

News from the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home, edited by Walter D. Kamphoefner, Wolfgang Helbich, and Ulrike Sommer, translations by Susan Carter Vogel. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991. ix, 645 pp. Illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DOROTHEE SCHNEIDER, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Amid the large number of monographs, biographical writings, and other publications on immigrants to the United States that have been issued in recent years, this book deserves special attention. More than a decade ago researchers at the University of Bochum, Germany, began collecting and preserving letters German emigrants to the United States had written home to their relatives and friends. From this large-scale effort grew a collection of more than five thousand letters, a fraction of which have now been translated and edited for publication in the United States. The result of these efforts is a treasure trove not just for the immigrant historian but also for anyone interested in the immigrant experience of Germans in general and the social history of the midwestern states. What makes the collection so interesting for a wide audience is the great variety of viewpoints represented by the letter writers and the directness of their style. From the pious farmer in Michigan to the urban factory worker, from the enterprising servant girl in New York to the failed entrepreneur in the far West, the nearly infinite variety of experiences within this largest of nineteenth-century immigrant groups can be well understood.

To provide some continuity and cohesion, the letters consist of twenty family series, grouped into three categories: farmers, workers, and domestic servants. In a rough sense, these are an accurate reflection of the three largest occupational groupings of German immigrants, but to this reader the differences were more apparent than the similarities among the men and women in each group. Among the workers we find a successful Milwaukee hardware merchant but also, more typically, a miner, a number of laborers, and artisans. Many of the farmers started out as laborers, but in the American context became rural entrepreneurs. Most interesting in many ways are the letters by domestic servants, rare among historical documents. They often give a close-up view of the lives of the working class (servants) and the middle class (masters) at the same time.

Although none of the letter writers were immigrants to Iowa, many letters reflect experiences of Germans in the surrounding

midwestern states, and therefore the volume should be of considerable interest to readers who want to learn about the lives of rural and urban Germans in the midwestern states. In addition, this volume is invaluable for its meticulously researched and clearly written editorial texts. The extensive introductions to the book in general and to the three subcultures reflect the latest research on German-American migration and immigration to the United States, and the reader will gain a vast array of information and survey knowledge from them.

Altogether this book should be a very valuable addition to any reading list concerned with the firsthand experiences of immigrants as well as a rich source of information on German immigration to the United States.

Watchdog of Loyalty: The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety During World War I, by Carl H. Chrislock. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991. xiv, 387 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical note, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY LAWRENCE O. CHRISTENSEN, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ROLLA

In *Watchdog of Loyalty*, Professor Carl H. Chrislock draws a comprehensive picture of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety (MCPS). He chose not to compare the Minnesota commission with other state councils of defense because the Minnesota legislature established the MCPS by a statute that predated the call from the National Council of Defense, the impetus for the organization of most other state councils. In addition, with few exceptions, other state councils had limited powers and basically carried out the policies formulated in Washington, D.C.; the Minnesota legislature, by contrast, gave its commission "almost dictatorial powers."

With those powers, the Minnesota commission defended the socioeconomic status quo "against a rising tide of radicalism" in farm areas and "a growing labor union militance in the mines, forests and working-class wards" (x) instead of working with Washington to mobilize Minnesotans for the war effort. The commission refused to implement federal policy when labor-management disputes erupted in 1918, and it disagreed with federal policy toward the Nonpartisan League. Washington sought to co-opt the League, while the Minnesota commission tried to exclude it by encouraging fearful "local officials to ban league activity" in their areas (x). Although the commission led an "intolerant loyalty crusade" against

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