

the American dream of upward mobility. Thus they founded numerous academies where their young could learn to make their way in the new land while also cultivating their faith in an affirming environment. Typical of such schools was Concordia College which, when it opened in 1891, advertised itself as a "school for both sexes" comprising "a business, practical, and classical course." As the public high schools developed rapidly after the turn of the century, the academies either went out of business (by the 1920s few were left) or made attempts to become colleges. A few succeeded. Except for Luther College—the oldest but also unique in that it began as a full-scale college—such mainstream colleges as St. Olaf, Augustana in South Dakota, Pacific Lutheran, and Concordia began as academies. The story of how these schools survived is itself an introduction to a sometimes neglected chapter in the story of how one major ethnic group made its way into the multicultural American melting pot while also maintaining a character of its own.

On Firm Foundation Grounded is a thoroughly researched institutional history that will be of special interest to alumni. Yet it is much more than that. It is an excellent case study of the process of acculturation by which the Norwegians worked out their own "experiment with the wilderness." Engagingly written and with careful attention to American social history, the author has maintained a good balance between institutional history and the cultural development of an ethnic group intimately associated with the upper Midwest.

The HON Story: A History of HON Industries, 1944–1985, by C. Maxwell Stanley and James H. Soltow. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991. x, 197 pp. Illustrations, graphs, appendixes, index. \$24.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM B. FRIEDRICKS, SIMPSON COLLEGE

In combining two perspectives, *The HON Story* is unusual among company histories: the manuscript was originally written by the late C. Maxwell Stanley, one of the founders of the firm, and completed by James Soltow, a professional business historian, now emeritus at Michigan State University. The varied backgrounds of the two authors provide an insider's view of a small Iowa-based company's rapid rise from its modest beginnings in 1944 to its 1985 listing as a Fortune 500 company as well as the distance and objectivity of professional historian.

HON Industries' success was based on the entrepreneurship of its founders, the creation of a sound management strategy and struc-

ture, an enlightened labor policy that allowed the firm to obtain and retain good employees, and, as Stanley mentions several times throughout the book, luck. Established in 1944 as Home-O-Nize to manufacture steel kitchen cabinets, the company had to rely on contract work to stay afloat. The acquisition of Prime-Mover, builder of material handling equipment, gave the firm a valuable product to sell. Then moving into file cabinet business and eventually all types of office furniture, HON quickly grew to dominate the middle of the office equipment market. By the 1970s, it expanded through horizontal combination into the upper end of the office market. In the 1980s HON diversified, acquiring a fireplace manufacturer and interest in a business that specialized in products for personal computers.

The HON Story is a fascinating account of a company that was created with one purpose in mind and ended up being very successful in a different business. Because HON is an important firm in Iowa, anyone interested in recent Iowa history will enjoy reading this book. Business historians focusing on entrepreneurship will find the insights of C. Maxwell Stanley illuminating.

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