

on a vital rural culture, not regional specificities, one or two charismatic individuals, or economic or political crises. Because of Watkins's unique approach, *Rural Democracy* is relevant to those interested in rural culture, agrarian politics and activism, and rural economies. And because women were vital to rural culture, *Rural Democracy* is a significant contribution to our knowledge about rural women, their activism and radicalism.

It is said that the path to someone's heart is through their stomach; and certainly food was a key to women's political involvement in the rural culture of Lewis County. The political organizations that successfully drew the farm families of western Washington relied on activities in which whole families and communities could and did participate. The complementary roles of men and women in familial politics and farming practices extended to the larger politics of farming. Discussions of producer cooperatives, voting strategies, or resistance to market values took place around tables piled with food contributed by farm women; these sites of political discussions created spaces in which women participated and then expanded their claims to activism and citizenship. Women strengthened political reform efforts and helped to sustain the unity of rural culture that those reform efforts depended on. Watkins's use of gender as an analytical tool, in combination with her focus on rural culture, is innovative and well substantiated.

*Rural Democracy* is a fine example of a community study. While Watkins provides an interesting and close examination of Lewis County, she never loses sight of her larger questions about participatory democracy, rural activism, and the rural cultures created by family farmers. Those interested in how to sustain contemporary rural activism would do well to read *Rural Democracy*.

*Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American through Celebration*, by April R. Schultz. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995. xiii, 156 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$25.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JANE PEDERSON, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

Some of us who have explored Norwegian-American historiography have acquired a strong sense that much is missing in this body of work. In her provocative study of Norwegian-American ethnicity, April R. Schultz explicates the source of some of the gaps. *Ethnicity on Parade* is an extended analysis of the cultural politics of the Norse-American Centennial of June 1925 and of Norwegian-American historiography. The centennial commemorated the 1825 arrival of the *Restauration*, which brought the first Norwegian immigrants to the United

States. Relying on the theories and insights of anthropologists and cultural critics, and affirming that public events are "significant sites where meaning is reaffirmed and/or constructed," Schultz analyzes the centennial as a case study in the "invention" of ethnicity in general and Norwegian-American identity in particular. The centennial celebration thus becomes a text that exposes the contested and dynamic nature of Norwegian-American ethnicity.

The four-day centennial celebration attracted more than two hundred thousand people to its lectures, parades, and exhibits. In the precarious context of postwar, red-scare America, the centennial represented an effort to "reinvent" a Norwegian-American identity appropriate to the times and class interests of its urban and bourgeois organizers. Seeking cultural legitimation, they assembled an image of Norwegian Americans as "safe" ethnics who posed no challenge to American business, politics, and culture. With Babbitt-like boosterism, they promoted a conservative cultural vision, laying claim to American ideals of progress, expansion, and individualism which they traced to the Vikings and which were perfectly consistent with 100 percent Americanism. They constructed a history and pageantry that proclaimed Norwegian-Americans even better Americans than the "Yankees."

Noting that history and culture are always ideological and political, Schultz skillfully delineates the cultural politics of the contradictory constructions of history and ethnicity at the Norse centennial. The middle-class organizers sought to legitimize their position as leaders within the ethnic community and to American business culture. But this assimilationist conservative construction of ethnicity faced challenges that reflected deep class and gender divisions among Norwegian Americans. The nineteenth-century Norwegian "romantic nationalism" expressed by Ole E. Rølvaag, O. M. Norlie, and others, which idealized an egalitarian folk culture and rural life, opened up "counter discourses" and "oppositional interpretations" that challenged the conservative assimilationist agenda of the centennial's organizers. Norwegian folk culture nurtured memories of community, economic independence and justice, cooperation, compassion for the poor, and egalitarian gender relationships that inspired farmer radicalism and feminism. By World War I, Norwegian-Americans were notable for their political success and for being the most left-of-center group behind midwestern radical and progressive politics.

For aspiring Norwegian-American Babbitts, these were deeply embarrassing realities that threatened the image of Norwegian Americans as "safe" ethnics. Conference organizers were careful to exclude feminists and farmer radicals. Nevertheless, radical agrarianism and romantic nationalism found an articulate spokesman in the esteemed

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-

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