

BOOK REVIEWS

Hubert Humphrey: A Biography. By Carl Solberg.
(New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1984. 572 p.
\$19.95.)

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, I think it fair to say, is an authentic political folk hero of Minnesota. He ran four times for the presidency; he was vice president of the United States; and for 21 years he served as a United States senator. He began his public career as mayor of Minneapolis, and he was every Minnesotan's friend. The stories about his impressive memory and his willingness to respond to the needs and interests of both rich and poor are legend. Humphrey was not a pretentious man; he was a first-class human being, albeit not without fault. Humphrey's accession to the vice presidency was thought by him to be the sure steppingstone to the Oval Office he yearned for, but instead it proved his downfall. President Lyndon B. Johnson co-opted his vice president over the issue of Vietnam, and the nation never forgave Humphrey for his seeming unwillingness to dissent. No matter that the vice president was an early, if private, protester. No matter that, late in the 1968 presidential campaign, he inched away from the Johnson administration. What people remembered was his endorsing rhetoric: "This is our great adventure—and a wonderful one it is." But it also speaks to the measure of the man that although Humphrey failed in his bid to become president, he made a political comeback and was re-elected by the people of Minnesota to third and fourth terms in the Senate. When he died he was deputy president pro tem of that body, a new post created by his Democratic colleagues to do him just honor.

Carl Solberg's is the first account of the Minnesotan's life to include the extensive materials in the Humphrey Papers at the Minnesota Historical Society. It is the richer for it. In every respect, Solberg's biography is a gripping tale of an extraordinary man. It is well written and amply documented. Solberg begins his account of Humphrey's life with the event that brought the then-mayor of Minneapolis to the national stage—his call at the Democratic National Convention in 1948 "for the Democratic party to get out of the shadow of states rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights." In that same year, he was elected senator from Minnesota.

Solberg tells us in exciting detail of Humphrey's performance as a legislator. In his initial session, he stumbled badly, speaking on 450 topics (as Humphrey said, "I liked every subject"), and introducing 57 bills, none of which passed. In time, however, he learned how to play the Senate game, and his colleagues came to like the ebullient young man from Minnesota. Solberg says that Humphrey "proved himself the premier lawmaker of his generation." In a way, that may be as

effusive a claim as Humphrey himself might have made, because the only legislation that bears his name is the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and National Growth Act of 1978, a rather vague effort at national planning that was passed after his death. He chaired only one major committee in all his Senate years—the Joint Economic Committee. But his fountain of ideas eventually bubbled into reality. Among them were the Peace Corps, the Job Corps, Food for Peace, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Medicare, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the limited nuclear test ban. On signing that treaty, President John Kennedy said, "Hubert, this is yours. I hope it works." Humphrey masterminded Senate passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and called it "my greatest achievement."

Against the backdrop of these achievements in the nation and in Minnesota—his building of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party and his recruitment of future political leaders—Humphrey's term as Lyndon Johnson's vice president represents the nadir of his political career. In a sense, this biography is more an account of those painful four years than of other facets of Humphrey's life. Some psychohistory emerges with Solberg suggesting that, "As vice president he surrendered his autonomy and gave absolute loyalty. More than deferring, he demeaned himself. He was hooked in the age-old dilemma: betray yourself or betray your father." And Humphrey himself admitted after going down to defeat in the 1968 presidential campaign, "I had become like the oldest son—and I couldn't make the break."

Another characteristic skillfully identified by Solberg is Humphrey's duality. He developed separate and conflicting constituencies: Arabs and Jews, defense spenders and disarmament advocates, Republican businessmen and labor leaders, farmers and consumers. But he orchestrated those apparent discrepancies with consummate ease and rhetoric. There were two devastating exceptions. In 1954, he brought in a bill outlawing the Communist party. Most liberals, shocked by its adoption, regarded Humphrey's action as a momentary aberration, but a University of South Dakota historian said: "Humphrey's espousal so out of spirit with American constitutional principles revealed a flaw in Humphrey's political character that will keep him eventually from becoming president of the United States." And he was right—the second exception and the final flaw was Humphrey's inability to disentangle himself from Lyndon Johnson and support of the war in Vietnam.

Carl Solberg has given us a fine book—the best to date on Humphrey of Minnesota. There are some errors of fact and typography. The editing needs some fine tuning; repetitions should have been eliminated, and a chronology of important dates would have been helpful. But these are minor com-

plaints. For political buffs, for Humphrey fans, for those occupying public office and those aspiring to it, and for Minnesotans in particular, *Hubert Humphrey: A Biography* is must reading.

Reviewed by BARBARA STUHLER, *associate dean of continuing education and extension at the University of Minnesota and author of Ten Men of Minnesota (1973), which includes a chapter on Humphrey.*

***Growing Pains: Diaries and Drawings for the Years 1908-1917.* By Wanda Gág. Introduction by Karen Nelson Hoyle.**

(St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984. 475 p. Illustrations. \$11.95.)

"I FOUND a new motto:—'Draw to live, and live to draw,' " wrote Wanda Gág in her diary on May 22, 1910. She was 17 years old, this young woman from New Uhn, Minnesota, who was to become an honored author and illustrator of children's books as well as a respected print maker and painter. Two years earlier, when her artist-father had died, she realized she was destined to carry on his calling.

Growing Pains, originally published in 1940 and recently reissued by the Minnesota Historical Society Press, contains her diaries, letters, drawings, and photographs from 1908 until 1917, the year she left the Minneapolis School of Art (later to become the Minneapolis College of Art and Design) to head for New York City. It is an endearing and inspirational book, often startlingly contemporary in its insights and outlook.

