

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

ditional foreign immigrant stock after the Civil War) can well belong in the opposite category. Jensen's characterization of the Democratic New Deal's antimodern nature, in its assumptions of an end to economic growth and of more or less perpetual hard times, is a brilliant insight.

But perhaps the greatest utility of a modernization approach for post-Civil War Illinois historians is that it allows a satisfying conceptual treatment of the state as a whole, thereby avoiding the schizophrenia so common in earlier renditions of the state's history, which have been unable to unify disparate accounts of what went on in Chicago and downstate. Jensen reveals this to be false dichotomy; for example he notes that in twentieth-century Illinois modern downstate farmers have many attitudes in common with Chicago businessmen; indeed he asserts that agriculture is the most "progressive" element of the Illinois economy. Likewise, unionized blue-collar workers can qualify as among the most traditional of the contemporary population.

Some "traditionalists" among historians will consider this book outrageous; it is certainly audacious, and it stimulates the reader to a rather constant dialogue with the author. On balance, in spite of its questionable aspects, it is probably the most interesting book-length treatment of Illinois's history since Governor Ford's was published over a century ago.

Rodney O. Davis
Knox College
Galesburg, IL

Minnesota: A Bicentennial History, by William E. Lass. New York: W. W. Norton/American Association for State and Local History, 1978. pp. xi, 224. Maps, notes, illustrations, suggestions for further reading, index. \$9.95.

Minnesota is large, diversified, and vigorous.

In the North Star State are fertile fields of grain, cattle pens, turkey farms, lakes sparkling with cobalt blue, ore mines sending across Lake Superior precious metal to foundries producing iron and steel. There are some stands of virgin pine and many

Book Reviews

second-growth trees. In Minnesota, the Mississippi River begins its long, important journey to the sea. To many Americans, the Mayo Clinic at Rochester is almost synonymous with Minnesota. The state, with its wilderness areas, is a mecca for sportsmen and campers. In St. Paul are the headquarters of the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association, a powerful agricultural and political organization. At Collegeville, the architecture of St. John's Abbey has captured world-wide recognition. The University of Minnesota's main campuses are spread across acres in both Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Minnesota Symphony Orchestra and the Guthrie Theater are applauded from coast to coast.

Although Minneapolis and St. Paul are "twin cities," they are not identical twins, for each possesses its own personality, individuality, and ethnic backgrounds. The masterful Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party was Minnesota's contribution both to state and national politics. It grew and wilted within the life span of one man. The area's climate is awful—"nine months of bitter cold and three months of thin ice," which, of course, is somewhat of an exaggeration, for springs and autumns are beautiful. Names on the land come from Sioux and Chippewa cultures, the lips of French voyageurs, and from Irish, German, Scandinavian, Finnish emigrants and settlers. Some ring musically and others lie dry on the tongue: Winnibigoshisk, Traverse des Sioux, Pokgama, Danube, Duluth, Woman Lake, Sandstone.

Lass's narrative of Iowa's northern neighbor is the result of an assignment conceived by the American Association of State and Local History, which as a project of the late Bicentennial, determined to publish short histories of each of the states. Authors were not to write comprehensive chronicles, research monographs, or provide new data for scholars. What was requested was an "interpretive, sensitive, thoughtful, individual, even personal" summing up of a state's history. Each author was given wide latitude.

Professor Lass, who has taught at Mankato State College for more than a quarter of a century, chose to condense and compress and to write a chronological account with, as he admits, "the land as a focal point." That is a respectable and traditional

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

approach if it is made clear that although the land worked its will upon the people, the people also dominated and mastered the land. Within the framework of the land, Lass discusses the various developing factors of Minnesota's agriculture, lumbering, mining, and, of course, railroads and the development of commerce. Much of the material mirrors the work of William W. Folwell in his four-volume history of the state and of Theodore C. Blegen in his *Minnesota: A History of the State*, although Blegen's enthusiasm and lively style is not reflected in Lass's prose.

In any event, the Lass account, reminiscent of a textbook, pushes courageously along, narrating the travels of early explorers, of the role of great fur companies, of the difficulties of gaining territorial status and being admitted into the Union. The rush of people after the Civil War is described adequately, yet somehow—possibly because of lack of space—the settler is more of a paper figure than a man of flesh and blood.

Final chapters capsule Minnesota's legacy of protest, concluding with emphasis upon the parts played by Hubert H. Humphrey, Walter Mondale, and other Minnesotans who served in important political positions. The author also sketches agriculture's modernity, speaks of the growth of the milling industry (with a bow to the ubiquitous "Betty Crocker"), comments upon conservation of natural resources, and carries the story of the taconite industry to date.

Now and again throughout this primer one raises an eyebrow. In his preface, the author correctly enough states that, despite the discovery of the Kensington Rune Stone, the stone was a fake and that no solid evidence presently exists to prove that Vikings were the first white men on Minnesota soil. That should be sufficient, yet Lass, in an "Interlude" sandwiched between chapters goes into six pages of detail. He devotes ten lines to discussing fearsome critters of the North Country and gives the impression that stories about them were told by lumberjacks. Actually, the mythical creatures were invented by William T. Cox in 1910, about the time the Minnesota timber frontier had reached and passed its climax. About three paragraphs are devoted to Paul Bunyan. He, of course, is a part of "fakelore." But despite what the author writes, Bunyan, speaking strictly,

Book Reviews

hardly appeared in the Detroit *News-Tribune* story of July 24, 1910. Lass fails to mention the impetus given Bunyan in pamphlets issued by the Red River Lumber Company. With all the emphasis placed on the Vikings, fearsome critters, and the Bunyan tales of exaggeration, it is curious that the Mayo Clinic and its founders are given only a couple of lines.

Indeed, except for scattered references, major attention to cultural activities—education, arts, theater, books, authors—is meager. Nevertheless, one unacquainted with the history of the state will find substantial information. Readers should not rely upon the index, which, like some others in the Bicentennial volumes, is a pitiful travesty.

Philip D. Jordan
Burlington, IA

Ups and Downs of Iowa's Railroads, by William Nelson Whitehill. Marshalltown, Iowa 50158: Privately published by the author, 1500 Lincoln Tower Circle, Apt. 402, 1978. pp. 131. \$6.50 (paper).

Railroad service came to Iowa just nine years after it gained statehood in 1846; in short order rails spread through every section. This was not simply because of an advanced technology and expanding capital investment which together would have inevitably brought at least a modicum of rail service. Rather, Iowa was fortunately located: immediately west of Chicago, an aspiring village at the southern edge of Lake Michigan; immediately east of the western terminus of the Union Pacific; north of established St. Louis and southwest of established Milwaukee; and in proximity to the burgeoning communities of Omaha, Kansas City, and St. Paul. Thus Iowa naturally received a host of horizontal or east-west carriers which bridged the intervening distance between Chicago and the Union Pacific and it received, as well, various vertical or north-south roads. All of these spawned branches to carry the produce from Iowa's incredibly rich soil. In the end, each of the state's counties was served by the steam cars and Iowa became one of the top-

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.