

Rølvaag. Schultz provides a superb analysis of Rølvaag's critique of American culture and the conflicted efforts of Norwegian-American historians and conservative cultural leaders to digest his ideas. Because of the failure to suppress Norwegian-American radicalism, the centennial became a site of cultural contest. Schultz suggests that Norwegian-American historians did a better job of silencing agrarian radicals and women than centennial organizers. One product of the centennial was the Norwegian American Historical Association, which devoted itself to the conservative cultural agenda. This middle-class construction of ethnicity was not without pernicious effects; it masked "powerful inequalities" among Norwegian-Americans, and it worked to wipe out the historical memory of radicalism.

While Schultz identifies the convergence of ethnic and class politics, she more completely unpacks the narrow vision of historians and centennial organizers than that of the excluded. She follows the well-established tradition of dissecting the ways of the Norwegian-American urban elite and neglects scholarship on rural community and agrarian politics during these years. In 1925 and long after, despite urbanization, Norwegian-Americans were still well entrenched as landowning farmers in rural communities where third-generation children might still rely on the public schools to learn English.

Though somewhat overburdened with theory and historiography, which no doubt reflects the book's origins as a dissertation, *Ethnicity on Parade* is a valuable contribution to the revision and expansion of Norwegian-American history.

*Norwegian-American Studies*, volume 34, edited by Odd S. Lovoll. Norwegian-American Studies Series. Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1995. ix, 360 pp. Illustrations, notes, list of publications. \$18.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JAMES S. HAMRE, WALDORF COLLEGE

The Norwegian-American Historical Association was organized in 1925 for the purpose of collecting and disseminating information about people of Norwegian birth and descent in America. Through its numerous publications—monographs and collections of essays—the association has established a respected reputation as a scholarly organization dedicated to the study of an ethnic group.

The volume under consideration, the latest in an ongoing series which began in 1926, consists of eleven essays plus a section listing some recent publications in the field. The first two essays deal with Thorstein Veblen and are based on papers presented at a Veblen con-

ference held in 1994. J. R. Christianson's contribution focuses on Veblen's family and Norwegian background and maintains that his "early ethnic experiences were not limited to rural communities but were shaped in a variety of Norwegian-American rural, urban, and academic communities, as well as in the tension between these communities" (3). William C. Melton's essay offers a detailed description of the Veblen homestead in Minnesota and notes four widespread myths about Veblen, due chiefly to Joseph Dorfman's biography of him. Melton's view is that the myths lack validity.

Several of the essays deal with educational and religious concerns and developments among Norwegian-Americans. Art Lee provides information about the academy movement among the immigrants and gives an interesting historical sketch of the academy in Scandinavia, Wisconsin, from its founding in 1893 to its demise in 1932. Olga Nilsen Berglund gives a biographical sketch of Ole Nilsen, who emigrated to America as a young man and became a clergyman. Anne Hvenekilde analyzes the readers published by Norwegian-American Lutheran publishing houses between 1873 and 1925, contending that they provide a window through which we can see which parts of their heritage the various groups valued most. Einar Niemi has studied the life of Nils Paul Xavier, a Sami emigrant (we have known them as Lapps, a term the Sami find derogatory) who came to America and achieved some prominence in the Midwest and on the West Coast. James B. Vigen describes the efforts in Madagascar of John and Oline Hogstad, the first persons to go as missionaries to a foreign land from the Norwegian-American community. Erik Luther Williamson's contribution is a study of the process by which the Norwegian *religionsskole* in North Dakota made the transition to English-language Vacation Bible Schools.

Three essays focus on other topics. Arne Sunde notes that Norwegian immigrants brought with them two written forms of the Norwegian language: the predominant Dano-Norwegian and Nynorsk, the latter reflecting nineteenth-century romantic, nationalistic impulses. The essay discusses attempts to promote Nynorsk in America. Kristoffer F. Paulson holds that a key to understanding Ole Rølvaag's classic *Giants in the Earth* is "to understand its structure as that of classical tragedy" (203). Noting Rølvaag's use of Norse and Christian mythology, the author states that "Rølvaag's theme is not the enthusiastic conquest of the frontier, but the tragic cost of settlement in lives and in souls" (209). Peter Thaler attempts to develop a methodology to enable students of American culture to use the writings of preservationist authors such as Waldemar Ager and Rølvaag as sources for understanding American intellectual history.

While not related to each other in the sense of dealing with a specific theme or topic, the essays are bound together by their focus on the concerns and experiences of Norwegian-Americans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The essays are carefully researched and documented. Four of them are based on doctoral dissertations or papers. All of them indicate involvement with primary sources related to their topics.

The essays provide insights into some of the concerns and methodologies of scholars studying Norwegian-American history. The variety offered in the volume enables persons with a background or interest in the field to gain further understanding. Other interested persons, especially students of other ethnic groups, should find materials illustrating themes common to all such groups, as well as features distinctive of the group under consideration. While the essays on Veblen, Rølvaag, and methodology would seem to have the broadest appeal, those dealing with educational, religious, and linguistic topics are also of interest and value.

*Was This Heaven? A Self-Portrait of Iowa on Early Postcards*, by Lyell D. Henry Jr. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995. ix, 256 pp. Illustrations, references, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY KARAL ANN MARLING, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The golden age of the photographic postcard was brief but glorious. Between 1905 and 1916, several factors conspired to touch off a national mania for mailing pictures of train wrecks, local businesses, backyard picnics, ears of corn bigger than wagons, or dusty classrooms at the local school to one's relatives and acquaintances. First of all, the camera was adapted for amateur use. Manufacturers then supplied preprinted postcard blanks, encouraging shutterbugs to immortalize any legible shot as instant stationery. Postal regulations were eased, too: after years of draconian restrictions, cards were finally permitted to circulate like letters but at a far cheaper rate. And finally, rural free delivery brought daily mail—including a flood of picture postcards—to the hinterlands. In the decade before World War I, the photocard was the equivalent of today's quick phone call to a friend. On the front was the news of the day in pictorial form, from ordinary doings to big, once-in-a-lifetime events. On the back was a personal commentary about it from the sender.

*Was This Heaven?* reproduces several hundred of these delightful postcard images, all made in Iowa. In his commentary on the pictures, Lyell Henry makes an honest effort to relate the imagery of the cards

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