After Wanda's father died, she as oldest child felt a responsibility to help her mother raise the six younger children. Her early diary entries reveal her devotion to this task. How carefully she recorded the development of her baby sister, Flavia, writing down with loving attention her first words and accomplishments! How earnestly she worked at her drawing so that she could earn money! The *Minneapolis Journal* carried a section called "Journal Juniors" to which young writers and artists could contribute, and Wanda's stories and drawings were frequently accepted. Because her mother was often sick, Wanda had to stay home from school to cook, clean, and babysit. Life was hard. She would rather have been reading or studying, but she bore her responsibilities valiantly. She found her diary a place to go for release and solace: "When I came home I went to the piano and played with the baby in my lap. And then I helped make supper and then—oh everything went crooked. I cried, and I don't care if I do say it. Louisa Alcott cried sometimes too and *she* wrote it in her journal. I long for school—and lessons—and true happiness. I am sorry that I have to write about such things. You may think I'm a pessimist, but I'm not. I really think I am an optimist; I intend to be one anyway, but you can't be happy when things go upside-down."

Her high spirits radiate throughout this book, too. She adored high school and the excitement of learning; she gloried in her "drawing moods" and the endless series of books she

devoured. And she constantly wrote poems and stories, made toys and paper dolls for the younger children, staged family theatricals, and looked forward to birthdays and holidays, especially Christmas. Poor as the household was, they managed to have fun, and a spirit of warm family feeling pervades the diary.

Her diary was also a place to discover and record the insights she was gathering about her inner self, the one she often hid from the outside world. She used the word "Myself" (always capitalized) to signify this being, to distinguish it from the many "me's" she revealed to her friends and classmates. "Myself, you see, stands for my better judgement, for my permanent self, and *Me* is my unstable self, the part that is continually changing.

After high school and a short stint as a country school-teacher, she was awarded a one-year scholarship to the St. Paul Art School. Thus began a year of incredible artistic, intellectual, and spiritual growth. She wrote more copiously than ever in her diary, which reveals her to have been gregarious and lively, a small-town girl eager to experience everything the Twin Cities had to offer. Enchanting accounts abound—of symphony concerts and art exhibits, lectures and discussions about books, art, love, immortality, and God, ten-mile hikes near Lake Minnetonka, outings on the streetcar to Como Park and Minnehaha Falls, and dinner at Donaldson's tearoom, where an orchestra played during the meal. In the midst of this active social and intellectual life, she retained her dedication to drawing, and often ruminated about whether she should marry or be an "old maid." "I think I had best be one, because [I don't] want to marry unless my husband-to-be would promise to get someone to do the scrubbing for me and to run the house when I had a drawing streak."

After a year at the St. Paul Art School, she received a scholarship at the Minneapolis School of Art and began her term there on the upper floor of the old public library at 10th and Hennepin. Soon the school moved to quarters in the new museum, where she attended the grand reception of its opening and wrote in her diary: "We had all enjoyed seeing silks and satins and throats glide by us, their owners doing their best to say something intelligent or noncommittal about the pictures. [A] woman said to her escort, 'Who painted these pictures?' Her companion, after consulting the catalogue, said, 'Corot.' Whereupon the woman said, 'Oh then I like them. Let's go on.'"

In the new school she met Adolf Dehn, who early declared himself to be in love with her. They were collaborators in various art projects and eventually applied together for admission to the Art Students' League in New York. Before they received word that both had been awarded scholarships to the League, her mother became very ill and died. Wanda courageously made plans for her family. By the time she and Adolf were ready to leave, she had sold the house in New Uhn and settled her sisters and brother in Minneapolis. She then felt free to go on to her next challenge. The final entry in the book is simple and stark, yet it suggests her anticipation: "Adolphe, Arnold Blanch and I start out for New York Wednesday evening."

Growing Pains is as compelling and suspenseful as a good novel, as useful and inspirational as a spiritual guidebook.

Reading it, one is transported back almost 80 years to live with Wanda Gág and share, as her friends did, her delights, sorrows, and revelations. Karen Nelson Hoyle's fine introduction greatly enhances our appreciation of the diary. Through Hoyle's careful research we learn many fascinating details of Wanda's life after she left Minnesota. The introduction whets our appetite for a full-length biography and holds out the intriguing possibility that additional volumes of Wanda's diary may also be published. There are more than 50 diaries waiting in the University of Pennsylvania's Van Pelt Library under the stipulation that they be closed to the public until 1993, the centennial of Wanda's birth.

Reviewed by PHEBE HANSON, who teaches writing at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, as well as courses in diaries, journals and letter writing at the University of Minnesota Split Rock Summer Session. She herself has diaries that go back to 1939, a year when she was reading Wanda Gág's stories in the Duluth Public Library.

***Dubious Alliance: The Making of Minnesota's DFL Party.* By John Earl Haynes.**

(Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Illustrations. Cloth, \$35.00; paper, \$14.95.)

IT IS FITTING that, during the presidential year of 1984, a sound monograph on the birth of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party should appear. For this unique political union has produced the last two Democratic vice presidents and, of course, the most recently defeated Democratic presidential candidate. For Minnesotans and, one would hope, a much larger audience, Haynes' book should be required reading.

Dubious Alliance is the odyssey of this unusual political party during the 1940s. Haynes first pieces together the unstable mid-1930s when the Farmer-Labor party was at its zenith. Even then its fundamental coalition—labor, farmers, women's groups, socialists of many stripes, protesters, and various radical factions—was highly uncertain about its common goals, its membership, and its relationship to the newly dominant national Democratic party. Enter then the small Communist party of Minnesota, ordered by its national leaders to become active in the Farmer-Labor party. Haynes chronicles the triumphs and tragedies of Farmer-Laborism and shows how its key actors played roles in the sudden collapse of Elmer Benson's administration in 1938 (when 31-year-old Harold Stassen was elected governor), and later in the 1944 merger.

