

Six Generations Here: A Farm Family Remembers, by Marjorie L. McLellan. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1997. 138 pp. Illustrations, notes, genealogical chart. \$24.95 paper.

NAN WOLVERTON, OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE

A volume of family photographs might seem at first glance merely the stuff of nostalgia, but Marjorie L. McLellan, in *Six Generations Here: A Farm Family Remembers*, demonstrates how meaningful and informative photographs can be. This collection of photographic essays is a visual narrative of how six generations of a Pomeranian immigrant family in Dodge County, Wisconsin, constructed identity for itself in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. McLellan deftly weaves photographs, stories, records, and memorabilia into a case study of how success and prosperity in the New World was reconciled with the loss of an Old World past.

Arriving in Wisconsin from Germany in 1851, the Krueger family, like many midwestern settlers, sought economic success as farmers and adopted changing technology. They also, however, felt the need to reenact and reinterpret the past—as if to remind themselves of where they came from even while they were embracing modernization. That their ethnic identity was important to them is illustrated by numerous posed photographs of family members dressed up in Pomeranian peasant garb accompanied by antique family “props” such as spinning wheels and homemade baskets.

Other photographs seem to recall the passing farms of pioneer immigrants. Family members pose with outdated farm equipment, and landscape views document changes on the farmstead such as an old split-rail fence cut off to make way for a new roadway. But the Kruegers’ photographs also celebrate modernization. Photographs of domestic scenes show a mixture of hand-made and store-bought objects. Children, for instance, are photographed with their grandfather’s hand-carved figures next to store-bought dolls. McLellan points out that part of what success meant for the Kruegers was the ability to accumulate store-bought objects to pass on to their children. The mix of consumer goods and traditional hand-made craft items suggests that the Kruegers responded to the market economy and new consumer patterns while still recalling their ethnic identification.

Those interested in Iowa history will find McLellan’s work intriguing for a number of reasons. Because some members of the Krueger family migrated from Wisconsin to Iowa, McLellan devotes part of a chapter to the family’s experience in Iowa. Letters and photographs help document how the Kruegers blended into and sometimes con-

flicted with the German and Welsh settlements of Cresco and Lime Springs, Iowa. Those familiar with the common experiences of Iowa farm families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries will enjoy making comparisons with this family. The story of the Kruegers' attempt to adapt to a world wrought with change is worth comparing with that of other farm families—immigrant or not. Those interested in the making of century farms in the Midwest will find the Kruegers' story compelling because a primary goal for the family as it sought continuity with the past was to maintain a presence on the land.

Kathleen Neils Conzen's informative essay, "Their Stake in the Land," provides the broader context needed to give the Kruegers' story regional significance, although it would have been better placed as a preface to the book rather than inserted after the first chapter. The photographs in the volume might have served the reader even better had they been numbered for quick reference from text to image. It would also have been preferable if all photographs in the volume were given dates to help readers keep generations straight, although the generational chart at the back of the volume is a useful guide.

Any student of history wishing to gain insight into working with material culture would do well to study this publication. McLellan shows how objects have meanings for people beyond their everyday uses. The Kruegers, like many midwestern farm families, passed along artifacts from one generation to the next, just as they passed on farm land. Those artifacts served as symbols of identity for the family and played a central role in the family's need to develop a sense of shared identity. The photographs in this collection are filled with such everyday objects, carefully included in staged, idealized representations of a family that turned the camera on itself. *Six Generations Here* shows us how one family developed a perception of its past while at the same time helping us to understand on the local level the immigrant experience that helped create the rural landscape of the Midwest.

America's Communal Utopias, edited by Donald E. Pitzer. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. xxi, 537 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$60.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY EDWARD K. SPANN, INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

If nothing else, this collection of essays covers many interesting aspects of America's communal past. The 17 essays deal with, among others, Ephrata, the Shakers, the Harmonists, Robert Owen and New Harmony, Mormon communalism, Fourierism and Brook Farm, the In-

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