

Churches of Minnesota: An Illustrated Guide

By Alan K. Lathrop; photography by Bob Firth

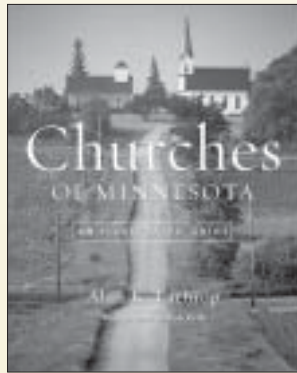
(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

306 p. Paper, \$29.95.)

PERHAPS NO BUILDING OR structure-type is as inspirational as a church. A church, after all, is a venue for acknowledging a force greater than oneself. Oftentimes, inspiration is reinforced by church design—the face that a house of worship presents to the community. Some faces are astonishingly beautiful, others are pleasingly humble, and there are many faces between the beautiful and the humble. Thankfully, Alan K. Lathrop's *Churches of Minnesota: An Illustrated Guide* shows them all.

Churches of Minnesota is not an in-depth study of ecclesiastical architecture, although the author, a professor and curator of the Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota, is clearly qualified to undertake such an effort. Lathrop does not deeply delve into the reasons certain church styles were common at different points in our past, nor does he intensely explore the basis for the particular design preferences of certain denominations or ethnic groups. The book's introduction, however, hints at his knowledge of this subject, chronicling briefly and generally the evolution of church design and construction in the state. Moreover, his church narratives include tidbits of larger architectural contexts. For instance, while discussing the Gothic-style Trinity Episcopal Church in St. Charles, Lathrop observes that the architecture "epitomizes Episcopal churches erected during the tenure of Bishop Henry Whipple," an Episcopal leader who, like Catholic Archbishop John Ireland, promoted the formation of numerous congregations and the construction of many Minnesota churches. Still, Lathrop's chief goal is to provide readers a showcase of churches punctuating the North Star landscape, an accessible work featuring varied designs and congregations with diverse histories.

This book highlights more than 100 churches as well as two synagogues, including St. Louis Park's Beth El Synagogue (1968, Bertram Bassuk), a visually agreeable edifice with a roof that curves sharply upward, somewhat resembling a spinnaker. Some of the houses of worship in the



book are old, while others are rather young. Many are on the National Register of Historic Places, that honorary roll of distinctive properties strongly reflecting various aspects of our history. All are worthy constituents of this book. A description of each church is provided, as is location and architect(s).

The tangible representations of the state's religious heritage in *Churches of Minnesota* are remarkable in their variety; by selecting buildings ranging from Gothic Revival to Richardsonian Romanesque to modern design and many others, Lathrop exhibits the diversity of Minnesota's ecclesiastical architecture. Plymouth Congregational Church (1907, Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge), for example, is English Rural Gothic style. This ornate Minneapolis church resembles a granite bastion that could withstand the king's army. Lathrop, however, refuses to fixate on Twin Cities churches, understanding that the state is not defined solely by its principal urban center. He highlights many venues of faith from all parts of the state, including Winona's majestic St. Stanislaus Polish Catholic Church (1894, C. G. Maybury and Son). Even those with a ho-hum view of the built environment are forced to pivot their heads and acknowledge this outstanding piece of Romanesque and baroque artistry. Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church (1874) in Millville is the antithesis of the religious palace in Winona, a modest, stone structure that was surrounded by a wood fence "after the congregation was bothered by cows . . . sticking their noses in the windows during services."

A book of churches must include photographs, and this one is filled with artful images by Bob Firth. These handsome images, however, would have been more handsome if printed in color. A handful of color photos mark the middle of the book, duly conveying the artistic magnificence of their subjects.

Churches of Minnesota concludes with an extensive list of additional houses of worship that readers may want to visit. Each entry includes location and architect(s). This section is followed by biographies of architects—an unexpected bonus and a resource that should make architectural historians giddy. But Lathrop's work does not cater only to those with a profound interest in architecture. Those who appreciate history and those inspired by viewing a church will also welcome this book.