Haynes largely succeeds in the difficult job of separating factional groups into understandable classifications. He prefers, for example, to call agrarian liberals, leftists, and radicals the Popular Front (against Hitler) rather than the United Front, a term then commonly used in the United States. He refines this term into "hard Popular Fronters" and "soft Popular Fronters," classifications that present readers with problems after 1944. The bitter 1945-48 DFL internal struggle was then usually described as the "left wing" of Benson, Communists, and fellow travelers versus the "right

wing" of Hubert Humphrey, Orville Freeman, Eugene McCarthy, and their followers.

More important, Haynes provides insight into the struggle of Communists and the left wing to control the rapidly declining Farmer-Labor movement. His treatment of Elmer Benson, for example, is fair and balanced. And Haynes effectively describes the wide gulf between moderate and conservative Farmer-Laborites and their left-wing adversaries. These battles for control of the F-L party and its extralegal Farmer-Labor Association were titanic compared to modern factional DFL disorders.

The second major section of the volume catalogs the merger movement. The Democratic and Farmer-Labor parties were not essentially compatible; each was buffeted by ideological forces and the individual ambitions of some of its primary actors. The Farmer-Laborites were prone to schism. At one end were Protestant agrarians, conservative in social values but critical of the extent by which rural Americans lagged in reaching the good life. Sometimes the agrarians found limited forms of public ownership acceptable when it was limited to the farm service sector, but beyond that, they had little in common with "godless communism" and the more strident socialists at the other end of the movement. Haynes skillfully recounts the epic struggles between the traditional AFL craft unions and the industrial unions of the CIO. Not surprisingly, the conservative AFL had little in common with radicals and Communists who had penetrated into key CIO positions.

There also were enigmatic personalities to contend with. Among the most interesting were the radical-leaning Elmer Benson and the more secretive and lonely conservative, Hjalmar Petersen. Added to them were Christian Social Gospelers, temperance crusaders, and reformers who found little in common with business Republicanism or Irish and German Catholic-dominated Democratic politicians.

Democrats, for their part, were equally divisional in their narrow alliances. Some fell in easily with the New Deal; others steadfastly resisted it. And Irish Democratic politicians seemed in no hurry to share power with either a broader-based Democratic party or the German and Scandinavian Lutherans so common among Farmer-Laborites. As for F-L radicals, they were unacceptable to most moderate, let alone conservative, Democrats.

Merger, therefore, was the product of the times. The Democratic strategy since the 1920s had been eventually to absorb moderate Farmer-Laborites and moderate Farmer-Laborism into the party. Wartime, however, muted both parties' natural antagonisms. It was the national Democratic party and the White House that helped convince reluctant Minnesota Democrats to merge with Farmer-Laborites. Haynes handles the merger details deftly and accurately. Popular folklore to the contrary, it remains fairly clear that Hubert Humphrey was not "the man who created" the merged DFL party, though he did play a major role during the negotiation process. One can even argue that the Communist party was more important to merger than Humphrey, whose major contributions came after 1944.

The 1944 merger was at best a risky marriage of convenience. It need not have been, had the anti-Communist or moderate wing of Farmer-Laborites been the principal nego-

tiators for the third party. But Popular Fronters, Benson followers, and Communists were firmly entrenched at this time, and the party line was for CPers and their friends to cooperate with Democrats in re-electing Roosevelt to a fourth term.

The convoluted activities of Minnesota Communists and their associates seemed certain to clash with traditional Democrats, whether New Deal or conservative, just as they would with anti-Communist Farmer-Laborites who ventured into the revitalized Minnesota Democratic party. The new party started life with a heavy load of Communists. Some were entrenched inside CIO union locals; a number of others, determined to work in a "progressive" DFL, aligned themselves with Elmer Benson and his allies.

Six months of on-again, off-again talks between representatives of the Democratic National Committee and the White House finally produced the long-hoped-for merger in 1944. Party offices were divided equally between Democrats and left-wing Farmer-Laborites. But after 1945 the going got rougher: the party line changed as Communists abandoned their Popular Front policy, and to the surprise of moderate DFLers and old-line Democrats, the radical wing wrested control of the new party in 1946. The next two years saw internecine warfare, centered upon policy issues as well as local, regional, and national party candidates. The Benson left and the Communists were determined to block Humphrey from winning a seat in the Senate. Nationally, presidential foreign policy with the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan united the Popular Front in opposition to Harry S. Truman's re-election in 1948.

"Cold War Liberals" such as Humphrey, Freeman, McCarthy, Donald Fraser, Arthur Naftalin, Karl Rolvaag, and Eugenie Anderson purged the Benson left wing in 1947 and 1948 by gaining control at caucuses and then the county, congressional, and state conventions. Haynes discusses the bitterness of 1948. A new organization, Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), recruited anti-Communist Democrats and worked for a postwar liberal agenda. (The ADA began as an anti-Truman faction, with Humphrey among its early national leaders.) By the end of 1948 the left-wingers had abandoned or been pushed out of the party; not until 1968 did some of them return to oppose Humphrey's presidential bid. The 1947-48 struggle was by far the most bitter of all DFL conflicts down to the 1980s.

Some readers will find the detail and the scores of names that are so liberally sprinkled throughout this excellent narrative overwhelming. But that is a minor problem compared to the able description of the unique beginning of a successful state political party. Haynes ends his account about 1948. Still, he is writing for a 1984 audience, and that raises questions about the health of the DFL 40 years after merger. How long can the party hold on to its populist following? Has a significant shift occurred in the demographic make-up of Minnesota?

