

BOOK REVIEWS

Plains Indian Sculpture: A Traditional Art from America's Heartland. By John C. Ewers.

(Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986. Illustrations. 239 p. Cloth, \$39.95; paper, \$24.95.)

THIS BOOK is simply one more in a string of classics by Dr. Ewers. Beginning before World War II with his first major work, *Plains Indian Painting*, and proceeding through his masterful *The Horse in Blackfeet Culture*, and now beyond the most recent *Indian Art in Pipestone*, Ewers has shown himself to be the dean of all Plains Indian ethnohistorians.

The combination of a deep interest in art and Indian history makes the author especially facile with this unusual subject. (The existence of Plains sculpture was denied or denigrated by professional anthropologists for years.) This study moves both chronologically and by subject. Through each chapter, Ewers weaves a rich blend of historical journals, ethnographic studies, interviews with Plains Indians, and gleanings from photographs and museum specimens.

The principal subject areas are pipes and pipestones, objects connected with religion and ceremony, and a section which includes such miscellaneous objects as children's toys, canes, and mirror frames. My favorite is the discussion of the carving of pipes "as media for social commentary." The author points out, for example, that liquor was viewed in quite different ways by Indians and that they carved pipes to express their attitudes—a chief passing out drinks to a supporter, two men fighting over a keg of whiskey, and so forth. Even such subjects as interracial marriage were dealt with by sculptors.

Ewers discusses the origins of Plains Indian carving and the prehistoric roots of the art form. While the bulk of the work is concerned with the period 1830 to 1900, an important feature is a chapter on contemporary trends that brings us up to date and reminds us of American Indian influences in today's art world. Another thought-provoking aspect is the author's emphasis on certain masters, some known and some not, who have influenced the development of style and technique among their contemporaries. Ewers also stresses the importance of such white-connected innovations as steel saws, knives, and drills, and a new market for all kinds of craftwork in the development of three-dimensional art on the Plains.

Readers of *Minnesota History* will be pleased to know that the Gopher State figures prominently in the treatise. Pipestone or catlinite has been an important medium for the Indian sculptor for hundreds of years. The early trading and military activities along the Upper Mississippi brought customers for "Indian curiosities" to Minnesota, and many important early pieces of Plains Indian sculpture were collected in the state. The interaction of Indian and white, of Dakota

and Ojibway, of Woodland and Plains gave Minnesota a dynamic role in the development of this exciting native art form. Many of the over 200 objects selected by Ewers are owned by the Minnesota Historical Society, and several other institutions are represented as well. It is also fascinating to see how much Minnesota Indian art now resides in major East Coast and European museums.

The book is beautifully designed and produced. There are 26 color plates and 220 black-and-white illustrations. There is a marvelously detailed bibliography, reflecting the author's complete command of the literature, and a list of all known Plains Indian sculptors, sadly brief when one considers the large number of museum specimens by unidentified artists. My only complaint with the volume is that there is no index. Otherwise, the Smithsonian Institution Press has a winner.

Plains Indian Sculpture should appeal to a wide audience. Certainly anyone interested in folk art, primitive art, Plains Indians, anthropology, sculpture, or frontier history should buy it. As with almost everything Jack Ewers does (with his wife Marge helping at every turn), the book itself is a marvel of research and thoughtful speculation. Therefore, those seeking a model for how to write a scholarly and interesting book need look no further.

Reviewed by JAMES A. HANSON, *the director of the Nebraska State Historical Society.*

Open Country, Iowa: Rural Women, Tradition and Change. By Deborah Fink.

(Albany, State University of New York Press, 1986. 275 p. Cloth, \$39.50; paper, \$14.95.)