Reviewed by Denis P. Gardner, an independent historian who has documented properties for the National Register of Historic Places and the Historic American Engineering Record. He is author of Minnesota Treasures: Stories Behind the State's Historic Places (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004).

Legacy of Violence: Lynch Mobs and Executions in Minnesota

By John D. Bessler

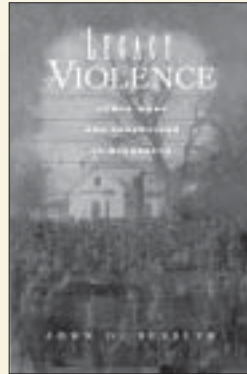
(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

307 p. Cloth, \$29.95.)

IN 1851 DAKOTA CHIEFS of the Wahpeton, Sisseton, Mdewakanton, and Wahpekute bands signed the treaties of Mendota and Traverse des Sioux, ceding vast tracts of land to the United States. The price was less than ten cents per acre. Government payments due under these and other treaty agreements, when made at all, were irregular and tardy. Deceitful negotiations, fraudulent trading practices, and Indian starvation—hallmarks of national and territorial administrations during most of the nineteenth century—ensued. Dakota attempts to subsist as farmers on crowded reservation land far from their buffalo ranges proved futile. The 1862 Homestead Act and the newly developed railway systems resulted in a repopulation of Indian lands within Minnesota Territory by mostly white, land-thirsty settlers numbering in the hundreds of thousands. It was a recipe for disaster.

Tensions, fueled by broken treaty promises, hunger, and the murder of five settlers near the town of Acton on August 17, 1862, exploded into full-scale war between the Dakota and the United States, with all of war's attendant cruelties. Known then as the Sioux Uprising, it ended with surrender to overwhelming federal forces and death sentences for 303 Dakota prisoners. A physically and emotionally depressed Abraham Lincoln, grieving the death of his son Willie and the carnage at Antietam and Second Bull Run, resisted for a time the mob mentality raging in Minnesota, where politicians including Henry Sibley and Alexander Ramsey fueled popular demand for a mass execution. Lincoln finally relented, authorizing the public hanging of 38 men at Mankato on December 26, 1862. It was the largest mass hanging in U.S. history.

John D. Bessler's compelling and important history of execution by hanging in Minnesota—by government and lynch mob alike—brings an unnerving relevance to the charged atmosphere of our times. He does not spare our midwestern sensibilities. Against well-documented political history, Minnesota's steady embrace of the hangman's rope well into the twentieth century is chronicled with no punches pulled. Though marred by some excessive references to courtroom and legislative debates, the book is well worth the read.



We become acquainted with hangings by mistake, botched hangings (ropes breaking or “too long”), private hangings, and lynch-mob hangings. In one chilling example, Bessler relates accounts of one execution during which both neck and rope stretched to the extent that the condemned man’s “feet touched the ground.” Death came, not from the assumed broken neck but from strangulation only after sheriff’s deputies took turns pulling on the rope. The attending physician detected a pulse 14 minutes after the ordeal began. Apparently, most hanging deaths resulted from strangulation.

Hangings conducted in public view are revealed in period newspapers as macabre social events worthy of Dickens’s *Madame Defarge*. The *Daily Minnesotian* in 1854 reported a government execution where liquor was openly passed among the waiting crowd amid shouts of “crucify him!” and a drunken father held his child aloft, “eager to see all.” Young girls and women were observed chatting “gaily” as old women competed “with drunken ruffians for a place near the gallows.” The crowd left the scene “satisfied and in high glee.”

In the book’s final and most jarring chapter, Bessler describes the 1920 lynching of three young black men in downtown Duluth. The three were among a group of circus workers accused of raping a 15-year-old white girl whose family doctor, after a gynecological exam the following day, concluded that no rape had occurred. Subsequent court proceedings demonstrated an almost total lack of evidence to support the allegations. A mob dragged the prisoners from jail, beat them savagely, and hanged them from a city lamppost, repeatedly proclaiming a lack of interest in their victims’ guilt or innocence. Afterward, a neat semicircle of satisfied white men formed around the mutilated bodies for the benefit of photographers.