Since 1978, the year Humphrey died, no DFL candidate has won a Senate campaign, while Republicans have won four by wide margins, the last (1984) with 59 percent. In 1948 nearly 35 percent of Minnesota workers were unionized, only about 20 percent in 1984. The farm population was 32 percent in 1940, 25 percent in 1950, and 9 percent in 1980. In 1984

nearly 60 percent of husband-wife households had two wage earners and were the core of the Minnesota middle class. Even the party name—Democratic-Farmer-Labor—seems not to carry the demographic magic it once did.

Foreign policy is another matter. The cold-war liberals of 1948 seem to have become the military critics of the 1980s, with the result that Minnesota Republican candidates often sound more like Humphrey cold-war liberals than the DFLers who oppose them. Some DFL liberals and most of the new DFL left wing sound much like the Popular Fronters of the 1930s and 1940s.

The Democratic (and DFL) American-style welfare state has been put into operation, but it too is in danger of alienating much of the political center upon which the early DFL built much of its success. All of this, it is interesting to speculate, makes one wonder whether the cold-war liberals and New Deal-Fair Deal Democrats whose battles Haynes so ably describes have increasingly lost out to a new generation of liberals who come considerably closer to the Popular Fronters than to the Humphrey-Adlai Stevenson-Dean Acheson-Paul Douglas Democrats of bygone days.

Reviewed by MILLARD L. GIESKE, *professor of political science at the University of Minnesota-Morris, and author of Minnesota Farmer-Laborism: The Third Party Alternative (1979).*

***Crusaders: The Radical Legacy of Marian and Arthur Le Sueur.* By Meridel Le Sueur. New introduction by the author.**

(St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984. xxix, 109 p. \$6.95.)

BEING objective about Meridel Le Sueur's *Crusaders* is next to impossible. An intensely personal work written in lyrical, flowing prose-poetry, the book at once combines a daughter's love with a family heritage of commitment to political and social change. A reader (and reviewer) cannot judge the book without bias; one either believes or one does not.

I choose to believe. Marian and Arthur Le Sueur participated in, led, or backed nearly every insurgent movement on the northern plains and prairies from the 1890s through the early 1950s. They were Populists, Socialists, Nonpartisan Leaguers, and Farmer-Laborites. Both worked with labor movements, became bulwarks of the Floyd B. Olson administrations in Minnesota during the 1930s, and played important parts in developing the Farmer-Labor party and keeping it a liberal alternative into the late 1940s. Their contributions to the Upper Midwest are undeniable, and their legacies remain a vibrant part of an agrarian political tradition that is unmatched elsewhere in the United States. They were, and are, significant personalities, deserving of honor and recognition for what they did and what they tried to do.

For those reasons, *Crusaders* carries an important message. In the lives of the Le Sueurs may be found the roots of modern politics in Minnesota, North Dakota, and other northern states. The author seeks to use the Le Sueurs' story as a building block and source of strength for modern-day insurgents and advocates of radical or liberal change.

Crusaders should not be thought a biography. The author sweeps through the past with glistening disregard for dates and specific events. Rather, the work evokes a sense for the eras in which the Le Sueurs lived and for the struggles in which they participated. Meridel Le Sueur's prose is elegiac and her intent is emotional; in Marian and Arthur she finds inspiration, and she conveys their dedication to change in place of the hard facts that a historian would prefer.

Still, the book has historical value. It is a folk history of midwestern radicalism, a book that recalls movements rather than personalities. The Le Sueurs were people whose lives had meaning, and their dedication sustained their existences. Necessarily, this biography should be read not so much for its historical content as for its successful portrayal of struggle and fealty to cause.

A historian, of course, would wish for much more. Where, he or she might ask, is the story of Arthur Le Sueur's deep and abiding connection with the North Dakota Socialist party and his role in its opposition to the Nonpartisan League? Where is the recollection of Le Sueur's subsequent employment by the NPL and his part in the founding of the Farmer-Labor party in Minnesota? Why is not the relationship to the IWW, the National Producer's Alliance, the Farmers Holiday Association, the Communist party, the National Woman's party, and a host of other left-wing movements of the 20th century detailed? Dozens of other questions about the family's life, their associations, their work, and their legacies remain untouched, as well.

The author leaves that kind of biography to someone else. And it is just as well that she does. Her brief, emotional remembrance, first published in 1955 and now augmented with her new, 29-page introduction, is a classic work precisely because it is an emotional elegy to a committed pair of radicals. Her story of Marian and Arthur Le Sueur stands unfettered by tradition, an appropriate style for two people whose lives and works were so outside the norm. The book deserved to be reprinted and the Minnesota Historical Society Press should be congratulated for returning it to the book-buying and book-reading public. As a believer, I hope it sells well.

Reviewed by LARRY REMELE, *historian/editor for the State Historical Society of North Dakota, who edits North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains, and devotes his research time to northern plains agrarian movements.*

***The Colossus of Roads: Myth and Symbol along the American Highway.* By Karal Ann Marling.**

(Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Photographs. 140 p. Cloth, \$27.50, paper, \$12.95.)

"IF I WERE a rich man," the tune from *Fiddler on the Roof* begins. If I were a rich man I would give a copy of this delightful book to every inhabitant of Minnesota. If I were very rich, to every inhabitant of the U.S.A. The latest work by Karal Ann Marling, a clever professor of art history and American studies at the University of Minnesota, is an extended essay (102 pages of text) about gigantic public statuary,

architecture, and advertising motifs—especially in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest, but also in southern California as well as other parts of the country. The book is profusely and informatively illustrated. Marling's prose is charming, droll, and carries the reader along breathlessly. This is a delectable to be devoured in one or two sittings, accompanied by a huge pitcher of beer or a gallon of milk. It's a slender book that nevertheless makes you think big. It's a book about one type of gargantuan appetite in American culture.