IN THIS well-written, challenging book, Deborah Fink documents the essential role of farm women in the economic survival of the family farm from the time of European settlement until the end of traditional farming patterns during World War II and in its aftermath. Farm women were responsible for production and marketing of the garden, poultry, and dairy goods and for processing and manufacture of the family's food and clothing. Women's profits sustained the family. Men controlled the commercial aspects of farming, and their profits, if any, went not to the support of their families but to the maintenance or extension of their commercial farming operations. From 1897 to 1920, as farm prices rose, the commercial, male domain of farming dominated. From 1920 to 1940, as farm prices fell, the household-centered, female domain was the most important. Women did cross over and do men's work in the fields and with large animals as economic necessity dictated and the customs of

ethnic background allowed, but Fink finds that by the 1980s women denied that they participated in such activities—even as they described the male work that they did. The only labor Fink finds women did not do on farms was to seed, because, she was told, women could not seed straight enough. Fink suspects seeding “might have been a symbolically male function,” though she does not direct the reader to Gerda Lerner’s discussion in *The Creation of Patriarchy* of the importance of seeding in male domination.

Like farm women, rural nonfarm women worked extensively in family businesses while denying that they did so. “How does one understand a report of a woman who managed a dry goods department well, yet did not work in the store?” Fink asks. Outside of family businesses, nonfarm women were hired informally by men who paid them wages substantially lower than the amount men earned. The depression brought greater discrimination against working women; for instance, married women who were teachers were fired. Throughout the depression, more women worked than previously, but in more marginal positions.

Women’s social power came from the extensive and frequent association they had with other women. Churches, one of the most important social institutions, for example, were dependent on the economic contribution of women’s clubs. Through this dependency women exercised control over church affairs although formal control was in the hands of men.

As men left the farms to serve in World War II, women not only increased their traditional poultry and dairy enterprises but took on “field work, operating machinery, and handling large livestock.” Ironically it was the farm prosperity of the war, coupled with deliberate government policy, that pushed women out of their essential role in the economic life of the farm. Massive purchases of eggs by the government produced the capital needed for large-scale production (run by men) which the federal extension service actively encouraged and supported. Collectively these government actions effectively forced women’s small-scale egg production out of the market. When, in the 1980s, the large systems failed, Congress stepped in and regulated the market, a step it had not taken to save the small, traditional, female producers.

After the war, the “modernization” of all aspects of farming replaced the diversified agriculture on which the dual economy of the family farm rested. Pigs, chickens, and cows disappeared from Iowa farms as production concentrated almost exclusively on corn and soybeans. With the disappearance of production for consumption, farm women became economically marginal to the success of the farm and economically dependent on men. “That some men dominated unselfishly, gently, and lovingly did not negate the reality of domination, and it was not something that most women could escape while living in Open Country.”

Fink makes a convincing case that bigger is not always economically better. The postwar increase in productivity did not bring uniform prosperity. Although some rural women shared in the increased wealth of their husbands, the price, with the loss of their economic base, was economic dependency. Other women were forced into poverty “[w]orking long hours at substandard wages.” Fink sees these poor rural women as sisters to other exploited groups of America.

“These women are white, but in losing their livelihood on the land, in increased dependency on men, in becoming cheap labor for corporations they share the economic predicaments of many black, Hispanic, and Asian women.”

Other postwar changes decreased the social power of women. Outmigration resulted in the importation of brides who did not have the kin and neighborhood ties which had given women support and power in the past. On the farms, single females became a rarity, the nuclear family dominated the social structure, and the sexual ties of marriage outweighed the traditional ties between women. By finding revenue sources elsewhere, churches ended women’s control. Although women began to hold local office, they did not gain power. Decision making was by public consensus, which the male community leadership created. Finally, deploring the destructiveness of class as well as patriarchy, Fink shows how women could not cross class lines to forge a union strong enough to ensure the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, a step which would have benefited them all.

Reviewed by ANNE B. WEBB, professor at Metropolitan State University in the Twin Cities, whose article on women farmers on the agricultural frontier of the Upper Midwest appeared in the Winter, 1986, issue of this magazine.

Old Times on the Upper Mississippi: The Recollections of a Steamboat Pilot from 1854 to 1863. By George Byron Merrick. Introduction by Jane Curry. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987. 323 p. \$8.95.)