The virulent racism and ferocity inherent in the Duluth lynchings and in the other violent history described in this book make difficult the recollection that Minnesota is also the state of Hubert H. Humphrey and Elmer L. Andersen. But Bessler avoids sensationalizing and voyeurism, carefully addressing a subject that easily lends itself to both. He poses important questions about the nature of the human condition and the extent to which it has been civilized. Both questions remain unanswered.

Reviewed by Franklin J. Knoll, a former state legislator and retired Hennepin County District Court judge currently practicing alternative dispute resolution.

Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880–1930

By Frank Tobias Higbie

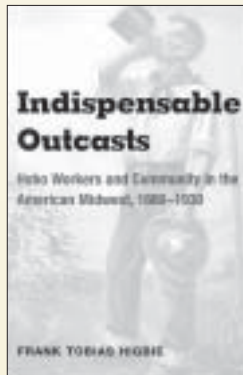
(Urbana: University of Illinois Press,
2003. 262 p. Cloth, \$44.95; paper, \$18.95.)

Transient workers, often called hoboes, were a significant feature of the economy in much of the United States during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Dakotas transients moved between the iron mines, the logging camps, and the harvest fields, “indispensable” for the muscle work that needed to be done, but “outcasts” in the communities through which they passed.

Transients are among the least studied American workers, and it is easy to see why. They were not generally a self-reflective lot, inclined to put their experiences on paper. Most of them were not organized most of the time, so they can’t be studied through their unions. While they were numerous, they were not systematically counted. Relatively few spent all of their time traveling—one town’s transients were usually another’s winter residents—and most settled down to conventional, year-round jobs at some point in their lives. The term frequently applied to them, “birds of passage,” captures the difficulty of subjecting them to systematic investigation.

Thus, Higbie has taken on a difficult task in his effort to recount the experience of transient workers. It is a tribute to his energy and imagination that he does it so well.

Higbie details the hobo life as one characterized by conditions that were frequently abominable, marked by hard work, poor food, and vermin-infested bunkhouses and beds. Transients were often victimized by employment agencies, local police, brutal railroad workers, and vigilantes fearful of labor radicals. While their lives were often degraded, transient workers did not surrender to degradation. They could and would walk off the job if mistreated or under-



valued, they created a sense of community and mutuality, usually among themselves and sometimes with sympathetic residents of the towns they visited, and they maintained a masculine subculture that allowed them to preserve pride and nurture self-confidence even when others held them in contempt. Higbie admires the hobo culture and respects the men who were part of it, but to his credit he does not gloss over the brutality, cruelty, and sexual exploitation that were inescapable features of life on the road. Unfortunately, this sort of “on the other hand” history sometimes leaves Higbie torn between portraying transients as victims of others and shapers of their own lives.

While there is much to be said for this thoughtful and insightful book, it has two significant weaknesses. The first is that Higbie is compelled to rely on sources that he correctly considers to be flawed. Progressive-era social investigators and undercover journalists examined the lives of floating laborers from a position of superiority, condescension, and sometimes contempt. They expected to find social pathology and frequently did. On the other side were former hoboes who wrote accounts—often rosy—of life on the road, accounts undoubtedly brightened by the passage of time. None of these observers were trustworthy, but Higbie cannot avoid leaning on them.

The second flaw in this book is that its author overemphasizes the significance of—and devotes disproportionate attention to—the Agricultural Workers’ Organization of the Industrial Workers of the World. Higbie is not the first scholar beguiled by the romance of the Wobblies, who reflected the masculinity he sees in hobo culture, and they did leave some records, at least. The problem is that the IWW was a relatively short-lived organization that included only a minority of transients, even in its best days. As a consequence, the Wobbly experience obscures as much about transient workers as it reveals.

Having said that, I want to emphasize that *Indispensable Outcasts* is a valuable and stimulating book. Students of the hobo experience for many years to come will begin their wanderings here.

Reviewed by David B. Danbom, professor of history at North Dakota State University. He is presently completing a book on Fargo, North Dakota, during the Great Depression.