The Colossus of Roads is wonderfully rich in social history. Do you want to know when and how the craze for miniature golf began? See pages 34-39. Are you curious about the genesis of tall-tale post cards? See pages 64-67. Have you ever wondered where the Burma Shave roadside ads started? In Minnesota, of course. See page 70. What about the impact of St. Paul's Winter Carnival on American literature and iconography? See pages 75-76. In Marling's enchanted mind the customary distinction between art and life becomes elusive. The two are inseparable in her engaging tilt at one aspect of wacky vulgarity in American life.

Marling wears her learning lightly. It is nothing less than a miracle that she has written a book of this sort without ever mentioning semiotics or Roland Barthes. Such trendy academic burdens have become tiresome, and Marling demonstrates that one *can* write a smart book without invoking current catchwords and gurus.

On the other hand, Marling might very well have beefed up a different aspect of her book. One of its central arguments (though she does *not* run it into the ground) is that her materials are "the debris of a trashy, commercial culture, to which they are eminently suitable monuments." When she discusses the 25-foot fiberglass codfish erected in 1983 on the edge of Madison, Minnesota, she is persuasive. When she claims that Paul Bunyan is "a commercial colossus of the 20th century," however, she is on shakier ground. Marling's essay would have been even better had she looked a bit more at the history of American folklore and linked it to the literature on the history of advertising. Her book is really about the convergence of those two phenomena. Marling does not take cheap shots: ours has indeed been a bourgeois culture. But I would contend that *some* of the roots of our folklore are relatively untainted by crass commercialism. To specify where and how and why a community or a company crossed the line from folklore to business promotion would have added an explanatory dimension to this sprightly study. Gigantism has been a part of the American outlook for a very long time. Marling's essay is, in one sense, a fresh chapter in the history of American advertising. But her emphasis on commercialism, especially during the period between the two world wars, had its beginnings (at least partially) in noncommercial aspects of western thought that date all the way back to European culture on the eve of discovery. The reader with a bit of leisure who finds Marling's material compelling should also peruse Constance Rourke's *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (1931) and Arthur K. Moore's *The Frontier Mind: A Cultural Analysis of the Kentucky Frontiersman* (1957).

Perhaps the ultimate compliment that one might pay this book is to invoke the overused phrase that a brief review cannot do it justice. I should like to have an extended dialogue

with Marling about certain aspects of her interpretation of Mount Rushmore. But space does not permit. Let it suffice to say that *Colossus* is simply *must* reading for every Minnesotan. You will want to explore the substance of her concern about "the relationship between colossi and the town festivals that play a major role in the economic and cultural life of Minnesota."

If Minnesota had not already chosen the moccasin flower, I would nominate Karal Ann Marling as the state flower. Be that as it may, she is a state flower to be cultivated, and a national resource to be cherished.

Reviewed by MICHAEL KAMMEN, *who teaches American cultural history at Cornell and is a trustee of the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown—home of the Cardiff Giant, who is prominently featured in The Colossus of Roads.*

***The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade.* By Harvey Klehr.**

(New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1984. 511 p. \$26.50.)

HARVEY KLEHR'S big book on American Communism has been in the works for a long time. It has an encyclopedic quality to it, covering a great many facets of Communist Party (CP) activity and offering 70 pages of documentation. For some, it will be heralded as the definitive work on the subject, and even those less enthusiastic will find it of value. In some respects, *The Heyday of American Communism* is a completion of work begun by Theodore Draper three decades ago. Here, I do not mean to detract from Klehr's efforts, but simply note that his book draws heavily (as he readily informs the reader) upon source materials that Draper gathered, and that it is organized and conceptualized along the same basic lines as those earlier predepression volumes. Klehr's own primary research includes interviews with former party figures and FBI documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

Yet despite these efforts and citations to recent scholarship, *The Heyday of American Communism* sometimes has an old-fashioned ring to it. Klehr's book offers essentially a political history of the CP, focusing upon the party's ties with the Comintern, its policy shifts, and the ramification of such changes upon Communist activities in the United States. We also learn how many members joined and how many dropped out at various times, and which organizations Communists formed and joined. But Klehr's work often is not informed with the findings and insights of much of the newer scholarship on American Communism. Recently, some historians have labored to reconstruct aspects of the CP's social history and, in so doing, have helped us better understand what it was like to have been active in the Communist movement. Klehr is aware of their work, even citing examples of it on occasion, but he seemingly refuses to acknowledge its most important insights. This newer scholarship often presents a more positive view of Communist efforts than Klehr entertains, and perhaps that leads him to undervalue its main findings. But whatever the reason, his relative neglect of the published

work of Lawrence Wittner, Mark Naison, and Paul Buhle (among others) detracts from *The Heyday of American Communism*.

I also find Klehr's discussion of women in the CP a bit perplexing. In a previous book, *Communist Cadre* (1978), he devotes a chapter to women CP leaders. This time, however, he pays little attention to women at all. Ella Reeve ("Mother") Bloor is mentioned in regard to Communist attempts to organize farmers, and there is some discussion on the party's difficulties in recruiting women. Yet Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, whom Klehr earlier characterized as "the CPUSA's most prominent woman leader until her death in 1964," is not mentioned once in a text of more than 400 pages. Here, Klehr's discussion could have benefitted significantly from the findings of Elsa Jane Dixler's 1974 dissertation and Robert Shaffer's 1979 article on women and Communists in the 1930s.

A short review does not allow for a full assessment of *The Heyday of American Communism*. I have offered criticism of certain aspects of this book and easily could add to it had I more space. Still, despite its flaws, Klehr's volume is a useful work. It is full of detail, extensively documented, and clearly organized. With its appearance, a gap in the historiography has been filled, and those who might quarrel with Klehr's interpretations and omissions can utilize the information he provides. Now, however, let some of us look forward to the publication of other studies treating the American Communist experience, which will be less concerned with national party leaders and the Comintern, and more interested in the rank-and-file and other relatively neglected topics.

