

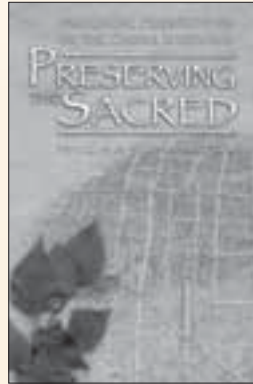
Preserving the Sacred: Historical Perspectives on the Ojibwa Midewiwin

By Michael Angel

(Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002. 274 p. Paper, \$24.95.)

Michael Angel has undertaken a study of the distinctive religious and healing organization of the Ojibwe, the Midewiwin. Both a series of healing ceremonies and an organization of persons spiritually qualified to conduct the ceremonies, the Midewiwin has, from the start, intrigued and confounded the French, the British, and their American and Canadian descendants. Beginning in the seventeenth century, various authors have described Midewiwin ceremonies with varying degrees of accuracy or distortion. As a “culturally sensitive outsider,” Angel does not attempt to reveal sacred information or discuss the content of sacred Midé texts and songs. Trained in religious studies and history, he seeks to place the Midewiwin in historical context, to write what he terms a “historiographical” account utilizing as many written records relating to the Midewiwin as possible. Recognizing that a sizeable portion of the writing about the Midewiwin comes from other scholars, Angel also includes analysis of their work. This accumulation of rather disparate written material, he believes, can chart the organization’s growth and document the changes it underwent, revealing new insights into the ways Ojibwe people themselves have adapted to the tremendous challenges of the last four centuries.

Such a methodology succeeds well in some areas and less well in others. Bringing together most of the ethnographic descriptions of the Midewiwin allows Angel to examine the European-derived cultural biases of the sources quite effectively. He takes great care to frame his analysis within an Ojibwe cultural context. This enables him to consider the Midewiwin seriously on its own terms as well as reveal how European-derived ideas have shaped the existing historiographic interpretations of the institution and its practitioners. An excellent example is his probing of the theme of religious duality. The Christian worldview, he observes, is rooted in an idea of dualistic spirituality, with spiritual beings conceived of as either all good, like God or Jesus, or all bad, like witches or the devil. Ojibwe people, in contrast, understood spiritual beings as both beneficial and harmful to humans, depending on circumstances. A hard-and-fast dualism made no sense to them. European-descended writers



did not grasp this fundamental distinction and continually assigned Ojibwe spiritual beings either divine or diabolic characteristics and origins. This either/or distinction obviously distorted much of what was written about the Midewiwin. Nor have scholarly researchers always understood the need to evaluate their sources critically. In keeping with his efforts to critique the scholarly literature as well as the ethnographic sources, Angel considers how scholars of religion have unquestioningly accepted spiritual dualism as characterizing Ojibwe belief because their sources, informed by the Christian worldview, inaccurately perceived dualism in Ojibwe religious thought. The result has been that they, too, have misunderstood the nature of the more fluid and situational Ojibwe spirituality.

While Angel’s methodology allows him to interpret the Midewiwin in Ojibwe-centered terms, it is less successful in its efforts to analyze the Midewiwin through historic time. This seems due in large measure to Angel’s understanding of the scope of his project. He frequently recapitulates existing literature but does not offer his own interpretations. This can lead to awkward efforts to reconcile contradictory tendencies in the sources, as when he attempts to explain anthropologist Ruth Landes’s characterizations of two Midé practitioners in the 1930s as bitter, almost psychotic, rivals and as colleagues who respected one another’s knowledge and relished a good philosophical debate. It can also leave tantalizing material only skimpily examined, as when he asserts that the Midewiwin was a force for unity in the war-torn and tumultuous seventeenth century but could not offer similar unity of purpose on Canadian reserves and American reservations during the harrowing nineteenth century. What had changed? Angel’s answer—that there were simply more competing religious traditions by the nineteenth century—only begins to grapple with the question.

