

## Our readers write . . .

Sara E. Wermiel's article on the Lumber Exchange fire and changes in building technology in the Fall 2014 issue sparked numerous comments from readers. Among them was Ralph Kurtzman, who e-mailed:

"I really enjoyed the excellent article by Sara E. Wermiel on the Lumber Exchange fire. An event that happened about two months ago is a sad—or maybe I should say, criminal—comment on the story. A nine-floor wooden apartment building burned 'to the ground' in San Francisco. The good thing was that it was new and in the process of being finished; there were no serious injuries. However, it was one of several, and people are living in similar fire-traps in San Francisco. Multistory wood buildings are common in the San Francisco Bay Area. . . . Remember: the San Francisco earthquake-fire was 1906, yet it was not enough to make them understand the meaning of the Lumber Exchange fire and the danger of wooden buildings."

■ Since 1954 *Minnesota History* has called on a panel of judges to select the winner of its Solon J. Buck award for the best article published in the magazine during the calendar year. We're pleased to announce that the award for 2013 goes to Joy K. Lintelman for her impressively researched, well-written, and engaging article, "A Hot Heritage: Swedish Americans and Coffee," which appeared in the Spring issue. Delving into published sources (both English and Swedish), diaries, letters, archival records, newspapers, cookbooks, material culture, and online commentary, Lintelman traces the evolving connection between Swedes and Swedish Americans and the beverage that has wafted through their history, illustrating the tastes and values immigrants brought with them from the homeland as well as the development of their ethnic identity in the U.S. She also takes on the question: What is Swedish about Swedish egg coffee? Lintelman, whose 2009 book *I Go to America: Swedish American Women and the Life of Mina Anderson* won a Minnesota Book award, is a professor of history at Concordia College, Moorhead.

In 1971 *Minnesota History* initiated the Theodore C. Blegen Award for the best article by a Minnesota Historical Society staff member. The 2013 prize has

been awarded to Adam Scher for "Long Remember: Minnesota at Gettysburg and Vicksburg," which appeared in the Summer 2013 issue. Noting that "1863 was a pivotal year—a 'game changer' in modern parlance," the article ably and clearly summarizes the ideological shift and military consequences of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation—and what those changes meant, specifically for Minnesotans and others involved in the two key battles of 1863. Scher also presents a dozen items from the MNHS collections, ranging from a battered canteen and a rain hat to battle flags and surgical equipment, which vividly illustrate the experience of war. Scher is the Society's senior collections curator.

This year's judges were Philip J. Anderson, professor emeritus of church history at North Park University, Chicago, and Jennifer McElroy, reference associate at MNHS. Each award includes a prize of \$600.

■ Coming soon: 2015 marks *Minnesota History's* one-hundredth anniversary, and what better way to celebrate a century than with something new? Introducing the *Minnesota History* mobile app! The print magazine you know and love will stay the same, but our new app, suitable for iPad or Android and avail-

able for free to members and subscribers, will feature additional content and updates. When the new and enhanced Spring issue goes live, two recent back issues, Fall 2014 and Winter 2014/15, will also be available. Watch for more information in the next few months.

■ The epic battle between captains of industry (or robber barons, depending on one's point of view) is chronicled in Larry Haeg's engrossing book, *Harriman vs. Hill: Wall Street's Great Railroad War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013, 375 p., cloth, \$29.95). The conflict unfolded over four days in 1901, with the Northern Pacific Railway as the unlikely prize sought by both James J. Hill of the Great Northern and Edward Harriman of the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads. Though twice-bankrupt, the NP was still the key to connecting the markets of the East Coast to the promise of the West. Soaring and then plummeting stock values, near panic, speedy recovery, a Supreme Court ruling against the deal, and Pres. Theodore Roosevelt's reputation as a trust buster are only some of the temporary and more lasting outcomes of the fracas.

■ The Mille Lacs Ojibwes' 50-plus-year struggle to retain their reservation lands (and be compensated for lost acreage), rather than be removed to White Earth Reservation, is one of eight stories that Frederick E. Hoxie carefully recounts in *This Indian Country: American Indian Activists and the Place They Made* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013, 467 p., paper, \$20.00). His 55-page chapter, "The U.S. Court of Claims: The Mille Lacs Ojibwes," presents a clear and detailed account of perseverance and strategy, as the Ojibwe made their case and continued to press it. "The survival and ultimate revival of the Mille Lacs community demonstrated that the struggles of activists . . . would have a tangible impact on the Native—and the American—future," Hoxie concludes. Most of the book's other chapters

center on individual activists, ranging from Sarah Winnemucca (Paiute) to William Potter Ross (Cherokee) and Vine Deloria Jr. (Sioux).

■ Lake Minnetonka histories published over the last 50 years have varied in reliability; some are carefully researched and well documented, while others are crowded with romantic impressions and local folklore. Eric Dregni's *By the Waters of Minnetonka* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, 197 p., cloth, \$29.95) is an undiscerning compilation drawn from both kinds of narratives and written, apparently, with very slight attention to original sources and with more than its share of petty mistakes and misconstrued detail. Content appears to have been chosen for its sensational, rather than clarifying, merits. The major flaw of this book is the author's rarely mediated acceptance of whatever can be discovered in print. For example: Did an antebellum ginseng processor in Wayzata really rely upon African American slaves, as the author asserts? One wishes that such a claim would only be

repeated after serious re-examination. References to sources appear sporadically within the text, making it difficult for the reader to investigate the book's extravagant stories. —*Paul Marvelas*

■ For those dreaming of springtime, what better way to pass the hours than by leafing through a baseball book? New in 2014 from Minneapolis's Nodin Press, *The Minnesota Twins through Memorabilia* is a large-format, highly illustrated volume by Twins curator Clyde Doepner, baseball historian Stew Thornley, and photographer Jerry Stebbins (96 p., cloth, \$29.00). Despite the book's title, its first chapter is "Before the Twins," showcasing objects associated with players such as Walter Johnson, ace pitcher when the franchise was still in Washington, D.C., Moonlight Graham, the Minnesotan with a brief career in major league baseball, and Babe Ruth, who occasionally barnstormed through the state. Teams, including the Minneapolis Millerettes and St. Paul Colored Gophers, also appear in this section. The book then moves on to the arrival of major league

baseball in Minnesota and a gorgeous array of objects, accompanied by their stories, documenting managers, stadiums, milestones, championship games, giveaways, and more. The book ends with a page of advice about collecting Twins memorabilia.

■ A new publication has been issued as part of a world-famous Minnesota institution's sesquicentennial celebration: Arlene Keeling's *The Nurses of the Mayo Clinic: Caring Healers* (Rochester: Mayo Foundation for Education and Clinical Research, 2014, 152 p., cloth, \$19.95). While the story of the doctors Mayo and the clinic's origins are known, this amply illustrated volume presents, for the first time in one place, the history of nursing at the clinic as it grew from all-important patient care to include education and research. The author, a distinguished professor of nursing at the University of Virginia, is also a PhD and a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing. The book is available online, including through the Mayo Clinic store.

## Minnesota HISTORY

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