

Germans in Minnesota, by Kathleen Neils Conzen. The People of Minnesota Series. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003. ix, 101 pp. Illustrations, notes, suggested readings, index. \$13.95 paper.

Reviewer Eleanor L. Turk is professor of history emerita at Indiana University East. She has published a number of articles on German Americans in Kansas.

Minnesotans who read this fifth book in The People of Minnesota series may be surprised to learn that people of German ancestry, not Scandinavian, are the state's most numerous and widespread population. Unlike the highly visible Scandinavians, however, the Germans blended into the mainstream in the twentieth century, losing their earlier high visibility.

Kathleen Neils Conzen, one of the nation's preeminent immigration scholars, has long studied the Germans in Minnesota. Her collaboration with the Minnesota State Historical Society on this book makes it an important and welcome addition to the history of German immigration to the United States. Highly readable, it offers a model that should encourage other states and ethnic groups to research and appreciate their heritage.

The narrative starts with a brief introduction to the conditions Germans faced in Europe that led some to choose immigration to the United States and to Minnesota. With interesting examples of individual settlers and lavish use of photographs and illustrations from Minnesota Historical Society files, the main part of the study focuses on life in the communities these emigrants established: their churches and schools, their choices of livelihood, and their celebrations. Conzen also points out how their culture was diluted over successive generations. The book closes with the delightful personal account of George Kulzer, who settled in Stearns County in 1856. Recommendations for additional readings are included.

Based on diaries, letters, census data, and scholarly sources, this slim volume offers much to its readers.

Fanatics and Fire-Eaters: Newspapers and the Coming of the Civil War, by Lorman A. Ratner and Dwight L. Teeter Jr. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. The History of Communication Series. xiii, 138 pp. Notes, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Mark Wahlgren Summers is professor of history at the University of Kentucky. He is the author of many books and articles about Gilded Age politics, including *The Press Gang: Newspapers and Politics, 1865-1878* (1994).

A pack of political prostitutes and tub-thumpers, nineteenth-century editors were always ready to lie for their country. From a safe distance,

they make terrific reading. Close up, their irresponsibility and certainty about things that just weren't so are repellant. Lorman Ratner and Dwight Teeter Jr. know; they have seen them close up. Now, in *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*, they show how the images that papers north and south drew of their compatriots made a peaceful patch-up of the slavery issue nearly impossible to arrange.

Ratner and Teeter have a case, obviously, though they make it by sticking to six flash-points between 1856 and 1861. Firm in revisionist faith, they leave an unmistakable impression that the war could have been prevented, if not for unreasonable men. To prove their case, they scan editorial columns in a dozen newspapers for the two or three weeks around the incident under examination. Every time—surprise!—they find northern editors shouting angrily mostly one way, and southern ones raging mostly the other.

Yes, yes, true, true, point granted, but . . . wouldn't it have been better to peruse page one, too? One might suggest that the real force polarizing Americans came not from how editors digested events, but from events themselves, and not those of one day or a bad weekend, but that cumulative supping full on horrors (or at least offenses) over a generation. A knock-'em-dead book could be made by exposing the way facts were twisted or made up; they surely were. But by starting in 1856? By sticking to the howls of Hoe-press Hotspurs?

Readers will marvel more at the book's mistakes than the editors' emphatics. A mob kills Elijah Lovejoy in August 1836, and all over again on November 7, 1836, two pages later. (You can't keep a good man down; Lovejoy died a final time, exactly one year later.) Why Preston Brooks was lurking on May 21 to avenge insults that Senator Charles Sumner had leveled at his relative, when, according to the authors, Sumner delivered his speech on May 22, and how Robert B. Rhett could be elected to the Senate in 1850 for the last two years of George McDuffie's term, which expired in 1847: these mysteries pale beside the authors' discovery that President Buchanan received *two* constitutions from Kansas, one pro-slavery and one anti-slavery, and chose the former. Many of the mistakes are whoppers. When the authors quote southern newspapers seething about one thing, as if it were another, and base their reading of a leading article's fine rolling frenzy on a vote in Congress that, in fact, had not occurred, more knowledgeable readers will dissolve their union with this book. Haven't Ratner and Teeter actually read the news columns themselves? Would it be too onerous to skim the basic books on the subject or even venture a whole month, or even two, into the newspapers?

More often than not, misstatements and ellipses work to dead-cat the "fanatics" of the North: that is, any Republican editor. Some passages, such as the coverage of the caning of Sumner, are almost indecent in what is stressed and what is left unsaid. Other parts, such as the plea that the Kansas-Nebraska Act was a "compromise" to settle a mounting storm over slavery in the territories, suggest an irrepressible conflict between this book and historical fact. Most unforgivably, when dealing with such a fun topic, this book gives journalism, the liveliest American art, a deadening uniformity. Slack in research, slim in length, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters* could have used a little fanaticism itself.

An Uncommon Time: The Civil War and the Northern Home Front, edited by Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller. The North's Civil War Series. New York: Fordham University Press, 2002. xx, 362 pp. Tables, notes, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Donald C. Elder III is professor of history at Eastern New Mexico University. He edited *Love Amid Turmoil: The Civil War Letters of William and Mary Vermilion* (2003).

During the Second World War, American citizens thought to be shirking their patriotic duties were often met with the sarcastic question, "Don't you know there's a war on?" As the essays found in *An Uncommon Time* make clear, few individuals living in the loyal states during the Civil War would have needed to be similarly reminded of the conflict that had engulfed the nation. Taking their cue from Maris Vinovskis's admonition in 1990 that historians need to study the effects of that war on northern society, Paul Cimbala and Randall Miller have gathered works that cover a broad range of topics relating to that subject. Although a book of this sort cannot fully cover the northern home front, it does bring the overall picture into clearer focus.

The 12 essays contained in *An Uncommon Time* represent an interesting mixture of approaches taken to gain a greater understanding of the civilians' war. Melinda Lawson and Michael Conlin, for example, chose to examine one individual in relation to the conflict. Lawson selected Jay Cooke as her focus, exploring how he used his financial acumen to help the Lincoln administration successfully market war bonds. She finds that Cooke was no Haym Salomon, who risked his personal fortune to help finance the American cause during the Revolutionary War; rather, Cooke managed the bond drive to improve his own economic standing. Joseph Henry, the first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, is Conlin's subject. He discusses Henry's efforts to preserve his vision of the Smithsonian as a bastion of pure scientific

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