In sum, Angel’s study performs a valuable service in bringing together a tremendous amount of documentary material on an important Ojibwe religious tradition that is currently enjoying renewed commitment from contemporary Ojibwe people in both Canada and the United States. If Angel has not answered all the questions this large body of material generates, he has made a good beginning. Other scholars, both Native and non-Native, will have much to consider and many avenues to explore.

Reviewed by Rebecca Kugel, an associate professor in the history department at the University of California, Riverside, where she teaches Native American history. Her research focuses on the Great Lakes Native nations, particularly the Ojibwe. She is the author of *To Be The Main Leaders of Our People: A History of Minnesota Ojibwe Politics, 1825–1898*.

Voyageurs National Park: The Battle to Create Minnesota's National Park

By Fred T. Witzig

(*Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.*
301 p. Paper, \$24.95.)

FRED WITZIG, PROFESSOR EMERITUS of geography at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, offers in this book a first-rate analysis of the long campaign to establish Voyageurs National Park, which stretches from Rainy Lake on its western side to Crane Lake. Voyageurs beckons thousands of anglers, boaters, and campers, including many recreation-minded Minnesotans and others from the Midwest and Canada. Yet, as Witzig ably shows, it took decades before the dream of this national park became a reality, years of much wrangling among northern Minnesota communities, natural-resource industries, resort owners, and a host of interest groups. This is a fine-grained political history of the making of Minnesota's lone national park.

Witzig makes clear how much of northern Minnesota, heavily reliant on the timber and paper industries for decades, took umbrage at the proposal for a national park in an area long dominated by logging and private resorts. For years, many regarded the effort to establish Voyageurs as a heavy-handed federal land grab, supported chiefly by the National Park Service, which had expansionary designs in the 1960s and 1970s, and by recreation-minded citizens from the Twin Cities, who had little regard for workers whose jobs depended on logging, paper production, and other industries. In 1964, following passage of the Wilderness Act that permanently protected a large swath of wilderness in the boundary waters canoe area, local resistance to a national park hardened. Among the strongest opponents were Boise Cascade, the Minnesota Timber Producers' Association, the Crane Lake Commercial Club (which resisted the incorporation of Crane Lake into the proposed park), the Minnesota Arrowhead Association, and the United States Forest Service, ever leery of National Park Service designs on its lands.

In the face of such resistance, supporters spearheaded a campaign for nearly 20 years. Pro-park forces were led by governors Elmer L. Andersen and Harold LeVander, Congressman John Blatnik, and the Voyageurs National Park Association and its energetic leader Rita Shemesh. Sigurd Olson, a premier conservationist in the boundary waters region from Ely, joined the effort. Park proponents mounted



a public relations campaign by providing testimony at congressional hearings, delivering speeches, and in other ways generating pressure on lawmakers in Washington, D.C. Champions of the park stressed the importance of protecting a vital stretch of the old voyageurs' water route through the boundary waters, and they proclaimed the merits of a splendid national park to attract the traveling public to Minnesota's north country. Repeatedly buffeted by strong resistance and by a variety of setbacks in the political arena, supporters were often discouraged. Yet support for the park steadily grew. Late in the 1960s and early 1970s the most difficult political obstacles centered on demands from local residents that hunting be allowed in the park and on anxieties over the potential loss of income from a reduction in timber production. In addition, the need for transferring lands from the state to the federal government proved complex and politically sensitive. Finally, in 1971, Congress authorized Voyageurs National Park, although four more years passed before it was fully established.

This book will make a fine contribution to the literature on national park history in the United States. Witzig's tightly written treatment is mindful of the various interest groups in Minnesota both in favor of and against the park. The author admits to having been an activist on behalf of the park, but his analysis of the political maneuvering is fair and balanced. With skill and intelligence he takes readers through the often-tedious political process involving public hearings, federal agency reports, the role of the press, the changing environmental scene, and of the all-important role of individuals. The strength of his approach is clear: readers are given a finely etched and in-depth portrait of the making of Voyageurs National Park.