Reviewed by WILLIAM C. PRATT, *professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, whose article, "The Socialist Party, Socialist Unionists, and Organized Labor, 1936-1950," appeared in Political Power and Social Theory, 4 (1984).*

***The Bones of Plenty.* By Lois Phillips Hudson.**

(St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984. 450 p. \$7.95.)

***Reapers of the Dust, A Prairie Chronicle.* By Lois Phillips Hudson.**

(St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984. 180 p. \$5.95.)

A GIRL of eight and a boy nine are hunting gophers on the North Dakota prairie for the bounty of two cents a tail. The boy lays a cord with a noose around a gopher hole, holds onto the other end, and the two sit down to wait. "Before he could jerk the noose, the gopher was nearly out of the hole and he caught only its hind legs. It flopped on its back, twisted up its head, and raked Peter's fist with its long front teeth. 'Ow!' he yelled, and in his shock he smashed down the rock he held in his other hand. It was a mangling blow to the gopher's little belly, but it did not die. It lay writhing at our feet." The girl hands Peter a rock—she knows that she could "never do it," and Peter drops it on the gopher's head, "and the legs in the noose kicked once and were still." That's how you hunt

gophers, and that also is something of what it was to be a child on the prairies in the 1930s. A birth and subsequent death of a foal; insides of shops, streets and roadways; the myriad house and barn and garden and field chores in the America of the rural poor move us in their exact detail. Both the novel, *The Bones of Plenty* (1962) and the sketches in *Reapers of the Dust* (1965) give personal meaning to stark objects and experiences much as do those marvelous photographs commissioned by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It is not only incidental details that are right, but the whole thoughtful, sometimes outraged, critical observation.

Author Lois Phillips Hudson was born in Jamestown, North Dakota; her parents, Carol and Aline Runner Phillips, farmed near Cleveland, west of Jamestown. Her parents moved to Seattle when Lois was less than two years old, and back to North Dakota when she was three, then returned to Seattle when she was nine. Her stay was short, but important to her development as a writer, and she has returned often to visit family and for a time to teach at the state university in Fargo. Her novel, *Bones of Plenty*, is about a family's struggle through the depression on a North Dakota farm near a town that sounds very like Jamestown, and they, like her family, finally give up. *Reapers of the Dust* explores the same time and place in separate essay/sketches from the point of view of a young girl. Both books make fiction out of autobiography and social comment.

I am glad that in its first venture into fiction the Minnesota Historical Society Press has republished these books, but it surprises me to realize that their first printing was only 20 years ago. Their contemporaries are novels by naturalistic writers a generation or more earlier: Theodore Dreiser, Clifford Odets, Hamlin Garland. *Second Hoeing*, (1935) by Hope Williams Sykes, for instance, also chronicles a family on the plains, German-Russian beet hoers in Colorado (re-issued in 1982 by the University of Nebraska Press). These books describe lives of ordinary people oppressed by social problems. Character and plot take second place to details of the physical environment and social conditions.

In October, 1983, Hudson spoke "On Saving History from the Historians" at the North Dakota Historical Society in Bismarck (her lecture is forthcoming in *North Dakota Quarterly*). She suggested that literary artists ought to interpret historical evidence in such a way as to move readers to ameliorating action. She said: "For many years in this century, the dominant literary critics have denied that serious writers have serious responsibilities to their society—an idea that would have left nearly all the great novelists of the nineteenth century gasping like fish out of water, and which has contributed mightily to depriving us, in the twentieth century, of those artists' insights so essential to the health of civilization." She refers to Abraham Lincoln's having said to Harriet Beecher Stowe, "So you're the little lady who made this big war." And introducing the new *Reapers*, Hudson writes that although artists cannot solve problems, "it is the artist's job to help us examine them," having first revealed "the dark an-

guish in individual human hearts which enables us, acting collectively, to do incredible things."

The girl narrator in "The Gopher Hunt" tries hard to impress males, and her father especially, that she is "as good as" a boy, even though she cannot bear to kill a gopher. When it gets dark and both children have lost their way, she falls into the mud, screams, and instantly, she says, "I became female." She realizes her advantage: "If boys were smarter, bolder, stronger, and steadier than girls, then Peter was responsible for getting us into this mess and he was supposed to be able to get us out. It was his fault that I had not minded my mother. For once the world was on my side. It was the reward of his birthright to suffer for both of us." A psychiatrist wrote that he wanted to use the story in his clinic. Hudson says, "He felt it would help his staff, particularly the men, become more sensitive to the lives of their women patients." For him, "The Gopher Hunt" helped examine, and maybe even solve, female psychiatric problems.

However, some scenes, and those between the two children are good examples, escape, it seems to me, from the "problem" they were supposed to present; they are fiction, made up; they take on a life of their own that does not necessarily adhere to any particular idea or quandary. The girl feels besieged by her father's contempt for femaleness, but this dour man is not necessarily all fathers, nor does her lively, inventive self stand for all little girls. And the boy, who has been trying to impress her in the way of older children, ends up small and muddy, being driven home by the father, in disgrace. The various complex tensions in the story mostly arise from highly particularized characters.