■ John Carroll is the winner of the 2004 *Minnesota History Magazine* Award for the best senior-division History Day paper on a Minnesota topic. For this year's theme, "Exploration, Encounter, and Exchange in History," Carroll delved into library and archival sources and conducted oral-history interviews to inform his paper, "Exploring the Idea of Two Races Worshipping God Together: The Encounter and Exchanges of Kindness, Good Fellowship, and Ideas between Border and Hennepin Churches." Carroll is a ninth grader at Southwest High School in Minneapolis. The \$50 prize is awarded by the editors of *Minnesota History*.

■ The 2004 Grand Excursion celebrates the upper Mississippi River by recreating the 1854 train and steamboat expedition that drew attention to America's western frontier. A lengthier and more personal expedition is commemorated in Harold Speakman's *Mostly Mississippi: A Very Damp Adventure* (reprint, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, 408 p., paper, \$15.95). In 1925 Speakman and his new wife, Frances "Russell" Lindsay Speakman, traveled the entire Mississippi River—from its headwaters in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico—on a 20-foot houseboat. The book recounts their adventures and interactions with lumberjacks, hoboes, roustabouts, and collegians. They also meet William Alexander Percy, the "Poet of the Delta"; Laura Frazer, the inspiration for Mark Twain's Becky Thatcher; and the prototypical "lady from Dubuque" as described by the *New Yorker*. Illustrated by Harold Speakman's paintings and sketches and Russell Speakman's delightful drawings, *Mostly Mississippi* captures the deepening emotional bond of a newly married couple embarked on a great adventure.

Focusing its lens on a 72-mile corridor of the Upper Mississippi that will be part of this summer's celebration is *River of History: A Historic Resources Study of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area* by John O. Anfinson with Thomas Madigan, Drew M. Fors-

berg, and Patrick Nunnally (St. Paul: St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers, 2003, 200 p., paper, \$15.00 plus tax). Extending from the confluence of the Crow and Mississippi Rivers at Dayton (Hennepin County) and Ramsey (Anoka County) south to the Vermillion River bottoms in Ravenna Township just below Hastings, the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area's 54,000 acres are filled with places and stories of local, regional, national, and even international significance. Beginning with the geology of St. Anthony Falls, the Mississippi River gorge, and the river's bluffs and flood plain, this book explores 12,000 years of Native American history; the changes wrought by fur traders and European settlers; navigation improvements including Lock and Dam Nos. 1 and 2 and the Minneapolis Upper Harbor Project; riparian industries ranging from lumbering to flour milling to hydroelectricity; and, finally, urban growth along the river's shores. As Anfinson notes in the introduction, "This area harbors places with stories so rich and important they define who we are as a people, where we have come from, what we have to celebrate, and what we painfully cannot forget." Illustrated with 85 black-and-white photographs, sketches, maps, and figures, *River of History* reaffirms the U.S. Congress's 1988 decision to establish the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area as part of the National Parks System, thereby preserving its valuable historical and cultural resources. The book is available at MNRRA's visitor center in the Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul.

Written for upper-elementary schoolchildren and their families but accessible to all, Paul Clifford Larson and Pamela Allen Larson's *Mississippi Escapade: Reliving the Grand Excursion of 1854* (Afton, MN: Afton Historical Society Press, 2004, 128 p., paper, \$17.95) brings the historic journey to life in a modern context. Amply illustrated and offering activities and crafts projects as well as additional resources for learning, the book includes a wealth of interesting information on lesser-known places as well as the major cities along the excursion route.

■ The life of a noted Minnesota progressive is intimately detailed by her daughter Brenda Ueland, whose rediscovered manuscript, *O Clouds, Unfold: Clara Ueland and her Family*, was recently published by Nodin Press (Minneapolis, 2004, 284 p., cloth, \$25.00). The younger Ueland brings her well-regarded, vivacious style to the story of her mother (and her family), using letters, diary entries, newspapers, and her own recollections to limn the life and accomplishments of a crusader for women's suffrage and other notable social reforms of the early-twentieth century.

