

tion that continues despite feminism and the changes in women's lives since the 1970s. She provides lots of engaging examples, especially of television shows and films that many readers might not have seen.

I do wonder, however, if the consumer story misses the variations and ultimately different meanings for weddings since World War II. How did the family photos of grandma in a white bridal dress contribute to the construction of tradition? What did the large Mexican American wedding party, with each offering contributions to the celebration, mean to the participants? What about brides who scrapped the matching bridal party dresses, or assigned both parents to give away the bride as well as the groom, or wrote their own individualized vows? Did such minor variations symbolize protest for brides and grooms, but seem so incidental that they were lost to the wedding guests and the author? In other words, does Jellison's linear story have a more jagged trajectory? Despite these minor reservations, Jellison has succeeded in isolating the role of consumerism in the construction of the white wedding style in this worthwhile and entertaining book.

The Schaffner Players, by Michael Kramme. Des Moines: The Iowan Books, 2006. 141 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, appendixes, index. \$14.95 paper.

Reviewer Richard Poole is professor and chair of the Theatre/Speech Department at Briar Cliff University. His research and writing, including an article in this journal in 1989-90 on theater in Sioux City in the Gilded Age, have focused on small-town and rural midwestern theater.

In eleven short chapters, Michael Kramme uses anecdotes, personal reminiscences, and historical memorabilia to compile a brief history of the tent repertory careers of Neil and Caroline Schaffner and the Schaffner Players, Iowa's most famous Toby Show troupers. A tent repertory player himself who had trouped with the Schaffners, Kramme uses his extensive association with them to craft his narrative. Essentially a brief chronology, the book not only recounts the individual careers of Neil and Caroline Schaffner, but also reveals in precise detail the inner workings of the tent repertory troupe they created, confronting the daily realities of a 33-year career on "the road," playing primarily in small-town Iowa, but also venturing into Illinois and Missouri. The book provides a fascinating glimpse into a form of entertainment now long dead but once wildly popular throughout the Midwest and especially in Iowa, with troupes presenting shows in small-town opera houses as well traveling and performing in their own tent. The book also catalogs the Schaffners' development of the Toby Show,

a special form of small-town entertainment in which Toby and his sidekick Susie outwit the city slickers while providing their primarily rural audiences with clean, homespun humor:

Susie: Where's your barn?
 Toby: I ain't got no barn.
 Susie: You ain't got no barn?
 Toby: No
 Susie: Where do you milk your cow?
 Toby: A little back of center (16).

Each chapter opens with a Toby and Susie routine that reinforces the essential theme of the book—rural values reflected in plays with humor as the driving force. The book's significant value is that it recounts the people, places, attitudes, trials, and tribulations of a once essential aspect of all theater, the small troupe that traveled from town to town, making a living by providing entertainment and glamour to thousands of rural folks who otherwise would never have had the opportunity to see a live show. Neil Schaffner's biography, *The Fabulous Toby and Me* (1968), recounts the Schaffners' experience as well, but it ends in 1968, when they sold the show and became semi-retired. Kramme's book continues the chronology until 1998, with Jimmy Davis's death. Davis, a Toby trained by Neil Schaffner, was a longtime member of the troupe, bought Schaffner's equipment, continued his routes, and maintained the Schaffner name until his death in 1998. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of Kramme's book is a taxonomy of the Schaffner Players' casts, plays produced, and towns where they performed. A separate appendix lists plays written or adapted by the Schaffners. There are also more than 50 illustrations.

There are, however, some significant problems with the book. The type is very small, which makes it difficult to read. It also could have benefited from more judicious editing, especially with regard to syntax and style. Those problems aside, it is a valuable introduction, especially for those who are not acquainted with tent repertory, as it chronicles the history of an Iowa-based troupe, reflecting an essential but largely forgotten chapter in the history of American theater.

Regional Railroads of the Midwest, by Steve Glischinski. MBI Railroad Color History. St. Paul: Voyageur Press, 2007. 160 pp. Illustrations (many in color), maps, bibliography, index. \$36.95 cloth.

Reviewer Don L. Hofsommer is professor of history at St. Cloud State University. He is the author of many books and articles on railroads in the Midwest, including *Steel Trails of Hawkeyeland: Iowa's Railroad Experience* (2005).