

Remedies and Rituals: Folk Medicine in Norway and the New Land, by Kathleen Stokker. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007. xii, 337 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Peter T. Harstad is retired. He was CEO of the State Historical Society of Iowa (1972–1981) and the Indiana Historical Society (1984–2001). With Bonnie Lindemann he published a biography of Iowa congressman Gilbert N. Haugen (1992). He has also written about health on the midwestern frontier.

Kathleen Stokker has examined hundreds of documents on both sides of the Atlantic, most of them in the Norwegian language, to determine the ingredients and incantations of Norwegian folk medicine. She sorts out which elements belong to mainstream western civilization and which are peculiarly Norwegian. Although the focus is on the nineteenth century, Stokker probes the deep past for perspective and also carries her story into our own times and into locations in the American Midwest where Norwegians settled.

One of Stokker's best sections appears near the center of the book in a chapter titled "Rickets Remedies and Lore." There she tells the story of Mor Frøisland (1829–1899) of Lillehammer, who consistently cured rickets patients a generation before medical scientists began to understand the disease. Her regimen included vegetables, exercise outdoors, sunshine, and cod-liver oil. "Sunshine activated the Vitamin D that ensured the body's proper absorption of the calcium and phosphorous in the food, but who knew that then?" (168).

Frøisland was one of several folk practitioners with large and faithful followings who ran afoul of the medical profession and Norway's *kvaksalverlov* (quack law). But even in a stratified society where doctors and civil authorities held the advantages it was hard to argue with success once a case came to trial. Make no mistake: in addition to the efficacious, Stokker reports hokum aplenty. Much of it centers on whispered spells and mysterious "black books" used by folk healers on both sides of the Atlantic. "These compendiums of magical procedures and incantations allegedly granted the power necessary to ward off hidden spirits and evil persons who caused diseases" (6).

"How does faith—whether in the religious sense or in the health care provider—relate to recovery?" (239). Through ten chapters Stokker sheds light on such timeless questions. When all is said and done, cod-liver oil is the greatest legacy of Norwegian folk medicine. The generation of this reviewer was neither the first nor the last to grimace when we took our daily doses. Now we know the origins of a childhood ritual that prevented bowed legs and soft bones. Many Iowans will find other intersections between Stokker's text and their lives. In addition to cod-liver oil, medical leeches were a significant export product of

Norway until scientific medicine all but ended the practice of bleeding. But not so fast. Plastic surgeons have recently found that “leeches facilitate the circulation of blood through transplanted tissues in a way that is unequalled and often impossible by other means. The anticoagulant in their saliva keeps the blood from clotting, while other components dilate the blood vessels and provide antibiotic and anesthetic effects” (208). In her closing chapter Stokker presents 14 pages of home remedies she has collected through the years from American correspondents and her students at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. This book proves that mature scholarship can also be “a good read.”

The Augustana Story: Shaping Lutheran Identity in North America, by Maria Erling and Mark Granquist. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008. x, 390 pp. Illustrations, sidebars, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$29.00 paper.

Reviewer L. DeAne Lagerquist is professor of religion at St. Olaf College. She is the author of *In America the Men Milk the Cows: Factors of Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion in the Americanization of Norwegian-American Women* (1991).

Commissioned by the Augustana Heritage Association, *The Augustana Story* was written by professional historians deeply rooted in that tradition. Its interest to those personally connected to Augustana is obvious: they will find the names of family and friends, read the stories of beloved institutions, and be reminded of a rich ethos and history. But those readers should be warned that this is not merely the narrative equivalent of a family scrapbook or an anniversary commemoration brochure. The book deserves a larger and more various audience than such a volume attracts. By placing the story of the Augustana Synod (1860–1962) within and in conversation with other Lutheran and American stories, Maria Erling and Mark Granquist illuminate several shared themes of American history and current life as they recount the major story of their book. Readers learn here about the distinctive ways Swedish Lutherans faced challenges familiar to those of many other immigrant groups. Readers also become acquainted with a specific type of American Lutheranism and with its internal variety. The narrative’s lively description and carefully selected details go far beyond one-dimensional, paper-doll portrayals of Swedish American Lutherans. Here readers encounter individuals and institutions, a people and their culture in a robust account of their church and its life over a century.

Beginning in the introduction, the authors contend that internal cohesiveness, mission mindedness, and “a strong sense of the broader church” were distinctive to Augustana and its gifts to the larger Lu-