Reviewed by Mark Harvey, professor of history at North Dakota State University, Fargo. He is the author of A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement (1994) and of the forthcoming biography, Guarding the Wilderness: The Conservation Career of Howard C. Zahniser (University of Washington Press, 2005).

Minnesota in the Mail

By Bonnie G. Wilson

(*St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press,*
2004. 134 p. Cloth, \$29.95.)

EVEN IN AN AGE OF E-MAIL and cell phones, sending postcards is still a fundamental requirement for those on vacation. And so tourists around the world dutifully peruse racks

of postcards, purchase large batches, fill them out, and mail them. This ritual may seem old-fashioned, with the postcard fated to go the way of the rotary-dial telephone and phonograph records, swallowed up by



the brave new high-tech world. Yet digital postcards just are not the same. After all, what is so rare and surprising these days as a handwritten note, however brief—and with a beautiful picture on the other side as a bonus?

In *Minnesota in the Mail*, Bonnie Wilson, curator of visual collections at the Minnesota Historical Society, writes of postcards with knowledge, insight, and humor. She reminds us that there was a time when postcards, rather than e-mail or a quick phone call, were the preferred way to stay in touch and communicate briefly, for business as well as personal matters. One result is that postcards supply rich material for a portrait of American life after 1873 (when the government introduced the penny postal) and especially for the years between 1905 and 1915. During those years postcards were at their most varied and popular, before being done in by a tariff (many major producers were foreign), folded greeting cards, newspapers (which took away the market for shots of special events such as parades or disasters), and, of course, the telephone.

Wilson begins with a brief yet useful “primer” on the history of postcards, with lively particulars on some of the main Minnesota practitioners, before moving on to her main subject groupings: towns, businesses, people, and vacations. Her annotations for individual cards are informative; I was sorry to learn that the Magic Aquarium Bar in Moorhead, a joint that looks worthy of a pilgrimage, closed in 1970. Wilson read the personal messages on all of the cards she examined—more than 20,000—and rightly notes how tantalizing it is to glimpse a story “we will never know.” Her valuable annotations make the book more than simply a selection of great cards from the MHS collection, although *Minnesota in the Mail* does offer one fascinating image after another, from a shot of Fergus Falls showing the devastation caused by a cyclone in 1919 to a card capturing homegrown haute couture—a woman modeling attire fashioned from Minnesota grains and grasses. Among the most winning of all is a real-photo card that shows the former chief librarian at the MHS as a barefoot 8-year old with a big carp and a big smile.

Since the golden age of postcards was so long ago and the images of early motels and the like may be half a century removed, it would be easy to turn a survey into a nostalgic

trip down Minnesota Memory Lane. The book does present plenty of postcards for those whose hearts skip a beat at the sight of an old Main Street or an ice palace from the 1930s. “Tourism keeps the postcard industry in business,” Wilson says bluntly, and she laments the generic quality of many contemporary views as “showing no place in particular and every place in general.” She includes some current examples from tourist towns but also adds other cards, for example art gallery announcements, to remind us that even today postcards are not always linked to tourism.

Minnesota in the Mail may be too big for a stocking stuffer, and sending it through the mail would require a mailer and extra postage, but it would make a swell present anyway, and not only at holiday time. It’s a pleasure to read and a joy to look at. Vacation postcards often do contain the classic phrase, “Wish you were here!” As if written in invisible ink, however, they may suggest an addendum: “But we are, and you are not! Jealous?” In that vein, *Minnesota in the Mail* may make non-Minnesotans jealous because they do not live here or have such an informative and entertaining volume for their state.

Reviewed by Robert Silberman, who teaches the history of photography and other subjects at the University of Minnesota. He served as an advisor to the Minnesota 2000 Project, a photographic documentation of the state on the cusp of the new millennium and co-wrote the introduction to the resulting book, Minnesota in Our Time: A Photographic Portrait.