SINCE it was first published in 1909, George Byron Merrick’s *Old Times on the Upper Mississippi* has been widely regarded as a classic. Merrick knew his subject well and wrote about it colorfully and enthusiastically.

Merrick’s relatively brief career as a steamboatman occurred during the “Golden Age” of commercial navigation on the Upper Mississippi. In her useful introduction Jane Curry suggests that Merrick enjoyed a Huck Finn type of boyhood, first in Niles, Michigan, a port on the St. Joseph River, and later in Prescott, Wisconsin, the gateway to the St. Croix River. Like many youths of his day, Merrick idolized steamboatmen and longed to emulate them.

Merrick’s interest was apparently stimulated by his father’s job as agent for the Minnesota Packet Company at Prescott. For several years after their move from Niles, the Merrick family lived in a warehouse apartment on the Prescott levee. Thus, young George’s daily life was caught up in the sights and sounds of steamboating.

In 1856, at the age of 15, Merrick began his steamboat career as a cabin boy. From the start his ambition was to rise to the top of the steamboat fraternity as a licensed pilot. He studied piloting under the tutelage of one of the river’s masters, but his boating career ended in the late summer of 1862 when he enlisted in a Wisconsin unit to fight against the Confederacy.

Since Merrick was never a pilot, the book’s subtitle was evidently an attempt to enhance his status. It is unfortunate

that Merrick felt compelled to exaggerate his own importance, because the real value of the book lies in his reporting, not his rank.

Merrick not only understood steamboating, but had an ability to describe it to those within and outside the business. In a series of short, fast-paced chapters he covers such diverse topics as the mechanical aspects of steam engines, crews and labor problems, piloting, dining, gambling, personalities, and the economics of steamboat freighting. His own experience gave him the sense of his subject, and his later career as a newspaper editor honed his writing skills and his ability to tell a good story.

After leaving the river in 1862, Merrick had ample opportunity to reflect on steamboating. With the exception of a nostalgic homecoming trip from St. Paul to St. Louis in 1881, he stayed off the river. But by about the turn of the century Merrick's thoughts of the "old times" prompted him to begin preparing lectures on Upper Mississippi steamboating. His book, an outgrowth of the lectures, was released at a time when there was a collective reminiscing about pioneer life throughout the Upper Mississippi region. Thus Merrick's book, touching as it did on the great common frontier experience, had broad appeal.

Despite his own label, Merrick's book is far more than "recollections." He obviously supplemented his own memories with interviews and newspaper research. Like every author he was faced with the nagging problem of using his research to its fullest potential. Since it was not possible to integrate histories of individual boats into his thematic chapters, Merrick appended a "List of Steamboats on the Upper Mississippi River, 1823-1863." This 38-page series of brief sketches is in itself an invaluable resource.

This book is must reading for anyone interested in the history of steamboating or the Upper Mississippi region. The original edition has long been out of print; this reprint edition not only makes *Old Times* available again, but includes an excellent introduction by Jane Curry as well. Curry, well known for her work, *The River's in My Blood: Riverboat Pilots Tell Their Stories* (1983), places both Merrick and his book in perspective.

Reviewed by WILLIAM E. LASS, professor of history at Mankato State University and author of *A History of Steamboating on the Upper Missouri River* (1962), recently reprinted by the University of Nebraska Press.

Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940.
By Susan Porter Benson.

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986. 322 p. \$27.50.)

TWO contrary evaluations have accompanied the surge toward specialization in historical research that has been one mark of the profession over the past generation or so of scholarship. Some critics regret the consequent loss of synthesis in historical writing and the failure of academic history to com-

mand a broad public following. Other critics celebrate the excitement and controversy provoked by the employment of new modes of inquiry, new sources of evidence, and attention to neglected themes and subjects. A major segment in what came to be labeled a "new social history" featured efforts to understand the life experiences of nonelite groups—women, immigrants, workers, children, racial minorities, the poor—and for some time such specialized studies tended to be fragmented. They focused on limited populations and remained within the boundaries of what were considered to be the separate domains of labor, family, ethnic, or black subspecialties. In recent years, however, social history has begun to draw together diverse strands of experience and to cross lines of method and field in sophisticated monographic studies that offer unified rather than fragmented narrative analyses.

