these conditions changed, so did German-American women's choices, and women began leaving rural communities or increasingly challenging their subordinate status within them. What Schelbitzki Pickle does provide is a compilation of the factors related to a woman's satisfaction, particularly for new immigrants: "Age at immigration, the presence of family (especially of female relatives), the strength of the ethnic community and its institutions, economic conditions, the affection and support of her husband, and her health and that of her family" (127). Elsewhere the author notes the importance of class background (specifically, those who were well-off prior to migration rarely liked their new setting), though she generally discounts economic factors and explanations. This is particularly notable given the importance of class variables for those who study urban German-American women.

Overall, the work is a tribute to the efforts of many German-speaking women in maintaining and passing on their culture. As a long-awaited work on this topic, it suggests many avenues for further research and contributes to our understanding of the interplay of ethnicity and gender, both in the nineteenth century and today. It provides an added dimension to work on rural women, one with important implications, at least in posing questions others may want to ask.

"And Prairie Dogs Weren't Kosher": Jewish Women in the Upper Midwest since 1855, by Linda Mack Schloff. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1996. x, 243 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. $29.95 cloth, $14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY JUDITH E. ENDELMAN, HENRY FORD MUSEUM & GREENFIELD VILLAGE

This book originated from an exhibition, *Unpacking on the Prairie: Jewish Women in the Upper Midwest*, which was organized by the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest and the Minnesota Historical Society and opened in October 1996. The book's focus on Jewish women's lives makes it an unusual contribution to the corpus of regional American Jewish histories. The region covered in the book includes Minnesota, the Dakotas, northern Iowa, and northern Wisconsin, although the emphasis is on the Dakotas and Minnesota.

Most regional Jewish histories are typically organized chronologically around the history of each town or community within a particular region, and usually focus on the rise, growth, and decline of communal institutions such as synagogues, charitable societies, and so forth. How Jewish families lived their lives and, particularly, how

Jewish women coped and then accommodated to life in a strange land, cut off from family and familiar support networks is, at best, usually a minor theme in these works. In this book, that is the theme and focus and, given the hardships of life on the upper midwestern prairie, it is a compelling story of struggle and triumph over adversity. The book is organized thematically, beginning with life in Eastern Europe and settlement in the upper Midwest, followed by chapters on domestic life, work, and synagogue and organizational activities. Although the emphasis is on the period 1890 to 1920, the book covers four generations of women and includes the contemporary period. Each chapter has two sections—a narrative essay, followed by a section called "Voices," which draws on the dozens of oral interviews, primarily with women, conducted for the book and exhibition.

One of the distinctive features of the book is the variety of sources it draws on, including 120 personal accounts, many previously unpublished. Each chapter is heavily illustrated with family photographs and a wide variety of other material—Jewish community cookbooks, homemade Hanukkah decorations, and other artifacts—that convey a richly textured picture of what it was like to live a Jewish life in places such as Hibbing, Minnesota, or to be a Jewish homesteader in Bowman County, North Dakota.

Although the impression one gets of life on the northern plains in the early twentieth century is of extreme hardship and adversity, this book tells an upbeat story. There are certainly tragedies—children freeze to death in blizzards and widows struggle to feed their families—but in general the book provides a positive picture of Jewish life in the region. Jews struggle, but they survive and even prosper. They may rely on an itinerant rabbi to serve their small communities, but they organize services, they celebrate the holidays, they might even keep kosher, although getting regular delivery of kosher meat is next to impossible. They get along with their non-Jewish neighbors, but they don't marry them; in other words, they remain Jewish. The book does not deal with issues of intermarriage or drift from the Jewish community; it touches on anti-Semitism, but does not dwell on it, nor does it discuss other less salubrious issues, such as wife desertion, which was a significant problem among Jewish immigrants in the early twentieth century. As that famous Minnesotan, Garrison Keillor, might have said, "all of their children were above average."

The great contribution of this book is as a documentary source; the excellent oral interviews, the wonderful family and other photographs, along with numerous examples of the particular material culture of the region, make it a real treasure. The oral interviews, in particular, provide dozens of wonderful stories and offer a view into

a vanished world, and into an American Jewish experience that was a bit out of the ordinary.

Although I very much liked the book's format, I was disappointed by the inadequate index, which did not capture all of the references to a particular geographic locale. This would seem essential in a regional history.

Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman, 1890–1930, by Marilyn Irvin Holt. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995. 250 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. $34.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY NANCY K. BERLAGE, THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Marilyn Holt has written a highly readable and enjoyable account of how the "domestic economy movement" affected many central plains farm women between 1890 and 1930. She illustrates how ideals about progress and science came together in experts' ideas about improving home management and efficiency, health and sanitation, and education in domestic matters. Through her detailed descriptions of the various programmatic efforts to put reform ideals into practice, as well as through the well-chosen reproductions of photographs, we can imagine and envision what this movement might have meant to many farm people. Holt also describes the unique mediums used to disseminate scientific ideas to women—clubs, fairs, contests, and other organizational forms. Evoking a nostalgic charm at times, she conveys the movement's sincerity and naiveté without ignoring its darker overtones of racism.

Historians have usually made scientific farming and men the focus of their studies of Progressive-era rural reform. This volume, however, provides a sorely needed account of its domestic science aspects. Holt shows that domestic science played an important role, initiating rural change and empowering female populations. Holt surely intended to—and ably does—portray farm women not as mere subordinates, but as rational actors whose experiences both paralleled and differed from men's. She accomplishes less well her goal of showing that women were not only passive receptors of advice but accepted or rejected ideas to fit their own needs. It is a difficult task to sort out farm women's voices from the multitude advocating improvements—a problem exacerbated by the diffuseness of sources available for this sort of "bottom-up" history. The author has relied primarily on experts' writings and assessments of farm women's re-

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