

ville as evidence that as early as 1900 the American "melting pot" had overcome the mass of Czech settlers. While cultural change characterized any immigrant group after five decades in America, the "melting pot" metaphor is a gross oversimplification. Whether in rural Iowa or urban Chicago, newcomers adjusted to the peculiarities of specific regions, classes, and economies. Furthermore, each group retained certain patterns of thought and behavior during adjustment. For those who would like to learn something of Czech Iowans' assimilative experience, this book may offer some interesting glimpses. For a full understanding, however, we await more scholarly studies.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER
INDIANA UNIVERSITY

JOHN BODNAR

Danes in North America, edited by Frederick Hale. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984. xx, 231 pp. Illustrations, index. \$19.95 cloth.

Historians long ago recognized the value of immigrant letters for the history of ethnic groups in America. They have treated the letters of no group more extensively or affectionately than those of the Scandinavians. The distinguished Theodore Blegen produced the pioneer volume in 1955, which gathered sample letters of Norwegian immigrants. More recently, H. Arnold Barton edited an excellent book of selections from Swedish sources. Now Frederick Hale has added *Danes in North America* as a parallel volume to treat the experiences of the third and, in America, least numerous of the Scandinavian peoples.

Hale has drawn his selections primarily from the "America letters" that have survived in Danish libraries, archives, newspapers, and other publications. Although millions were written, only a small proportion escaped destruction. Yet the thousands that remain are sufficiently varied in subject, time, and place to present an editor with a formidable task of choosing letters that accurately reflect, as Hale describes it, "immigrants' aspirations and apprehensions, successes and joys, homesickness and American patriotism, disillusionment and defeat" (viii).

Hale organizes the book in a traditional fashion. Letters in the first chapter treat the ordeal of crossing the Atlantic. Subsequent chapters describe immigrant life on farms, in cities, and in the American West. Hale then switches to political questions before turning to problems of ethnic pluralism and Danish identity in America. He devotes a separate chapter to the experiences of immigrant women and follows

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it with selections on the religious pluralism of Danish Americans. The final part touches on the disillusionment and defeat that many immigrants felt as they struggled to find places in a new society with a strange language and alien ways.

In general, Hale chooses letters that both reveal nineteenth-century experiences and interest modern readers. He carefully reflects the wide range of human response to the problems of adjustment. For example, he balances panegyrics to American economic success and political freedom with disgruntled and dyspeptic grumblings about American greed and deceit. Yet readers must resist the notion that the letters are truly representative of all Danish immigrants. Most of the letters Danes dispatched from America to the folks back home, like those of people everywhere in most times, were dull, mundane, and not highly literate. The editor tends to publish, as the owners tended to preserve, only those accounts that were lively, well composed, and revealing. The writers of such letters were not ordinary or typical. Inevitably a collection of them innocently injects a bias that easily seduces the unwary reader.

Hale's introduction to Danes in North America is an exceptionally fine survey of Danish immigration to this country. Moreover, Hale begins each chapter with a succinct summary of background material to enhance one's ability to evaluate the translations that follow. Similarly, he briefly introduces each letter or other account with a statement that extracts its special significance. His easy, free-flowing style attracts the reader to the primary material of the book. Hale's translations bear the same characteristics of cogency and readability. Although his English settings are no doubt accurate, they also bear Hale's personal style, which gives the letters a homogenized quality and seems to alter the distinctive characteristics that the Danish originals must have conveyed.

Iowans interested in the ethnic history of their state will find this book especially attractive. Hale and his selections often mention the large concentration of Danish immigrants and their institutions in Iowa in this major contribution to the history of Danes in America.

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

FREDERICK C. LUEBKE

A Special Relationship: Germany and Minnesota, 1945-1985, edited by Clarence A. Glasrud. Moorhead, Minnesota: Concordia College, 1983. 128 pp. Notes, illustrations, index. \$6.00 paper.

Between 1979 and 1983, four conferences, which the Minnesota Humanities Commission and the National Endowment for the

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