

This is an outstanding book that will be of interest not only to professional historians but also to general readers with an interest in the history and development of the Great Plains. The author not only provides new information; he also provides a meaningful synthesis of previous scholarship. By design he spends very little time on political history, but provides a comprehensive view of the economic and social history of the Great Plains during the war. It is the only available book that covers the individual topics in such depth. Hurt's narrative approach, using the words and remembrances of people who lived through the period to tell the Great Plains story during the war, makes the book an extremely enjoyable read. He focuses not only on what happened in the region's major cities, such as Wichita or Tulsa, but on how the war affected the lives of farmers and people who lived in small towns throughout the Great Plains states. Among the book's most engaging and informative chapters are the ones on internment and prisoner-of-war camps and the one on Indians in wartime.

The research the author completed for this book is outstanding, with 47 pages of exhaustive endnotes, a 20-page bibliography, and a detailed index, which is especially valuable for readers looking for particular information about events and developments in their own states. This is history at its best—both scholarly and fascinating reading—and is indispensable for our understanding of the Great Plains experience during the Second World War.

It's Our Day: America's Love Affair with the White Wedding, 1945–2005, by Katherine Jellison. CultureAmerica Series. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008. xi, 297 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Carole Srole is professor of history at California State University at Los Angeles. She is the author of *Transcribing Class and Gender: Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Courts and Offices* (forthcoming, 2009).

Katherine Jellison's *It's Our Day* is a delightful read for brides and grooms as well as a useful monograph for scholars. Her exploration of how the consumer culture promoted formal weddings focuses on how "standards for celebrating weddings" were developed and maintained. She explains how an upscale ceremony has become the norm, even as it adjusted to changing demographics and ideologies. Consumerism drove the ideal of the fairy-tale event as the bride's "day" to be pampered like a Cinderella princess by aping the lavish styles of the affluent.

World War II weddings set the stage for the decline of the informal celebrations that mixed modest gowns from local dress shops

with a family-cooked dinner served at home. The rushed marriages left postwar mothers with a desire for the “best of everything” for their daughters. After the war, the wedding industry and consumer culture constructed and publicized this new ideal, led by the recently organized Association of Bridal Manufacturers, department stores, the magazines *Bride's* and *Modern Bride*, movies, and television.

This new style of the white wedding featured an array of consumer items, from the tiered cake to stockpiled household appliances, with the white dress as the ultimate consumer symbol. The wedding itself represented proof of the bride's father's financial and social success and a vindication of family itself, as brides and their female relatives planned the occasions in an exercise of feminine kindred bonding. These styles became standardized and democratized, attracting whites and blacks, middle and working class, gays, and even bohemians.

The cultural and social upheaval of the 1970s had the potential to challenge the white wedding, with the rise of feminism, expanded female employment, delayed marriage, cohabitation, divorce and remarriage. Instead, the white wedding grew in popularity, although its meaning changed. No longer did the white dress symbolize virginity, but instead came to mean family, tradition, religion, and marriage itself. Moreover, the dual-wage-earning bridal couple increasingly paid for more of the affair, rather than rely entirely on patriarchal funding. Self-pampering replaced the parental gift. By the 1990s, the white wedding suggested the promise of marital stability, contrasted with the high divorce rate among baby boomers.

Jellison attributes the continuity of the white wedding to the “conduits” of modern popular culture, films, magazines, and television, which publicized it as an ideal. In chapter three Jellison examines the celebrity celebrations of Grace Kelly, the daughters of Presidents Johnson and Nixon, and John F. Kennedy Jr. and Carolyn Bessette. These widely publicized nuptials reveal the surprising endurance of the formal wedding, despite changes in brides' attitudes toward work, age at marriage, and style of wedding dresses. In chapter four Jellison turns to films to illustrate how the white wedding became the goal for working-class as well as middle-class families. Films such as the 1950s *Father of the Bride*, its 1991 remake, and *The Catered Affair* normalized the white wedding across classes. In chapter five Jellison looks at reality magazine features of the 1950s and television productions of the 1950s, 1990s, and 2000s that reinforced the opulent gala as the norm now aimed at working women who could pay for their own wedding. Most significantly, Jellison explains how the wedding industry and consumer culture promoted the white wedding as a symbol of tradi-

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,