

Wiggins writes with an authoritative voice, and he knows a good character when he sees one. He uses biographical details skillfully to suggest the trajectory of a person's career, the nature of a social relationship, or the evolution of a business enterprise. That Wiggins has a genuine interest in the lives of his subjects—the men and women of early Des Moines and the community they built in frontier Iowa—is evident throughout the book. His prose is unusually good at evoking a sense of the private and public lives of his characters, resulting in clearer images of their day-to-day world. Misspellings and typographical errors mar the text here and there, but not enough to distract readers from an absorbing story loaded with fascinating personalities:

The Rise of the Allens is aimed at general readers rather than scholars. Thus, the author chose to keep bibliographical citations to a minimum, except in cases where research for the book led him to previously untapped resources. I respect his rationale, but I regret that many of the newspaper articles Wiggins quotes, the books and pamphlets he references, and the personal communications he alludes to in the text are not listed with enough precision in the book's brief bibliographical notes to be of much use to historians wanting to build on all that he has accomplished here. Still, scholars as well as general readers will welcome David Wiggins's *The Rise of the Allens*, for no one has ever told this important story so thoroughly before.

Jews in Minnesota, by Hyman Berman and Linda Mack Schloff. The People of Minnesota Series. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001. ix, 91 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, notes, index. \$13.95 paper.

Irish in Minnesota, by Ann Regan. The People of Minnesota Series. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001. ix, 89 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, notes, index. \$13.95 paper.

Norwegians in Minnesota, by Jon Gjerde and Carlton C. Qualey. The People of Minnesota Series. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001. ix, 99 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, notes, index. \$13.95 paper.

Reviewer Corey Smith is lecturer in English at Wartburg College and a Ph.D. candidate in American history at the University of Iowa. His research interests include American ethnic, immigrant, and urban history.

In 1981 the Minnesota Historical Society Press published a collection of essays on the variety of ethnic groups in Minnesota. The highly successful *They Chose Minnesota* remained popular for many years, but did not satisfy those who wanted more affordable access to the story of a single group. Twenty years later, the publisher has responded to

that demand by expanding and updating the essays in the collection and publishing them individually as The People of Minnesota series.

The Jews, Irish, and Norwegians of Minnesota are the focus of three early installments in the series. Each book provides an overview of the people and events characterizing the respective group from settlement to the present, furnishing a broad introduction to each group's history in the state. This attention to a general audience combined with brevity represents both the greatest strength and the greatest shortcoming of the works.

Collectively, these books introduce Minnesotans to their neighbors. In roughly parallel structures, readers learn of the settlement patterns, the involvement of each ethnic group in rural and urban settings, political and community involvement, patterns of work and social concerns, and recent acculturation as Americans.

General readers will recognize names such as O. E. Rølvaag, Hubert Humphrey, and Paul Wellstone, who are integrated into the narratives. They should become aware of less well-known, though perhaps equally important figures such as Rabbi Samuel Deinard, founder of the *American Jewish World*, and the Unitarian minister Kristofer Janson. They may know of the predominance of Norwegians in the Red River Valley, but be surprised by the vehemence of anti-Semitism in the 1930s. The books will entertain and enlighten such readers.

Academic readers, in contrast, may be frustrated by the quick allusions to significant events and surface discussions of significant concepts and ideas. And although obeisance is paid to such historians as Kerby Miller and Theodore Blegen, there is little engagement with recent ideas on immigration or the acculturation of ethnic groups in America.

Jews in Minnesota discusses the smallest population of the three, but that small population allows Berman and Schloff to include greater detail. Disproportionate, if still small, space is allowed for discussions of depression-era anti-Semitism and the impact of third wave Jewish immigrants, but the articulate expositions amply reward readers. In particular, the book refreshingly reminds us that the civil rights movement began long before 1954 and included Jews.

The book demonstrates that Jews in Minnesota were "able to establish and maintain elaborate communal structures" (1), but the authors avoid significant consideration of two vital fields of inquiry. First, occasional statements about splits regarding worship style or orthodoxy gloss over the importance of these rifts in expressing cultural identity. Much of the reason the communal structures were so elaborate is because of the tensions these divisions caused. The second

somewhat slighted field of inquiry is anti-Semitism. The discussion of mid-twentieth-century anti-Semitism is fascinating, but the subtler, more pervasive forms of the prejudice in the nineteenth century are largely ignored.

