

The greatest American interpretive influence on Frayssé seems to have been the writings of Paul W. Gates in the 1930s and 1940s on the history of land speculation in the Midwest. *Lincoln, Land, and Labor*, represents a firmly populist, or Gatesian, approach to the history of land dealings in Illinois. Frayssé has carefully compared Lincoln's list of friends and partners with the lists of "speculators" that Gates assembled from the manuscript records of the General Land Office. Although not himself a buyer of public land for quick resale, Frayssé's Lincoln is very much a water-carrier for the Whig land-kings, cattling-kings, and money-kings of Illinois.

So how did Lincoln emerge from the obscurity of country lawyer and servant to the exploiting class? The great accomplishment of Lincoln and his Republican Party, in Frayssé's view, was to have convinced the "rural masses" of Illinois, and eventually the rest of the North, that the slaveholders of the South (and not the capitalist market) were the principal threat to order and stability in the Union. Frayssé sees this as nothing less than a struggle to reorient the Midwest toward the urban, commercial, capitalist values of New England and away from the relaxed pre-market values of the upper South. Only a person raised amidst the humanity of the rural North could so effectively lead its people on that path of transformation.

*Dutch American Voices: Letters from the United States, 1850-1930*, edited by Herbert J. Brinks. Documents in American Social History. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995. xvi, 480 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendixes, bibliography, indexes. \$35.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BRIAN W. BELTMAN, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Historians of immigration depend on primary documents such as emigrant and immigrant rolls, ships' passenger lists, manuscript census data, newspapers, land records, city directories, diaries, and letters. In particular, descriptive accounts in the latter two textual sources, as opposed to other, more "faceless" records, give personality and character to the migrants.

Herbert J. Brinks has assembled a collection of letters by Dutch-American immigrants. Their correspondence formed part of the wealth of "American letters" that served as important catalysts in the decision-making processes of thousands of immigrants to the United States. This compendium is but a sample from the Dutch Immigrant Letter Collection at Calvin College Library Archives, where Brinks is curator. This collection of at least eight thousand items is of inestimable value to students of immigrant history. Brinks's book comprises twenty-three

collections of letters, ranging from as few as three letters to as many as thirty-five per correspondent. One collection covers fifty-seven years of letter-writing; another relates to only three years. The writers represent every decade of Dutch immigration to America, from the 1840s through the 1920s. In the preface, Brinks lays out the criteria used to select various collections for inclusion in this edited work and notes how they enhance recent Dutch ethnic scholarship heavily dependent on quantifiable source materials that Robert P. Swierenga has gathered and analyzed.

Brinks offers a very readable and insightful general introduction to the book as well as useful commentary and contextual information on the subsets of writers in this collection. These categories reflect the recognition that most immigrants were transplants who moved from one place of distinguishable attributes to another that was usually different but not totally alien or alienating. Hence, some rural immigrants from sand-soil and clay-soil regions in the Netherlands who were farmers or farm workers migrated to new lands in the American countryside to continue or take up agricultural livelihoods. These Dutch Americans frequently found moorings in close-knit ethnic enclaves in the hinterlands where residents preserved their ethnocultural heritage. Similarly, many rural villagers who came from the ranks of skilled or semiskilled craftsmen or laborers joined land-seeking settlers to become farmers in the American heartland or gravitated to enclaves in midwestern cities such as Grand Rapids and Chicago to form small family business ventures of various kinds. Other correspondents were interurban migrants who were business people intent on furthering commercial ventures and capitalizing on perceived American economic opportunity in growing cities. Brinks classifies a final cohort of letter-writers as "detached immigrants." They were generally unmarried, more secular and urban, and not part of the strongly cohesive Dutch ethnic subcultures found in the prominent enclaves in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. These transplants Americanized rapidly in contrast to immigrants from the other delineated categories who displayed remarkable ethnic persistence over the years.

Through this careful selection of immigrant writers Brinks gives us an excellent window on the complex story of Dutch Americans who at once had so much in common through their migratory experience, yet revealed an impressive variety of response and adaptation. Brinks skillfully portrays the universal and the individual among these Dutch-American voices. Students of Iowa history will note that three of the writers in this collection lived for a time in the Hawkeye state and a majority of them settled in neighboring midwestern states. Finally, Brinks's three-part index—personal names, place names, and topics—

deserves special commendation for its thoroughness and detail and is particularly valuable for an edited work of this kind. Brinks's book is a welcome addition to the expanding historiography of Dutch-American ethnic studies.

*Material Culture and People's Art among the Norwegians in America*, edited by Marion Nelson. Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1994. ix, 228 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$30.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY APRIL R. SCHULTZ, ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Marion Nelson's edited volume provides a wonderful and much-needed interdisciplinary study of material culture among Norwegian Americans. I have learned in my own research on Norwegian Americans that some of the most poignant evidence is in the form of material objects. Nelson, director of the Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, Iowa, points out that Norwegian Americans were very early concerned with collecting and preserving material objects, yet there has been little in print that interprets those objects themselves. This volume is an important beginning.

Topics of essays in the collection range from Nelson's analysis of collection and preservation among Norwegian Americans to interpretations of architecture, clothing, arts, and objects, and the life of a local artist. In his introductory essay, Nelson offers a fascinating account of the origins of the Norwegian-American Museum and the meaning of collecting and preserving immigrant objects, both as a tradition brought with immigrants from Scandinavia and as an effort at cultural legitimation in America. Reidar Bakken analyzes acculturation in buildings and farmsteads in Coon Valley, Wisconsin, from 1850 to 1930. In this well-illustrated and well-documented piece, Bakken argues convincingly that the architecture demonstrates "a gradual adoption of American customs" rather than a "rapid Americanization in building practices" (73). In a similar piece, Kenneth Breisch argues that Norwegian immigrants to Bosque County, Texas, preserved some important elements of community traditions while pragmatically adapting new forms and technologies from their Anglo-American neighbors. The next two essays deal with even more "everyday" matters such as dress, arts, and objects. Carol Coburn offers a compelling argument about Norwegian-American immigrant dress, a much under-analyzed element of immigrant life. Coburn focuses specifically on immigrant dress as expressions of group membership and status. M. A. Madson provides a historic, economic, and demographic analysis of vinaigrettes,

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