

ments. Territorial voters approved all three constitutions by margins that increased from 29 to 91 percent. Lauck counters Lamar's criticism of the delegates' rejection of reforms such as prohibition and woman suffrage, arguing that the action "was primarily based on cultural objections and pragmatism, not the economic self-interest of statehood advocates" (135).

Lauck readily admits support of early twenty-first-century conservative politics in his approach to scholarly interpretation. Thus it is difficult to fully accept his claim that "I organized the book based on my reaction to what I found" after "perusing the historical sources" (22). Yet this study is built on a thorough reading of primary as well as secondary sources: newspapers as well as governmental, organizational, and personal documents. The publisher provided an interesting set of contemporary photographs and maps. Unfortunately, several elements may confuse readers. Lauck implies that the Great Sioux Reservation was created in 1877 rather than in 1868. The map on page 12, labeled "the railroad network in Dakota Territory" in 1889, shows only eastern South Dakota, falsely implying that there were no railroads elsewhere in the territory. Despite these minor quibbles, this is a well-written, thoughtful analysis of the political culture in one of the largest U.S. territories.

*The State We're In: Reflections on Minnesota History*, edited by Annette Atkins and Deborah L. Miller. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010. viii, 337 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer Marvin Bergman has edited the *Annals of Iowa* since 1987. He is also the editor of the *Iowa History Reader* (1996, 2008) and a coeditor of *The Biographical Dictionary of Iowa* (2008).

*The State We're In* reflects the diverse approaches to state history that are possible in the present environment — from a close literary and historical analysis of some early accounts of hunting expeditions by Henry Hastings Sibley, later to become one of Minnesota's most influential citizens and its first governor (there's a similar analysis of prognostications of Minnesota's future by Sibley and two other prominent Minnesotans in the 1850s), to a memoir of a flood in Marshall in 1957. There is even a wonderful piece of short fiction that ends the volume, though it's not clear whether it is set in the past, and its setting vaguely somewhere in Minnesota is not important to the story's development. This diversity makes for an apt celebration of Minnesota's sesquicentennial — the volume originated in a conference held in 2008, the

state's actual sesquicentennial year — but it's not entirely clear what other purpose this unfocused collection of brief essays might serve.

That said, the rich opening essays (after the editors' introduction) by James H. Madison and Paula M. Nelson, reflecting on the current state of state history from a regional (Madison) and local (Nelson) perspective are worth the price of the book. While insisting on the importance of state history, Madison refuses to yield to the temptation to justify its importance by pointing to some set of images or values that midwesterners (or Minnesotans or Iowans) supposedly share. He also cautions against a narrative of progress, "comfort history . . . that makes us feel good about ourselves and our home place as it submerges and hides other stories that might cause discomfort" (22). Nelson adds a caution against seeing humans acting in history only as part of groups (the working class, Norwegians, Anglo-Saxon Protestants). Instead, she makes a case for a "humanities-based history [that] never forgets the essential humanity of its subjects and the commonalities that bring us together, despite race, ethnicity, religion, gender, class, and other differences" (28). She also balances Madison's warning against "comfort history" with a cautious endorsement of "exceptionalism" in state and local history. "The 'exceptional,'" she writes, "often provides powerful stories for us and can serve as motivating examples, or warnings, to those who study them" (30).

Otherwise, the volume includes topics and approaches for nearly every taste: essays on the "forgotten" St. Peters Treaty of 1837 and the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862, essays that harshly judge the white settlers, seconded by a personal essay by the descendant of Irish settlers who benefited from the displacement of indigenous peoples even if they did not participate directly; a plea to tell and preserve stories connected to the Mississippi River; scholarly perspectives on baseball teams at Indian boarding schools in the early twentieth century and on African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression; a defense of the authenticity of the controversial Kensington Runestone; a summary of the Civil War correspondence of two brothers who had contrasting perspectives on their service in the First Minnesota Battery; an apologia for a career in public history; a close analysis of a seemingly simple posed office photograph from 1901; and an account of what one can learn from a close reading of local and ethnic cookbooks. And this is just a sampling of the 24 essays included in the volume — a rich feast for those interested in a taste of Minnesota history and perhaps a suggestive appetizer for those more interested in the history of surrounding states.