Susan Porter Benson's study of the "culture" of American department stores provides a brilliant example of the new history at its very best: sensitive to complexities of gender, class, ethnicity, and social roles; appreciative of shifting dynamics of power, influence, and custom that characterized the separate yet overlapping cultural worlds of store managers, saleswomen, and customers; and sensible in its judgments. Benson draws methods and insights from historians of business, labor, women, and immigration, and analytical models from cultural anthropology.

The author deals, moreover, with a subject surprisingly neglected. Not many among the reading public have enjoyed direct experience in factory, farm, or mine, yet all of us are shoppers. Here in Minnesota, James J. Hill and Frederick Weyerhaeuser are distant figures, but our lives as consumers have been shaped by other entrepreneurs whose names grace what Benson calls "palaces of consumption"—Dayton, Schuneman, and Donaldson. Historians have told us much of railroading and lumbering, precious little of retailing. Professor Benson does a great deal to remedy this neglect; now we know very much more of what, as shoppers, we thought we knew best.

Nothing escapes her attention: the physical layout of department stores; the rise of store services as a prime way to win customers; the manipulation of fashion and design; the training and supervision of personnel—and the subtle, yet effective strategies developed by saleswomen to achieve some degree of control over work conditions on the floor; the composition of the sales staff, its wages, hours, fringe benefits, as well as aspirations, satisfactions, disappointments, and disaffections.

The account is driven by a central thesis that focuses on the often contradictory and paradoxical interrelationships among managers, saleswomen, and customers. "Encounters among the three were not simply economic—related to profit, value, and income—but cultural," Benson concludes. Managers were torn between a culture of business—resting on efficiency and profit—and a retail culture which stressed "service and amenity." Managers shared with their customers an "urban bourgeois culture" that separated them from their saleswomen, "whose working-class demeanor they condemned." Between customers and saleswomen grew a bond of shared experiences as women, a bond weakened and often sundered, for "saleswomen also partook of a workers' culture which scorned the condescension of well-to-do reformers and

provided patterns of shop-floor resistance from which they forged their own occupational culture."

This is a specialized study of broad synthetic significance. It is an accessible study, unmarred by jargon or dogma. Let all who shop, read. In addition, students of historiography, persons curious about how professional historians go about the practice of their craft, are urged to read the author's preface and introduction, in which she sets forth the factors in her own personal and professional life that led her to explore this neglected topic. It is self-knowing and other-knowing, candid and disarming.

On all counts: Brava!

Reviewed by CLARKE A. CHAMBERS, *an American social historian at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.*

Victorian Anthropology. By George W. Stocking, Jr.
(New York: The Free Press, 1987. 429 p. Cloth, \$29.95.)

THIS STUDY is a distinguished contribution to the history of science, the history of anthropology, and to Anglo-American intellectual history. Author George W. Stocking, Jr., delineates the complex transformation of anthropological thought and the growth of the discipline of anthropology in Victorian Great Britain. He uses the 1851 "Crystal Palace" exhibitions as a framing metaphor of mid-19th-century British thinking about the "progress of the [industrial] civilization it [Crystal Palace] epitomized." Then moving backward from 1851, Stocking describes British theories of "civilization" in the century before the Crystal Palace, and he outlines British notions about the specific field of ethnology from early to mid-19th century. James Cowles Prichard's numerous editions of *Researches Into the Physical History of Mankind* represented a summary of the pre-Crystal Palace ethnological paradigm. Even by 1851 increasing industrialism within Great Britain, prolonged contact with and imperial control over indigenous, nonindustrial cultures around the world, and changes within anthropological thought itself were undermining the Prichardian approach to ethnology.