Before Lewis and Clark: The Story of the Chouteaus, the French Dynasty that Ruled America’s Frontier

By Shirley Christian

(New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004. 509 p. Cloth, \$27.00).

RESIDENTS OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY don’t need to go to Europe or Australia to find sweeping family sagas full of political intrigue, fortunes won and lost, and daring frontier adventure. We have one right here: the story of the Chouteaus, a remarkable dynasty that shaped the central corridor of the continent from 1764 until the Civil War.

Shirley Christian’s book is as expansive as its subject. It sweeps the reader through the decades and over the half-continent through which the Chouteaus’ family story winds as they evolve from the illegitimate scions of a French army officer to the courted confidants of presidents, financiers, and frontier legends. George Rogers Clark, John Jacob Astor,

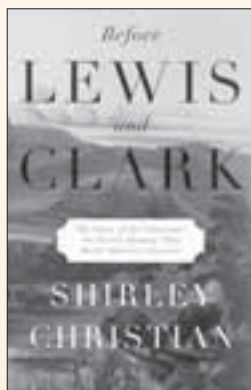
BOOK REVIEWS

George Catlin, Sam Houston, and others enter the story as the saga passes from the French colonial period through the development of the American West. Even the two explorers of the strangely misleading title make cameo appearances.

The “Chouteau” clan originated when the resourceful Marie Thérèse Chouteau fled an abusive and absentee husband to follow her lover, Pierre Laclède, up the Mississippi River from New Orleans to what was then called the Illinois country. To avoid the consequences of illegitimacy, Laclède’s children and grandchildren retained the Chouteau name as they proceeded to dominate, then finally monopolize, the midcontinent fur trade from their position as leading merchants of the town of St. Louis.

The source of the Chouteau power and wealth was their talent as culture brokers. The West in their era was a place of rapidly shifting linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries, and few indeed were the people who could negotiate, much less profit from, this treacherous social terrain. Like many French fur traders, the Chouteaus skillfully bridged the boundary between Indian and European, as they established a warm and personal relationship with the powerful Osage tribe. Unlike many others, they also managed to cross the chasm between the colonial French world of the Mississippi Valley and the new American regime.

The story centers around two pairs of brothers, both named Auguste and Pierre. The first, who achieved prominence amid the feudal assumptions of Spanish colonial rule, had to negotiate the transition to American democracy without losing their hard-won status. The second generation,



raised among the Osage as well as in St. Louis and the East, were forced to choose between the values of an industrializing nation and those of their frontier heritage. Auguste chose one way and ended his days materially impoverished amid a large and respectful Osage family; Pierre chose the other, and ended up a partner of John Jacob Astor.

Christian tells this dramatic story with great narrative skill, moving the story forward at a fast pace that highlights large patterns of events. While little of the story will be new to historians, it is assembled in a useful and compelling way. This is good, old-fashioned historical narrative writing like Bernard DeVoto and David Lavender used to do.

Emphasis on the “old-fashioned.” For all its merits, this is a book that could have been published in the 1950s. Historians have made tremendous strides in understanding the fur trade and frontier in the last 50 years, and almost none of that is reflected here. Christian’s book reproduces all the bias and Eurocentrism of her primary sources, which she uses uncritically, and it is untouched by the wealth of new ethnohistorical and gender research. Indians are “braves” and “fiery young bloods.” Their debts to fur traders are the result of dependence and improvidence—although Pierre Laclède, who also dies deeply in debt, is enterprising and honorable. Despite the importance of Indian motivations and policies, we never get the slightest hint of their point of view. And women are simply invisible. There is a far more complex and nuanced story than one would dream from reading this book.

It is still an engrossing tale, and the reader who brings to it awareness of what is missing will be well rewarded.

Reviewed by Carolyn Gilman, special projects historian at the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, and author of Lewis and Clark: Across the Divide (2003).

