to the bygone retailer, *Dayton’s: A Twin Cities Institution* (2013, 127 p., paper, \$19.99), will be a trip down Memory Lane for readers who lived and/or shopped at the Minneapolis store from 1902 until 1990 when the Dayton Hudson Corporation purchased Marshall Field’s and rebranded itself with that name. Photos, sidebars, and prose document the history of the department store, including its regular seasonal sales and holiday spectaculars, its Oval Room and designer fashions, and its dining rooms. Popover fans, take note: the River Room’s recipe is printed at the book’s end.

On a completely different note, *Minnesota’s Notorious Nellie King: Wild Woman of the Closed Frontier* (2013, 141 p., \$19.99) recounts the exploits of an

attractive young female criminal and drug addict of many aliases who operated in Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Wisconsin from 1887 to 1893. Author Jerry Kuntz pieces together the clues to the real identity of this now-unknown character in a story that may appeal to those with an interest in the seamy side of local history.

■ Back in print is the second revised edition of *The Red Pipestone Quarry of Minnesota: Archaeological and Historical Reports*, compiled by Alan R. Woolworth (St. Paul: Minnesota Archaeological Society and Prairie Smoke Press, 2013, 227 p., paper, \$24.95, plus \$3.00 shipping and handling). Originally published in 1983 as a special issue of *The Minnesota Archaeologist*, the book contains reports and essays from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ranging from George Catlin's account of his trip to the quarry to Newton H. Winchell's essay on pictographs at the site, Paul Beaubien's notes on the archaeology of Pipestone National Monument, Robert Murray's survey of pipes and smoking customs among Indians of

the northern plains, and Woolworth's selected and annotated bibliography of catlinite and Minnesota's pipestone quarry. The book is available from Prairie Smoke Press, PO Box 439, Champlin MN, 55316 or its website.

■ Norwegians on both sides of the ocean are the subject of two very different recent books. Daron W. Olson's *Vikings across the Atlantic: Emigration and the Building of a Greater Norway, 1860-1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012, 296 p. cloth, \$34.95) examines how immigrants to the U.S. constructed their hyphenated identity and how their "myths" about themselves, rooted in religion, literature, media, and ethnicity, evolved in relation to both Anglo-American culture and the national culture of Norway. Norwegians had developed a transnational concept of Greater Norway, a construct that encompassed both Old World and New. Olson argues that this concept was proven true by World War II, when Norwegians all over the world were willing to fight and die for the homeland.

The annotated correspondence between two brothers offers a grounded view of life on both sides of the ocean—in Dakota Territory and Norway—in this same period. *Dear Unforgettable Brother: The Stavig Letters from Norway and America, 1881-1937* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2013, 148 p., paper, \$19.95) tells the story of the brother who left home to pursue a better life and the one who stayed behind. Compiled and annotated by great-granddaughter Jane Torness Rasmussen and John S. Rasmussen, the volume also contains two essays helpful in providing context for the family story: Edvard Hoem's "One Family, Two Lands: Why Did We Leave?" and Betty A. Berglund's "Norwegian Immigration to the United States and the Northern Great Plains."

■ A wide-ranging collection, *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013, 417 p., paper, \$29.95) features 24 essays by scholars that, individually and collectively, make the point that Anishinaabeg stories—both old and new—carry dynamic answers to questions posed within their communities as well as in other nations and the world at large. Editors Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesik Stark have assembled a multifaceted volume that draws from a variety of disciplines and methodologies to examine stories and storytelling that can be philosophical, analytical, political, humorous—and always transformative. The book's sections forecast but do not limit the volume's creative and thorough approach: *Stories as Roots, Stories as Relationships, Stories as Revelations, Stories as Resilience, Stories as Resistance, Stories as Reclamation, and Stories as Reflections.*

## MINNESOTA HISTORY

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