

Dictionary of Missouri Biography, edited by Lawrence O. Christensen, William E. Foley, Gary R. Kremer, and Kenneth H. Winn. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999. vii, 832 pp. Map, index. \$49.95 cloth.

Reviewer Philip R. Vandermeer is professor of history at Arizona State University. He is the author of *The Hoosier Politician: Officeholding and Political Culture in Indiana, 1896-1920* (1985).

The past decade has seen the publication of numerous biographical dictionaries, especially the multivolume *American National Biography*. The near absence of comparable works for individual states suggests their difficulty and highlights the success of the *Dictionary of Missouri Biography* (DMB). Featuring sketches of 724 individuals from throughout the state's history, this excellent volume reflects well on both the editors and the authors, a number of whom had previously published works on their subjects.

Traditionally, such dictionaries have focused on political and military figures. The DMB editors started by including all of Missouri's governors and U.S. senators. Consequently, most of the state's best-known public figures—from Thomas Hart Benton to Harry Truman and Stuart Symington—made the list. Other important politicians also covered are several St. Louis mayors, the notorious Pendergasts, and various U.S. Representatives: Speaker Champ Clark, liberal gadfly Richard Bolling, Richard "Silver Dick" Bland, and several long-term members of Congress, such as Leonor Sullivan and Dewey Short.

The majority of DMB entries, however, represent other fields, from economics to folklore, music, and art; and from sports and media to religion and philanthropy. In further distinction from the old norm of biographical collections, the DMB also includes women and persons of color. This broadened definition of importance includes characters as diverse as Jessie James, theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, novelist Kate Chopin, baseball star Dizzy Dean, and brewer August Busch.

The nearly 300 authors received sufficient space for their subjects: most sketches run roughly 1,000 words; a few are less, while important figures receive 2,000 to 3,000 words. Overall, the essays are quite good. At a minimum, they provide basic information in a readable style and with several references; the best offer insightful portraits with thoughtful interpretations of broader topics. Appropriately, Alonzo Hamby's discussion of Harry Truman is a model, as is Susan Curtis's biography of ragtime composer Scott Joplin. Also compelling are the sketches of politician Frank Blair by William Parrish, of painter Thomas Hart Benton by Henry Adams, and of city planner George Kessler by Edward Rafferty, to mention a few.

Although the entry selections are generally good, the editors made several key decisions that merit discussion. Though practically advantageous, excluding persons still alive in 1994 clearly reduced the volume's post-1950 coverage (no John Danforth and worse, no Stan Musial). Second, including those who resided in Missouri only as children effectively imports figures whose fame developed elsewhere. Better, then, to have dropped Langston Hughes and Walt Disney, for example, and included adult Missourians who built the state's radio and television services. Finally, some areas seem somewhat neglected: one will find only two of the more than one hundred state supreme court justices and only a third of the congressmen serving twenty or more years.

Ultimately, any volume like this reflects largely what has already been published. Some of these portraits (those on labor leaders, for example) substantively expand the literature, but the success of this volume mainly demonstrates the larger truth: during the past thirty years Missouri has been well served by its historians and its press.

Diaries of Girls and Women: A Midwestern American Sampler, edited by Suzanne L. Bunkers. Wisconsin Studies in Autobiography. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001. xiv, 457 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$60.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer Marilyn Motz is associate professor of popular culture at Bowling Green State University. Her publications include studies of nineteenth-century midwestern diaries, personal letters, and photograph albums.

Diaries of Girls and Women features excerpts from the diaries of 46 girls and women from Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The excerpts date from 1837 to 1999. They represent diversity in age, class, race, ethnicity, education, religion, and rural/urban location. Seventeen of the diaries were written by Iowa residents, five of which date to the nineteenth century, four between 1900 and 1920, four between 1935 and 1975, and four to the 1990s.

Suzanne Bunkers, professor of English at Minnesota State University, Mankato, is an expert on American women's diaries; her edited books include *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*. Her 37-page introductory essay places the diary excerpts in the context of current scholarship on the diary as a narrative form, with bibliographic notes to guide further reading. Bunkers discusses why it is important to study diaries, suggests strategies for interpreting them, and outlines themes common to the selected diaries. She concludes

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