■ The Solon J. Buck award for the best article published in *Minnesota History* during 2003 has been won by Annette Atkins, professor of history and Michael Blecker Professor of Humanities at St. John's University, Collegeville. Her article "At Home in the Heart of the City" (Spring/Summer 2003) captures the changing face of Minneapolis's Gateway District, birthplace of the Mill City. By uncovering the lives and stories of the people who lived, worked, and visited in the district over the years, the article portrays the evolution of a complex urban milieu.

The Theodore C. Blegen Award for the best article by a Minnesota Historical Society staff member goes to Scott F. Anfinson for "Unearthing the Invisible: Archaeology at the Riverfront," also published in the Spring/Summer 2003 issue. Drawing on his more-than-30 years of studying the area, Anfinson recounts the challenges and surprises of reclaiming Minneapolis's industrial waterfront—and conducts a walking tour of its principal archaeological remains. He is a National Register archaeologist in the State Historic Preservation Office at the Minnesota Historical Society.

This year's judges were Colette Hyman, professor of history at Winona State University, and Patrick McCormack, deputy director of the Minnesota Historical Society. Each award includes a prize of \$600.

■ In the study of history, popular tastes seem to have turned back to the study of great men. Books on the nation's founders, for example, have been on bestseller lists for the last few years. A fascinating new book, *A Dog's History of America: How Our Best Friend Explored, Conquered, and Settled a Continent* (New York: North Point Press, 2004, 380 p., cloth, \$25.00), offers a corrective to this trend. In his exhaustive research, author Mark Derr hounds out the role dogs played in the settlement of North America. From their earliest uses by conquistadors as both food and weapons to their modern roles as villains (think Birmingham Riots) and heroes (at the

World Trade Center), dogs have played a fascinating part in our history. Minnesotans will be especially interested to learn that the first guide dog—trained to assist blind soldiers in the wake of World War I—arrived in America as a gift to Senator Thomas D. Schall of Minnesota. History, it seems, is always nipping at our heels.

■ Few Minnesotans have been held in as high esteem as former Governor Elmer L. Andersen. In *I Trust to be Believed: Speeches and Reflections by Elmer L. Andersen* (Minneapolis: Nodin Press, 2004, 220 p., paper, \$17.00) readers catch a glimpse at why this might be. Arranged by topic are about 50 speeches mostly given in the 1950s and '60s that reflect the wit, wisdom, and grace of this remarkable statesman, businessman, and philanthropist. Speeches range in subject from the proper role of government and the importance of fair housing to the true cost of a good haircut. "Lives are like cathedrals," he writes. "Both require many years and great effort to become fully formed and functional." Like Andersen's, they can also be magnificent to behold.

■ Applying their many years of experience in assisting researchers, the reference staff of the Minnesota Historical Society has produced *A Guide to Family History Resources at the Minnesota Historical Society* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004, 105 p., paper, \$14.95). This useful genealogical tool offers an annotated list of sources including biographical, census, naturalization, cemetery, school, religious, business, court, government, legal, military, and veterans' records; statewide death records, 1908–96; photographs, personal papers, oral histories, ethnic resources, local and county histories; family histories, newspapers, and ship-passenger lists; and maps and atlases.

■ In *H. V. Jones: A Newspaperman's Imprint on Minneapolis History*, biographer John J. Koblas details not only the man and his career but also his ancestors, extended family, descendants, hometown, and rival newspapers. Jones

moved to Minneapolis in 1885 and began as a reporter on the *Minneapolis Journal*, the paper he eventually owned. He, the paper, and his adopted city grew and prospered together. Under his aegis, the *Journal* gained national recognition as a conservative organ with a well developed understanding of business and economics. Koblas's book (St. Cloud: North Star Press, 2003, 404 p., hardcover, \$29.95, paper, \$19.95) also details Jones's (and his family's) hobbies, including book collecting, community involvements, and recreational pursuits. It is available from the publisher, P. O. Box 451, St. Cloud, MN 56302 or nspress@cloudnet.com.

