

aspect of his work. For example, she could have included one of his photos as printed in one of the many magazines in which he published, or she could have quoted his correspondence, if available, with picture editors. The captions for some photos could have indicated which magazines published them, whether Morton sold them as postcards, and which ones local families and businesses commissioned. Such clues to the photographer's intent and motivation would aid in understanding and viewing his work.

This book's usefulness lies in its availability for comparison. Curators and collectors can compare Morton to their own local photographers and draw some conclusions from the similarities and differences. If he was painstaking and exacting, were others more informal? Was his "unusual attention to detail" (xi) really so unusual? When did he excel at depicting processes and when was he mediocre? For me, comparing Morton to some Minnesota photographers helps put them in a slightly broader context. I hope the work of more such individuals gets published, but with essays, *please*.

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BONNIE WILSON

They Came to This Place: A History of Spillville, Iowa and Its Czech Settlers, by Cyril M. Klimesh. Sebastopol, Ca.: Methodius Press, 1983. viii, 239 pp. Notes, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$14.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper.

Historians have extensively chronicled the migration of over forty million immigrants from Europe to America in the century after 1830. Unfortunately, despite this abundance of studies, two important problems still plague immigration scholarship. First, we know much more about some groups than about others. Second, newcomers to urban America have drawn considerably more attention than those who settled in rural regions. Because Cyril M. Klimesh's account of Czechs in Spillville, Iowa, treats a seldom-studied ethnic group and helps to extend the boundaries of historical inquiry into rural America, it is a useful addition to the field of immigrant, ethnic, and even community history. Yet, while Klimesh bases his account on original materials such as local newspapers, ethnic histories, and census manuscripts, he clearly does not attain the standards of modern, historical scholarship. The book's research is spotty and unduly selective, the analysis of the data at hand is weak, and Klimesh makes no attempt to link his findings to the existing knowledge on Czechs and other immigrants. This neglect is unfortunate, for many of the details about these Iowa Czechs need more explanation and background.

Klimesh admits that he is not a professional historian. Were he, he would surely have examined the specific origins of Czech Iowans more fully to explain the selective nature of the process of emigration. Certain social classes were more liable to send emigrants than others. Klimesh's description of the newcomers' social and economic backgrounds is vague; it is not enough to say simply that they were impoverished and unemployed. Modern scholarship has demonstrated that the poorest levels of European society seldom crossed the Atlantic. Individuals with some modest means could afford the trip, and people with at least something to lose were more likely immigrants than those with nothing to lose at all. It is even inaccurate to claim, as Klimesh does, that these newcomers decided to "forsake" their homeland. Since he does not investigate return migration, Klimesh does not know how many returned or wished they could.

Finally, Klimesh does not examine the family life of Czechs in Spillville. For those who did stay and endure the rigors of life in nineteenth-century Iowa, family networks and roles ordered life and rooted individuals to a particular place. The family mediated the discrepancies between new cultural and economic demands and the familiar ways of behavior brought from the homeland. This major omission leaves a gaping hole in Klimesh's portrait of this immigrant community.

Klimesh compensates somewhat for his scholarly failures, however, by investing a good deal of love and devotion in his subject. The book is more anecdotal than interpretive, and offers enough warm, revealing glimpses of immigrant life in nineteenth-century Iowa to satiate the appetites of interested readers. The chapter on the journey to America contains vivid details of how Czech families made their way in the 1850s to the German parts of Hamburg and Bremen. Material drawn from the Czech periodical *Katolik* reveals something of the hardship many faced at sea. Klimesh even describes some early encounters in Iowa with Native Americans, the cost of living for immigrant housewives, the process of erecting cabins and homes, and community activities such as church building and singing societies. His description of a religious celebration in 1910, which was typical of Czech communities throughout the United States, is very detailed. These descriptions, of course, contribute to our evidence that Czech or other immigrants developed rich communal traditions which facilitated their adjustment to American society whether they lived in rural or urban settings.

The final part of Klimesh's book deals with assimilation. Klimesh notes widespread use of the English language in contemporary Spill-

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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