■ "Midwesterners can be proud of their successes in maintaining the historical integrity of their top executives' mansions while accommodating the change that comes with time," states Ann Liberman in her book, *Governor's Mansions of the Midwest* (photographs by Alise O'Brien; Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003, 172 p., cloth, \$34.95). Varied architectural and decorating styles mark the 12 residences, stretching from Ohio to the Dakotas and obtained as governors' homes in a variety of ways. The 12 pages devoted to Minnesota's residence include an historical overview—lacking any of the controversy of recent years—and many warmly lit interior and exterior photos.

■ The James J. Hill Library announces a new round of grants (up to \$2,000) to support research in the James J. Hill, Louis W. Hill, and Reed/Hyde papers. The deadline for applications is November 1, 2004. For more information, contact W. Thomas White, curator, James J. Hill Library, 80 W. Fourth St., St. Paul, MN 55102, (651) 265-5441, or twhite@jjhill.org.

■ The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial continues to stimulate publications on the men, the epic journey, and its many component parts. Added to the ever-growing list are Dayton Duncan's *Scenes of Visionary Enchantment: Reflections on Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004, 202 p., cloth, \$22.00), which revisits the people and

places and offers the author's own commentary on the journey and its continuing hold on the national imagination; Landon Y. Jones's *William Clark and the Shaping of the West* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004, 394 p., cloth, \$25.00), which reveals the events and controversies of Clark's long career including, but not limited to, his landmark expedition; and *A Vast and Open Plain: The Writings of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in North Dakota, 1804-1806*, edited and introduced by Clay S. Jenkinson with a foreword by James P. Ronda (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2003, 594 p., cloth, \$49.95, paper, \$34.95), which includes helpful appendices on the dynamics of the journals, the challenge of interpreting Sakakawea, biographies of expedition members, and

a detailed list of the party's North Dakota campsites.

■ "American cities change at a frightening speed," writes photographer Mike Melman in his preface to *The Quiet Hours: City Photographs* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, 81 p., cloth, \$34.95), a collection of 70 of his haunting black-and-white images. The photographs, taken from 1985 to 2002 in the half-light just before dawn, chronicle homes, empty streets, businesses, and industrial sites—the "mighty heart of a city," as poet Bill Holm states in the book's introduction. Melman's sometimes gritty, sometimes contemplative views of familiar spots in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, and smaller cities such as Cokato and New Ulm evoke the past without nostalgia.

■ When do "current events" and "politics" become "history"? More than 20 years after they were first published in Massachusetts, the University of Minnesota Press has reprinted two books by Paul Wellstone that remain timely today. With a new foreword by Frances Fox Piven, *How the Rural Poor Got Power* (Minneapolis, 2003, 227 p., paper, \$16.95) describes the then-college professor and organizer's experiences working with Rice County citizens who were grappling with health-care, welfare, and transportation issues in the early 1970s. Wellstone's book chronicles and analyzes the successes and failures of Organization for a Better Rice County, the group that he helped to organize. Along with Wellstone's voice, the book also features interviews with members of the grassroots group.

Powerline: The First Battle of America's Energy War (Minneapolis, 2003, 314 p., paper, \$17.95), by Wellstone and Barry M. Casper, remains a classic chronicle of populist protest. Set largely in west-central Minnesota, the book recounts the opposition of rural citizens to a high-voltage powerline that traversed fields from North Dakota to the Twin Cities suburbs. A new foreword by Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa assesses the legacy of the protest that, he believes, "prefigured later political events."

■ To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the town's founding, editor and translator Don Heinrich Tolzmann compiled *New Ulm, Minnesota: J. H. Strasser's History and Chronology* (Milford, OH: Little Miami Publishing, 2003, 370 p., paper, \$34.95). Strasser, the nineteenth-century editor and publisher of a local German-language newspaper, printed his *New Ulm in Word and Picture* as a special issue in 1892; his town chronology, covering the 1850s through the 1890s, appeared seven years later. Uniting the two documents, Tolzmann, who earlier had published a translation of the narrative history, has also added a picture section, a source list, and a comprehensive index. The book is available from the publisher, P. O. Box 588, Milford, OH 45150-5588; include \$3.00 for postage.

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Minnesota History welcomes the submission of articles and edited documents dealing with the social economic, political, intellectual, and cultural history of the state and the surrounding region.

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