

in an essay that respects their significance without minimizing them in too brief an overview.

The reproductions within the book are excellent and substantially augment the text. Together they form an attractive package that will be a nice addition to coffee tables and collections of museum catalogs, even if it is not an especially significant one.

Happy as a Big Sunflower: Adventures in the West, 1876-1880, by Rolf Johnson, edited by Richard E. Jensen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press in association with the Nebraska State Historical Society, 2000. xxxii, 270 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$15.00 paper.

Reviewer Terrence J. Lindell is professor of history at Wartburg College. His research and teaching focus on the World War II home front and the history of immigration and ethnic groups in the West and Midwest.

Rolf Johnson, the American-born son of Swedish immigrants, began keeping a diary on the last day of 1875, a few months before his family joined a group of Illinois Swedes in a venture to build new homes for themselves in Phelps County, Nebraska. He continued the diary, with varying degrees of consistency, until the fall of 1880 (though there may have been later entries no longer extant). Johnson, who turned twenty the day he headed west, experienced the early days of farm- and community building on the Nebraska frontier. While in Phelps County he performed farm work for his father and neighbors, got involved in local politics, taught school for a term, and led an active social life. He apparently suffered from wanderlust, for he also took part in a buffalo hunt, spent two seasons as an itinerant harvester, and in 1879 abandoned a homestead claim for adventures in Dakota, Colorado, and New Mexico. That colorful characters and the romance of the road appealed more to him than mundane farm life is evident in the depth of his descriptions.

Portions of the diary have previously appeared in print, but only in limited venues. Richard Jensen, who does an impressive job of filling out Johnson's story in the notes, is to be commended for bringing this work to a larger audience. It will appeal primarily to general and scholarly readers interested in the 1870s Nebraska frontier, but will also attract those interested in the Black Hills gold rush and the Rocky Mountain West.

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