■ Genealogists with roots in Bohemia (the present-day Czech Republic) or Burgenland (now Austria) may welcome a new finding aid, *Church of St. Agnes, St. Paul, Minnesota, Ethnic Origins in Marriage Records, 1887–1897*, transcribed and introduced by Linda Therkelsen (Roseville: Park Genealogical Books, 2002, 44 p., paper, \$13.00). This volume contains full transcriptions of the more than 250 marriages performed at the church, located in St. Paul's Frogtown neighborhood. Also included are the names of witnesses, translations of dispensations, several helpful maps of the home regions and specific locations of the parishioners, and indexes to brides and grooms as well as localities. The book may be ordered from the publisher, P. O. Box 13098, Roseville, MN 55113-0968 or www.parkbooks.com. Include \$4.00 for shipping and handling; also add Minnesota sales tax, where required.

■ David T. Dana III, the editor of *A Fashionable Tour through the Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi: The 1852 Journal of Juliette Starr Dana* ((Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004, 121 p., paper, \$24.95), does what so many editors of published journals do not: he places the journal and its author in the context of their times. In this little book, we learn who Juliette Dana was, the circumstances under which she and her 16-year-old son Richard made their tour from New York City to Minnesota

Territory in 1852, and the nature of the journal and its editing. But it is Juliette herself who captures the reader's fancy. Never mind that readers may think of Victorian women as retiring. Juliette was up for any adventure or side trip. On her water journey westward, she never said no to an opportunity to see something of interest, whether it be a mine or a cave or an Indian village. Minnesota readers will be especially interested in her descriptions of the Falls of St. Anthony and Fort Snelling. The journal is fully annotated, and the editor has included an appendix listing Juliette's expenses for the trip, a bibliography, and a thorough index.

■ Long before the Victorian houses dotted the shores of Minneapolis's lakes, the land was home to Indians, missionar-

ies, and abundant wildlife. In *The Lake District of Minneapolis: A History of the Calhoun-Isles Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, 112 p., paper, \$19.95), David Lanegran and Ernest Sandeen provide glimpses into the life and activities that followed the earliest white settlers, beginning in the 1800s. Farms and homes are only a portion of the story. With the advent of a good streetcar system, the lakes and parkland were transformed into a haven for the public to enjoy. Taking refuge from the dirty, dusty city, many people headed for the hotels that sprang up on the shores of Lake Calhoun. In summer, city folk boated and swam; in winter there was ice-skating and horse racing on the frozen lakes. Not only does this newly reprinted book describe the lakes and

the culture surrounding them, but it also includes the origins of the mansions that dot the Lowry Hill, Kenwood, Groveland, and Cottage City neighborhoods. The book concludes with a series of walking tours accompanied by illustrated maps and photos.

Another 2004 University of Minnesota Press reprint, Ernest Sandeen's *St. Paul's Historic Summit Avenue* (110 p., paper, \$19.95), presents a brief history of this well-known city street along with an enjoyable guide to some of the prominent architects and the mansions they designed. First published in 1978, the book contains some outdated information but still provides valuable insight into the architecture and life on Summit Avenue. A walking tour as well as a house index is provided, allowing readers to explore on their own this wonderful street.

■ Mines present a tremendous paradox. Viewed for a time as permanent geographical features, they are only stages in the long and evolving history of the landscapes they inhabit. Photographer Peter Goin's and essayist C. Elizabeth Raymond's *Changing Mines in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, 240 p., hardcover, \$27.50) explores the birth and death of mining towns and their transformation (with varying success) to uses ranging from tourist attractions to sites for hiking and recreation. The book's first chapter focuses on the Mesabi iron range; comparative historical and modern art photographs document how quickly vegetation reclaims tall cones of tailings back into the landscape. The most arresting of the mine sites included in this handsome book is probably the Sunshine Radon Health Mine in Montana, where visitors descend an 85-foot shaft for sessions whiled away playing cards and resting on bus benches. The book is distributed for the Center of American Places.

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