Hudson's most moving writing often stretches us beyond social urgency (a young girl's anxiety about gender) and also beyond the actual lives that her fictions draw upon and approximate. We need only compare the tender humor the gopher-killing scene evokes with, say, the reminiscence of an actual boy who hunted gophers: "I used to operate on gophers, cut their hearts out, cut them open and watch their hearts beat, but they never felt it because they were under ether all of the time. They died that way. You could feel the palpitation in their hearts. We were curious, that's why we did it" (from an oral interview of a man now in his eighties, conducted by Florence Clifford, Grand Forks, 1982). This boy's curiosity comes to little more than gruesome cruelty. The facts are there, but they lead to no revelations comparable to two children's discoveries of their powers and limitations. Lois Phillips Hudson appears sometimes an old-fashioned writer, but it may be that the strategies of writers contemporary to her parents gave her a way to describe a time and place that resembled much of the rest of the country many years earlier.

Reviewed by ELIZABETH HAMPSTEN *of the English department at the University of North Dakota, who is the author of* Read This Only to Yourself: Writings of Midwestern Women, 1880-1910 (1982).

NEWS & NOTES

A FARM PROTEST movement during the Great Depression of the 1930s is recalled in *Holiday: Minnesotans Remember the Farmers' Holiday Association*, edited by David Nass, with a foreword by Lyndon Johnson (Marshall, Minn., Plains Press, 1984, \$5.95). Twenty-one informants who participated in an oral history project conducted by Southwest State University (Marshall) and supported by the Minnesota Historical Society give perspectives on the protest against low prices for farm products and mortgage foreclosures. Peaking in the waning days of Herbert Hoover's administration and the early days of Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency, the movement in Minnesota was strongest in the southwestern and west-central regions. The informants describe stirring scenes during this troubled period as farmers halted trucks hauling products to market, massed at auctions to bid pennies for distressed farmers' possessions, and crowded into courthouses to halt foreclosure proceedings. Although most of the informants are farmers, perspectives on the movement are broadened by inclusion of a representative of an insurance company that held farm mortgages, a veterinarian, a newspaper editor, a county attorney, and a city clerk. Photographs complement the vivid narratives. The book also has a bibliography, a chronology, and an index.

GREEN ISLE: Feeding the World; Farming for the Banker by Ken Meter, a 58-page booklet produced from an incisive series of oral histories gathered between 1978 and 1983 among dairy farmers in the Arlington area of Sibley County, examines the worst depression that is being weathered by Minnesota farmers since 1932. It argues that dairy prices are well below the cost of production; the farm community is no longer its own source of credit; and economic and political pressures are depopulating the countryside. The price of land is higher than what that acreage can produce, exerting increasing strains on farm family life and concen-

trating land ownership into larger farms. Farm depressions, the booklet reminds us, precede more widespread economic panics that engulf the larger society.

Meter has woven excerpts from a number of interviews into a compelling glimpse of one of Minnesota's and the nation's major contemporary economic and social problems. "In only thirty years," he writes, "the United States government—over both Democratic and Republican leadership—has dismantled this self-reliant rural economy. . . . This has been accomplished by holding grain prices low in a conscious effort to force farmers off the land, to become laborers in the city." This is an excellent example of how a study of a local area, through oral history, can illuminate a national pattern. *Green Isle* is available from Crossroads Resource Center, P.O. Box 7423, Minneapolis, Minn. 55407.

Russell W. Fridley

A COLORFUL MAP by Rene Durand augments the text of his brother Paul C. Durand's book entitled *Ta-Ku-Wa-Kan-Ti-Pi: "Dwelling Place of the Gods."* Written in the form of a glossary, the 31-page text explains the original names assigned by the Dakota Indians to geographic features in the Twin Cities area in the era before white settlement began. The names are listed in phonetic English, followed by a literal translation and then its connotation; for example, "Hu-Pa-Hu Sa" means "wing" and "red"—now Red Wing. Both the booklet (\$7.50) and the map (\$9.00) may be ordered from the author at 15341 Red Oaks Road, Prior Lake, Minn. 55372. There is a \$3.00 postage charge.

THE SEEMINGLY endless fascination with the story of Minnesota's F. Scott Fitzgerald takes a new twist in James R. Mellow's well-written biography, *Invented Lives: F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald* (New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1984, 569 p., \$22.50). This dual biography traces much ground familiar to Fitzgerald aficionados, but the author

adds significant information on their relationship with a quantity of private correspondence. The rise and fall of this literary couple seems to mirror American society in the 1920s and 1930s, according to the author. The counterpoint is exemplified in Scott's words: "There is simply too much of the past between us," and Zelda's echo, "Nothing could have survived our life."

AN EXHIBITION sponsored jointly by the St. Louis County Historical Society, the Chisholm Museum, and the Duluth Art Institute has produced a catalog entitled *Circle of Life: Cultural Continuity in Ojibwe Crafts* (Duluth, 1984, 187 p., \$6.42, including tax). Written by the exhibit's curator, Edna Garte of the art history faculty at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and published by the exhibition's sponsors, the book is a valuable record of the contents of a too-short-lived exhibition.

Circle of Life is a sincere attempt to give us a nonethnocentric interpretation of Ojibway crafts. Garte treats Ojibway art as a continuum, emphasizing the persistence of tradition. She not only resists the temptation to trace the "Europeanizing" of Ojibway art in the 20th century, but criticizes our motivation for doing so. She quotes the story of an Indian artist who, chastised by a white visitor for using the "un-Indian" design of a beaver on a quillwork box, wondered, "I don't see what isn't Indian about a beaver. Is a beaver a white man?" The story eloquently reflects the pressures on 20th-century Indian artists to live up to an idealized white view of what Indian art "ought" to be like.

Garte has made an effort to seek out and report Ojibway artists' own interpretations of their work. Though she has not undertaken extensive ethnographic fieldwork, her interviews with Ojibway artists have clearly shaped the book's interpretations. The most useful passages are those in which she discusses techniques and media that have increased in popularity since the 1920s, such as black-ash basketry, hooked

rugs, and patchwork quilts. This information is taken almost entirely from interviews with living craftspeople.

