

Sweden: The Nation's History, by Franklin D. Scott. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977. pp. xviii, 654. Index, maps, illustrations, notes and bibliography. \$25.00.

Long recognized as the dean of American scholars in the area of Scandinavian history, Franklin D. Scott has devoted fifty years to studying, teaching, and writing about Sweden and its Nordic neighbors. Although most of his distinguished teaching career was spent on the faculty of Northwestern University, his first college position was as an assistant professor at Simpson College in Indianola during the years 1925-1928. Fittingly, the Iowa school chose 1975 to honor Scott with the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

In the preface to this fact-filled yet readable volume, the author describes his purpose as an attempt "to give a cohesive explanation of national development, put in a chronological-topical framework, weaving together as many as possible of the multitudinous historical strands" (p. vii). While not totally eschewing historiographical debate, Scott's efforts are largely directed toward producing a synthesis which describes the long, often painful emergence of modern Sweden. Passing quickly over the era of the Vikings, the coming of Christianity to the North, and the travails of medieval Sweden, Scott delineates the creation of the modern state under Gustav I and the rapid growth of the Swedish empire under Gustav II Adolf, who created "one of the most efficient and well-organized governments in Europe" (p. 182). Even so, the empire could not last; confronted by powerful rivals to the east and south, drained by a century and more of war, and left virtually leaderless by the death of Karl XII in 1718, Sweden's century as a great power was over.

By the early nineteenth century, Sweden, with a population of slightly more than two million dominated by the four estates structure—nobles, clergy, burghers, and, to a lesser degree, landowning farmers (*bönder*)—had fallen to the point that it was one of the poorer countries of Europe. Yet, in what the author describes as "an amazing achievement," within a few decades Sweden had become one of the most prosperous and democratic nations in the entire world. What caused this "Great Transformation?" The answer to that question forms the essence of Scott's book.

Of primary importance, he argues, was the rapid growth of Sweden's population during the nineteenth century. Despite the emigration of over a million Swedes, all but two percent of whom came to the United States, the Swedish population managed to more than double. Hard work and thrift were attributes deeply ingrained in much of that expanding population. In addition, Sweden had the right combination of inventive geniuses and practical manufacturers, individuals who nonetheless were willing to cooperate with government planners in producing a rapid industrial break-through. Other factors involved include the ability to stay at peace, an abundance of high demand raw materials, largely wood and iron ore, a somewhat fortuitous inflow of capital, and, less tangible, perhaps, "a deep national pride and a will to achieve" (p. 467).

Thirteen maps, more than seventy photographs, nearly forty pages of notes and selected bibliography, and an extensive index—all greatly augment this massive and highly competent work. Even in these days of inflated book prices, twenty-five dollars may seem excessive, but if I were to have only one book on Sweden in my library it would be Franklin D. Scott's *Sweden: The Nation's History*.

—Peter L. Petersen
West Texas State University

Joseph N. Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies, edited and translated by Edmund C. and Martha Coleman Bray. The Minnesota Historical Society, 1976. pp. 294. Maps, illustrations, appendices, and index. \$14.50.

The true value of a primary account often transcends any strictly historical relevance it may have. Such is the case of the Brays' exemplary translation and elucidation of Joseph N. Nicollet's exploration journals of the northern Great Plains region in 1838-1839.

Joseph N. Nicollet was a transplanted Frenchman who came to the United States in 1832 at the age of 46. Trained as an astronomer and cartographer, Nicollet in 1838 and 1839 led two major exploring expeditions, both liberally financed by the United States' government, into the relatively unexplored region wedged between the Missouri and Minnesota Rivers. Nicollet's extensive journals, maps, and astronomical and meteorological information greatly enlarged the government's scant knowledge of the regions he explored, providing a tentative, but well-grounded springboard to later exploration and settlement.

The observations recorded and the wealth of data collected by his exploring parties (which included luminary John C. Fremont), offer modern-day researchers in a variety of fields—history, geology, botany, geography, anthropology, meteorology, cartography, and others—a rare opportunity to take full advantage of Nicollet's detailed, encyclopedic, and above all, fastidiously accurate observations. And for the individual merely interested in an intriguing, readable account of exploration in the trans-Mississippi West, Nicollet's journals offer an equally rewarding experience.

However, full credit for the success and overall usability of Nicollet's journals must go to the Brays. Assembling Nicollet's journals, notebooks, maps, and records, scattered piecemeal in several major collections and libraries, the Brays have translated Nicollet's materials from the French, simultaneously integrating them with Fremont's records to form a coherent, chronological record of Nicollet's explorations. And the Brays have augmented that material tremendously through their own painstaking research, providing a substantial complement of related primary materials which illuminate nearly every person, place, or thing described in the text,

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