

Out on the Wind: Poles and Danes in Lincoln County, Minnesota, 1880–1905, by John Radzilowski. Marshall, MN: Crossings Press, 1992. x, 130 pp. Maps, illustrations, appendixes, index. \$11.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY STEVEN J. KEILLOR, ASKOV, MINNESOTA

Out on the Wind is a well-written description of two late nineteenth-century settlements in southwestern Minnesota: Polish-American Royal Township and Danish-American Hope Township. Based on considerable work with property tax and census records, the author compares two ethnic groups, their settlement patterns, their success at farming, and their struggle to preserve language and culture. The book is nicely festooned with well-designed charts and graphs that help make interesting points about the time lag between purchasing and plowing land. Excellent ethnic maps are models of clarity.

The author follows the conventions of the new local history: combining quantitative analysis with some oral history; mixing quantitative, economic data and qualitative, cultural description. He has done a workmanlike job, but the conventions have not served him well. The quantitative analysis comes up short of firm conclusions. Often, a paragraph of educated guesses follows the data. At the microscopic, township level, a study should arrive at firmer conclusions. Otherwise, why focus the historian's lens that narrowly?

Local newspapers are available for the period, but are underutilized. They are an invaluable resource that would help Radzilowski nail down conclusions. For the rural historian, the nineteenth-century county editor should be an esteemed friend—not unbiased, but always observant, and usually willing to print readers' observations or criticisms. For example, Radzilowski suggests that Danes were able to purchase town properties because non-Danes faced "difficulties" during the 1893 depression (47). Yet they may have sold to make a tidy profit or to escape the Danish influx. The act or time of selling do not announce the cause. Reading through the local newspaper would likely reveal the cause(s).

Another convention is to speak no evil of any ethnic group. Comparative history must risk analyses that could be interpreted as critical of one group. Following convention, this study ends with platitudes—Poles and Danes struggling heroically to succeed on the land and preserve their culture. Conflict and contact between these two nearby groups is absent. They are not allowed to speak evil of each other. Yet a bitter county seat battle raged between Lake Benton in the Danish area and Ivanhoe in the Polish area. Newspaper accounts might reveal

contact between Danes and Poles then. Groups do not interact in property tax lists or on ethnic maps, but in real events recorded in the local press. That is another consequence of preferring oral interviews over contemporary newspapers. Interviewed decades later, subjects often omit conflict. What is left are mainly platitudes.

The secondary literature listed in the bibliography rarely informs the analysis. Robert Ostergren's model of social and economic communities in Swedish-American Isanti County, Minnesota, would work wonderfully for the Poles' decision to retain railroadless Wilno while trading in the railroad town of Ivanhoe. Radzilowski gives a good description of Wilno, but his promising start falls short when he follows the conventions and ignores the best evidence—local newspapers.

Gilbert N. Haugen: Norwegian-American Farm Politician, by Peter T. Harstad and Bonnie Lindemann. Iowa City and Des Moines: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1992. xi, 217 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendixes, tables, chronology, index. \$14.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PETER L. PETERSEN, WEST TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY

After a nearly twenty-year hiatus, the State Historical Society of Iowa has added another volume to its long-standing Iowa Biographical Series. Actually, much of the research for this book, primarily in the Society's extensive but uneven Haugen Collection, was done in the late 1970s when the authors worked for the Society—Peter T. Harstad as director and Bonnie Lindemann as a temporary employee. Much of the writing was also done at that time, but as the authors explain in the preface, changes in their personal lives, including new jobs, along with Society reorganization and a major building project resulted in the manuscript laying dormant for more than a decade. Fortunately, the authors and the Society eventually revived the project and guided it to publication.

Most students of American history are at least vaguely familiar with Iowa Congressman Gilbert N. Haugen (1859–1933) and can identify him as a champion of agricultural reform during the 1920s. His name is forever linked with that of Oregon Senator Charles McNary as co-sponsors of the McNary-Haugen Bill, one of the most controversial pieces of farm legislation ever introduced in Congress. But as the authors rightly point out, there was much more to Haugen's life than this farm bill.

Born to immigrant parents in Wisconsin on the eve of the Civil War, Gilbert N. Haugen was only fourteen when he joined the steady stream of Norwegian and Norwegian-American migrants to northern Iowa.

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