In the post-Prichardian era, five men—John Lubbock, Henry Maine, John McLennan, Herbert Spencer, and Edward B. Tylor—defined anthropology in Great Britain. Stocking probes the thinking of each man, noting the differences in thought, subject matter, and approach that separated one from another. The religious, political, and class background of these thinkers also shaped their intellectual assumptions. As he analyzes the development of their respective theoretical positions, Stocking notes how the incoming rush of linguistic, geological, paleontological, archaeological, ethnographic, and folkloric data from Great Britain and around the world compelled them continually to refine their notions. The impact of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) provides another significant thread in this rich intellectual tapestry. The development of Victorian ethnology had direct implications at home as it affected British thinking about the status of women, the "Celtic fringe" of the British Isles, and rural populations in general.

My summary of this erudite and thought-provoking book merely skims the complex nuances. At first glance *Victorian Anthropology* may seem to have scant appeal to readers of *Minnesota History*; however, Stocking's book should be of keen interest to historians of American anthropology, historians of Indian—non-Indian relations in North America, ethnohistorians, and historians of American thought and culture, because 19th-century British and American ethnologists shared a wide range of intellectual assumptions about indigenous peoples. These commonly held notions shaped the colonial and Indian policies of governments in Britain and the United States, the punitive military measures against tribal groups, and shaded efforts at religious conversion. Ideas about "primitive" peoples crept into the arts, the literatures, and the popular cultures of the United States and Britain. There were also significant variations in the American and British responses to tribal groups. These variations were based upon differences in local circumstances. With this in mind it is especially fruitful to juxtapose Robert E. Bieder's *Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880: The Early Years of American Ethnology* (1986) against *Victorian Anthropology*.

Victorian Anthropology suggests additional research into the relationship between British and American ethnology in the 19th century. Stocking points out that the British kept fully informed on ethnographic research in North America, and this topic suggests further study. By the 1870s and 1880s, self-proclaimed ethnologists in America were conducting field research for their own monographs. These same Americans were simultaneously providing data to their "armchair" colleagues in England. For example, the pre-eminent English anthropologist Edward B. Tylor maintained close communications with the Americans. He studied the works of Alice Fletcher, Frank H. Cushing, John G. Bourke, and others. Tylor, through Bourke, maintained contact with Apache Indian informants in the American Southwest. Conversely, the American ethnologists read, pondered, and certainly were influenced by Lubbock, Maine, McLennan, Spencer, Tylor, and other British social evolutionists.

Stocking raises the central issue of the history of anthropology, that of one culture studying other cultures. In western thought this process has been inexorably wedded to various notions of social and cultural developmentalism. *Victorian Anthropology* places this fundamental theme into the 19th-century British context. It is a significant work that should focus needed attention on anthropology within the larger framework of western cultural and intellectual history. I should mention that this book is closely written in a prose style that makes the reader work very hard. This is especially surprising after the lucid exposition that Stocking displayed in his earlier *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (1986).

Reviewed by JOSEPH C. PORTER, *curator of Western American History and Ethnology, Center for Western Studies, Omaha, and the author of the award-winning biography, Paper Medicine Man: John Gregory Bourke and His American West (1986).*

NEWS & NOTES

THE SOLON J. BUCK Award for the best article to appear in *Minnesota History* during 1986 will be divided this year. Half of the now \$600 prize goes to John T. Fierst for "Return to 'Civilization': John Tanner's Troubled Years at Sault Ste. Marie." The co-winner is William Millikan, who wrote "Defenders of Business: The Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association *Versus* Labor During World War I." Both of the winning articles were in the Spring, 1986, issue.

Serving as judges on this year's committee were Clifford E. Clark, professor of history at Carleton College, Northfield; Helen M. White, author and 1985 Minnesota Independent Scholar of the Year, Taylors Falls; and Mary D. Cannon, editor of this journal.

