

The Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening, by Wilhelm Miller. Centennial Report Series of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002. xxxiii, 34 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Cathy Ambler is a preservation consultant and independent scholar. She lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Wilhelm Miller's *Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening* is a reprint of an Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station circular first published in 1915. Now a part of the Centennial Report Series of the American Society of Landscape Architects, it provides a portal for understanding the philosophy and aesthetics of a group of contemporary architects, artists, and landscape gardeners who were interested in promoting "American" design based on naturalistic native midwestern landscapes.

Miller's publication was a treatise on the "prairie" philosophy and its practical application. Presented in an Extension circular, Miller's outright sermonizing about the prairie aesthetic made it remarkable. However practical a plant list or strong a rationale for the conservation of native regional plants, such advice was nearly overwhelmed by Miller's demanding "we will" checklist, which summoned rural residents with a missionary zeal to plant his way.

Christopher Vernon's introduction places the context of Miller's writing in perspective. Vernon carefully links Miller's ideas to broader thoughts, ideas, and movements of the time. The Progressive Era nourished the prairie philosophy in other Chicago-based architects and landscape designers such as Jens Jensen, Ossian Cole Simmons, Walter Burley Griffin, Frank Lloyd Wright, and George W. Maher. Iowa readers interested in the landscape, architectural, and cultural history of midwestern states, the value of native plants in gardens and landscapes, and the prairie philosophy of design will welcome this reprint and Vernon's insight.

Fredrick L. McGhee: A Life on the Color Line, 1861–1912, by Paul D. Nelson. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002. xxvi, 234 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer William D. Green is associate professor of history at Augsburg College. His research and publications have focused on African Americans' struggles for civil rights in Minnesota.

The history of civil rights during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—indeed, the history of African Americans—is usually based on experiences that occurred largely east of the Mississippi River. Where there is an absence of a large black population, Jim Crow laws,

or the tragic spectacle of the Saturday night lynching, people often conclude that there is, in effect, no black experience, no problem in race relations, or at least none that is worth examining. Like bright stars in the firmament, W. E. B. Dubois, Ida B. Wells, and Booker T. Washington outshine the glow of lesser-known local and regional activists. The true nature of race relations, however, can be better found, not in the grand gestures of black notables before a national audience, but in the actions of little-known, ordinary people compelled by circumstances to do the extraordinary. From their actions we learn that genuine greatness exists when individuals courageously buck social convention without the protection of notoriety. It is possible to be a major contributor to the national cause even from the remote outpost of the upper Midwest. Paul Nelson's biography of Fredrick Lamar McGhee tells us about one such person.

Upon gaining his freedom from slavery in Mississippi, McGhee worked to acquire a college education and subsequently a law degree. As a young lawyer, he moved first to Chicago, where his future seemed assured. The African American community there was ideal for an ambitious man, for it was large enough to provide him with many professional and social opportunities. Just as he was about to make a name for himself, however, McGhee decided to move to St. Paul, Minnesota, a city whose black middle class could only be described as embryonic. There, in this improbable northernmost midwestern city, he made his home for the rest of his life. There he also served in the vanguard of the civil rights movement. McGhee knew Booker T. Washington and served as counsel to his organization. McGhee also knew Washington's chief rival, W. E. B. Dubois. After breaking ranks from Washington to join the "radicals," McGhee inspired Dubois to launch the Niagara Movement, the precursor of the NAACP.

Motivated by an impulse to agitate for justice, McGhee, as portrayed by Nelson, was a man who thought little of irritating anyone—even friends and allies—if he thought they were wrongheaded or their conviction weak. In a state governed by Republicans, McGhee left the party to become a Democrat because the Republicans were not doing enough for social and political equality. In a state where Catholics were derided, he joined that faith because Archbishop John Ireland was the only major figure in the state who aggressively advocated civil rights. McGhee even attacked other black leaders for supporting a civil rights bill that limited the punishment of violators.

Nelson's biography of McGhee is well researched, clearly written, and reliably annotated. It is evident that the author (himself a lawyer) admires his subject both as a historical figure and as an effective litiga-

tor, yet he is not given to hero worshiping, for he shows as complete a portrait as the historical record allows, warts and blemishes of character included. The backdrop of McGhee's life is a world in which post-Civil War racism is not exclusively a southern phenomenon and the "bad guys" are not always venal. Complacency, Nelson shows, often promotes bigotry as much as the bigoted act itself. In essence, Nelson's book tells us about an important man determined to confront an allegedly progressive place that resists seeing its own peculiar institution of hypocrisy; a place where blacks and whites seem to get along because they smile at each other. For these insights, this book is an important addition to our regional history.

A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America, by James H. Madison. New York: Palgrave, 2001. xvi, 204 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewer Michael J. Pfeifer teaches American history at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. He has published articles on lynching and criminal justice in Iowa and U.S. history.

In *A Lynching in the Heartland*, James H. Madison skillfully narrates and contextualizes the mob killing of two African American youths, Tom Shipp and Abe Smith, and the near lynching of another black youth, James Cameron, in Marion, Indiana, in August 1930. The mob's victims had allegedly murdered a young white factory worker, Claude Deeter, and raped his companion, Mary Ball. A photograph of the corpses of Shipp and Smith, surrounded by jeering and pointing whites, was widely distributed and became one of the most well-known photographs of a lynching. The photograph has often been erroneously captioned as depicting an early twentieth-century southern lynching. Yet the event that it vividly documented took place in the Midwest, in north central Indiana near the beginning of the Great Depression. Employing an array of sources that include newspapers, court records, oral history, and governmental and institutional correspondence, Madison makes a strong contribution to a growing literature that analyzes the brutal and complex phenomenon of lynching in American history.

Madison begins by effectively situating the violence in the history of Marion and Grant County. He describes violence against Native Americans during white settlement; a proud pioneer heritage still often remembered in 1930; a substantial history of lynching in postbellum Indiana, including the thwarting of the lynching of an African American man in Marion in 1885 through the aggressive action of law

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.