Circle of Life was a monumental job, as the list of lenders to the exhibition proves. I hope that next time an exhibition like this is undertaken, the subject will be treated with as much sensitivity.

Carolyn Gilman

FOR A BOOKLET, *The Last Years of Sitting Bull* (Bismarck, State Historical Society of North Dakota, 1984, 60 pages), Herbert C. Hoover, professor of history at the University of South Dakota, has contributed an excellent brief biography and assessment of the famed Hunkpapa Dakota leader in an opening section entitled "Sitting Bull: The Image of a 'Great Man.'" Hoover concludes: "From his initial appearance as a military leader in the 1850's to some point beyond his lifetime in the twentieth century, he made a mark and created a legacy that clearly merits his designation as 'great man' in both Canadian and United States history."

Robert C. Hollow, curator of collections at the North Dakota society, also has an able, short essay in the booklet on "The Sioux Ghost Dance of 1890." The booklet was given free to people who visited a temporary exhibit of the same name last summer at the center. Plans call for the booklet to be reprinted and sold at a modest price yet to be determined. It includes many illustrations, particularly of Sitting Bull artifacts shown in the exhibit.

THE SIXTH VOLUME, entitled *The End of an Era* (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1984, 496 p., \$39.95), concludes an important series of books covering the Civil War pictorially under the general title, *The Image of War: 1861-1865*. As in other volumes of the series, the last one combines essays by Civil War experts with more than 650 photographs, many never reproduced before. More than 4,000 illustrations are reproduced in the six volumes from an immense collection assembled before publication by Editor William C. Davis and others of the National Historical Society who put the series together.

The final volume begins with a long chapter on "The Modern Army," with text by Russell F. Weigley and many photographs of guns and ammunition. Other themes include Rear Admiral David F. Farragut's victory in 1864 at Mobile Bay, Major General William T. Sherman's famed "March to the Sea"

from Atlanta to Savannah, the lengthy siege of Petersburg, Virginia, and the consequent fight for Richmond. A chapter called "The 'Late Unpleasantness'" winds the story up through Lincoln's death and what happened to some soldiers after the war.

A massive company history with an interesting Minnesota connection is *John Deere's Company, A History of Deere and Company and Its Times* (New York, Doubleday, 1984, 895 p., \$24.95) by Wayne G. Broehl, Jr. The author had access to company archives and officials, and the result is a well-balanced, scholarly, and objective account of the company's evolution from its 1837 beginnings as a manufacturer of steel "ploughs" to its present position as the world's largest producer of agricultural machinery.

Charles C. Webber is the Minnesota connection. Webber became manager of Deere's Minneapolis branch in 1883, a position he held until his death in 1944. Broehl's book also shows him traveling frequently to the firm's Moline, Illinois, headquarters in his role as a company director actively involved in its general management for more than 58 years—years during which Minneapolis became one of the world's largest distribution centers for farm equipment, while the Deere company evolved from a "small set of loosely knit factories and branches" into an integrated modern business.

John Deere's Company provides a nicely balanced presentation of changes in technology, finances, labor, and management practices. The book's value is further enhanced with a wide range of illustrations, some in color, and nearly 90 pages of appendixes, bibliographic notes, footnotes, and index.

John M. Wickre

WINTER campers, sports activists, and summer vacation dreamers will welcome Jim Umhoefer's *All Season Guide to Minnesota's Parks, Canoe Routes, and Trails* (Madison, Wis., Northword, 1984, 104 p., \$9.95). The comprehensive guide has clear maps, text, and photographs taken by the author for 69 park and recreation areas, 20 canoe routes, and nine biking and hiking trails. The text combines some historical vignettes with up-to-date information on what to see and do in Minnesota's "fine park system." The book is available postpaid from the publisher, P.O. Box 5634, Madison, Wisconsin 53705.

CONTRARY to popular stereotypes, there is no population more individualistic than the old. That helps explain why *Essential Gifts: An Anthology of Writing by Older Adults* (St. Paul, 1984, 77 p., \$6.00) contains so much rich diversity. The essays, poems, and memoirs in this book are by older adults in Minnesota and were written under the tutelage of COMPAS writers Carol Bly, Patricia Hampl, Deborah Keenan, and Nancy Paddock. (COMPAS published the book, and each of these writers contributed an essay.)

The writings range from gentle childhood reminiscences of life in a Jewish kosher household to candid revelations of a parent's marriage, from funny little odes on forgetting to a woman's soaring sense of self in the wake of a divorce, from a folk tale with a serious message to a poem whose brevity in no way diminishes the sense of terror of a woman facing serious illness.

There are essays on life in Europe and emigration to America, an angry poem on strip mining, a gently humorous piece on hospitals, tales of lumberjacking, and a polemic (the author says she is "full of threats") on the possibility of nuclear annihilation. Despair is transformed into faith in the magical story "Dad and the Buddha"; a hilarious account is given of the brief life of a captive pickerel in "Clarence"; and a woman tells of her new beginnings in love and purpose in "An Original Design."

Anne Merriam, to whom this book is dedicated, would have loved *Essential Gifts*. Like her, it is full of uncommon wisdom, elfin wit, indomitable youth, an unbending sense of justice and compassion, and an abiding love of language. Merriam, editor and gadfly, some of whose all-too-rare words grace the dedication page, died in October, 1983, at the age of 59; gifts from her friends helped make the publication of this book possible.

Virginia L. Martin

THE NORTHERN Great Plains History Conference, to be held in Moorhead, Minnesota, October 3-5, 1985, invites proposals for papers and sessions in all areas of history. Send a brief description of your paper or session to David B. Danbom, Program Chairman, Northern Great Plains History Conference, Department of History, North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota 58105, by April 1, 1985.



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