

Book Reviews

EDITED BY MICHAEL D. GIBSON

They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups, ed. June Drenning Holmquist. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981. pp. xiii, 614. Maps, tables, photographs, reference notes, appendix, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Production of this large and useful book engaged the minds of many able people over a period of eight years. The late June Drenning Holmquist, editor of the volume and head of the publications and research division of the Minnesota Historical Society, provided the standards, staying power, and coordination. *They Chose Minnesota* is the capstone of her thirty-three-year career at the society.

In addition to sound scholarship, good writing, and superb editing, many other ingredients were essential in the making of this fine book. Not the least of these were sustained institutional commitment and support. This book is a good example of what a stable and productive state historical institution can and should be doing. Every Minnesotan from Ojibway, to Norwegian, to Hmong is likely to learn something about his/her background from these pages. Editor Holmquist credited Carlton C. Qualey, retired history professor from Carleton College, with the idea of bringing between two covers "information on the major ethnic population elements that have resided in Minnesota during the 130 years from 1850 to 1980" (p. xii).

The book is divided into four sections (North Americans, Northern and Western Europeans, Central and Southern Europeans, and Middle Eastern and Asian Peoples) and thirty-two chapters. In a few places the organization will surprise readers. For example, chapters on blacks and the old-stock Americans are located in the section about North Americans. A sixteen-page, triple-columned index (with twenty-eight references to Iowa) is available to help users find what they are looking for, including searchers who wish to slice through data on sixty ethnic groups for particular purposes. Among the twenty-seven authors are seasoned scholars with national reputations; "others appear here for the first time" asserts the dust jacket. There are

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

61 maps, 85 tables, 143 photographs, and over 2,000 notes following the chapters.

The scholarly apparatus need not scare readers. This is an exciting book about the people who came to Minnesota and what has become of them since their arrival. It is full of fascinating details, insights, and statistics. The latter are under control. Demographers and quantifiers may consult Jon A. Gjerde's "Appendix on Statistics" for technical points.

Public libraries in at least the northern tier of Iowa counties should purchase this book as should research libraries. By consulting *They Chose Minnesota* genealogists and family historians can clear up many a troublesome point about ethnic terminology and shifting Old World boundaries. Those who teach United States history in Iowa high schools and colleges could freshen up their presentations on immigration by reading Holmquist's twelve-page introduction and dipping into the book for illustrative detail.

Iowa's neighbor to the north has set high standards for state ethnic history.

BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE

PETER T. HARSTAD

James R. Howard and the Farm Bureau, by Robert P. Howard. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1983. pp. xv, 225. Photographs, bibliographic essay, index. \$18.95 cloth.

This biography represents a significant achievement on several levels. On one level, it could be read for its valuable information about the extension service conducted by our agricultural colleges and the role of extension agents in the founding of farmers' improvement organizations under various names and titles, which eventually took the name of farm bureaus. On another level, it is an account of the internal workings of the American Farm Bureau Federation. Most important of all, it can be read and enjoyed for what it purports to be: a good, solid, unadorned biography of a founder and the first president of the American Farm Bureau Federation. It happens to have been written by that man's son, a matter of some consequence. The result demonstrates that a son or daughter *can* tell the story of his or her father's life and accomplishments in a fair, detached, and trustworthy manner, giving full credit where credit is due and recognizing shortcomings wherever they exist. (In this case, fortunately, very few existed, none pertaining to character.) Of course it is a thing that has been done before and doubtless will be done again, but it is a challenge of a high order to the best of writers.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.