ERLING N. Rolfsrud's book, *Scandinavian Moses: The Story of Knute Nelson* (Farwell, Minnesota, Lantern Books, 1986, 101 p., \$4.95) is not the "definitive" biography of Knute Nelson that historians have been awaiting, nor is it intended to be. But in terms of the author's objective—to sketch panoramically and sympathetically the life of Moses who led Minnesota Scandinavians into the promised land of American politics—the volume succeeds. In 14 well-written, readable chapters, Rolfsrud follows Nelson from his arrival on Castle Island, New York, from Voss, Norway, with his mother on July 4, 1849, up to his death on April 28, 1923, at the age of 80. The bibliography as well as the text indicate familiarity with the major secondary sources (the omission of Millard Gieske's doctoral dissertation on Nelson's later career being a glaring exception); in addition, Rolfsrud has thoroughly investigated Alexandria's newspapers. Although not of superior photographic quality, the illustrations alone—particularly those depicting pioneer Alexandria—are worth the price of the book.

Carl H. Chrislock

THE autobiography of Leah Bernstein, entitled *Leah, For Freedom . . . For Love . . .* (Robbinsdale, Patriot Printers, 1986, 112 p., \$12.00) recounts the story of a multit talented Minnesotan who has received special recognition as an artist, sculptor, composer, concert pianist, and accompanist—and the President's Citation for Swimming! Her life in prerevolutionary Russia, her family's emigration to join Leah's grandparents in Minnesota in 1923, and her education and many careers in Minnesota—including 50 years as a music teacher—make a rich and interesting story. Pictures of Mrs. Bernstein throughout her life and of some of her works of art add charm to this thoroughly enjoyable book. Copies may be ordered from Eleanor Matchett, 1031 14th Ave. S.E., Minneapolis 55414. A tape of Mrs. Bernstein's original compositions is available from the same address for an additional \$7.00

STANDING the Test of Time: Quality Assurance for State and Local Government Records Microfilming reports the results of a survey that probed the policies and practices of state agencies that microfilmed permanent government records. Sue Holbert, state archivist, directed the project, and Linda James, who wrote the report, was project co-ordinator. Funded in part by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the project aimed to determine which states (all but three of the 50 responded) had microfilming standards and enforcement methods. The answers to the questionnaires pointed to three main areas of concern: comprehensive legislation, dissemination of information, and compliance verification. The report concludes that "It has long been known what must be done to ensure archival quality microfilm. Now is the time to act on that knowledge." A microfiche supplement, containing copies of printed material pertinent to micrographics quality control that responding states submitted, accompa-

nies the 70-page booklet. Both are available (\$20 for members, \$23 for nonmembers) from the Association for Information and Image Management, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1100, Silver Springs, MD 20910.

A SERIES of sermons by the author, editor, Unitarian minister, pacifist, and social reformer Jenkin Lloyd Jones has finally been brought into print in *The Agricultural Social Gospel in America: The Gospel of the Farm*, edited by Thomas E. Graham (Lewiston, N.Y., Edwin Mellen Press, 1986, 300 p., cloth, \$59.95). Jones's family emigrated from Wales to Wisconsin in 1845. Notorious in his own time (this Civil War veteran's pacifism became increasingly intolerable to the public as World War I dragged on), his name "scarcely survived his death in 1918." Nor did the three books he was circulating at the time of his death find publishers, possibly because of his unpopular convictions. *The Agricultural Social Gospel* is one of these, a collection of sermons mostly preached from Jones's pulpit at All Souls church in Chicago. These essays range from discussions of plowing and cultivating to pointed social commentary, as in "Pigs and Babies."

A REVISED EDITION of Lucile M. Kane's 1966 book, *The Waterfall that Built a City*, examines the many changes that have come to the falls area in recent years. Retitled *The Falls of St. Anthony: The Waterfall that Built Minneapolis* (St. Paul, MHS Press, 1987, xviii, 245 p., paper, \$9.95), this new edition contains recent photographs of the area and an epilogue that describes the rehabilitation that has occurred there between the 1960s and mid-1986. A map locates the redeveloped sites. Author Kane points out that there are "certainties revealed in the recent past: The riverfront is no longer the back door of the city, and the city has paid its respects to the falls area where its life began."



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