Ann Regan's account of the Irish often centers on individuals, especially Bishop John Ireland, whose heritage played an important role in internal Catholic conflict resolutions as well as general Irish settlement. Ireland's role in populating Minnesota with the Irish through the Catholic Colonization Bureau is surprising. The connection to Charles Stewart Parnell of the Irish Land League, who raised more than \$1,700 for the bureau with a single 1880 speech, is particularly intriguing since Parnell was a Protestant. With this discussion, Regan deftly separates Irish from Catholic—no easy task—creating a more complex understanding of Irish ethnicity.

This nuanced grasp of Irish identity is further supported by Regan's account of the Irish in politics and the opposition they encountered in the non-Irish press. The rather insubstantial discussion, however, of more radical forms of anti-foreigner and anti-Catholic sentiment is disappointing. The American Protective Association and the Ku Klux Klan, for instance, are mentioned only in passing, and the prejudices they espoused are ignored.

Norwegians in Minnesota is the most complete of the three. Jon Gjerde and Carlton Qualey trace the migration patterns of Norwegian immigrants to rural southeastern Minnesota and the Red River Valley as well as the urban Twin Cities. They describe the noteworthy events and individuals within Minnesota's Norwegian culture without losing sight of the elements that constitute that culture, primary among which was Lutheranism.

Gjerde and Qualey are at their best when using conflicts, both internal to the Norwegian community and with outsiders, to highlight important elements of Norwegian culture. In one instance, the authors quote a common observation that "they argued predestination in the saloons, with their tongues, and settled it in the alley with their fists" (36). Most importantly, the account of acculturation that was forced on the Norwegian communities during World War I allows readers to see which elements of the culture could be sacrificed and which the Norwegians clung to despite societal pressure.

The biggest drawback to all three books is a by-product of the space limitations. All maintain a tight focus on Minnesota, failing to examine close connections to the region, such as the contiguous settlement of Irish and Norwegians in southeastern Minnesota with those in northeastern Iowa. Further, with the exception of Regan's argument

that the Irish were more likely to be farmers in Minnesota than elsewhere, the authors do not contextualize the Minnesota experience in a national setting.

"Know your audience" is the first rule of writing, and these authors follow that rule rigorously. Outstanding as a point of departure for general readers or newcomers to Minnesota ethnic history, these books effectively introduce Minnesotans to their neighbors. A similar series for Iowa would be welcome.

Jewish Life in the American West, edited by Ava F. Kahn. Seattle: University of Washington Press and Autry Museum of Western Heritage, 2002. 144 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.50 paper.

Reviewer Linda M. Schloff is director of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest. Her book, *"And Prairie Dogs Weren't Kosher": Jewish Women in the Upper Midwest* (1996), accompanied an exhibit on the same topic that she curated at the Minnesota Historical Society.

Jewish Life in the American West is a companion to an exhibit of the same name that appeared at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage in Los Angeles. Heavily illustrated, the book's essays offer new perspectives on the history of the American West and cover topics that are only suggested in the exhibit.

In her introductory essay, Ava Kahn gives a brief historical tour of Jewish migration to the West (defined as anything west of the Mississippi River) and settlement between 1860 and 1920. She enumerates the ways Jewish settlement in the West differed from that of the rest of the country. San Francisco rather than New York, for example, was the major entrepôt; by the 1880s it had the second-largest Jewish population in the United States.

Hasia Diner's provocative essay, "American West, New York Jewish," explores the paradox of American Jewish history being written as if the New York experience was the only authentic one, while Jews who took part in the western migration were perceived as somehow more American. As Moses Rischin comments in the afterword, "Jews have opted for 'American West, New York Jewish'" in order "to have it both ways" (136).

Ava F. Kahn's essay on four Jewish women's lives conveys the diversity of their experiences, their ability to adapt, and extremes of social mobility. It is refreshing to be reminded that not all Jewish women worked in sweatshops.

William Toll, one of the finest social historians of the western Jewish experience, uses an astonishing variety of sources to draw a picture

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