

1888); the first years of the "Domestic Servants" experiences of the Winkelmeier sisters, Engel and Margarethe, are beautifully reflected in their letters from Indianapolis (1867–1872).

The whole colorful spectrum of immigrant reactions to the new—and to the old—homeland comes alive in this competently edited and translated book that must be recognized as a major addition to the literature on immigrant history.

EBERHARD REICHMANN is professor emeritus of Germanic Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington. He has most recently edited *Hoosier German Tales Small & Tall* (1991).

Women of the Grange: Mutuality and Sisterhood in Rural America, 1866–1920. By Donald B. Marti. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991. Pp. viii, 157. Notes, note on sources, index. \$39.95.)

In *Women of the Grange* Donald B. Marti seeks to define the roles which women played in that agricultural organization as well as to uncover ways in which their participation therein led them to be a part of the women's movement. He argues that the Grange's structure, which included women from the first, reflected the mutuality of rural life that has been documented by other scholars. Both in the Grange and on the farm, men and women worked and lived together—mutuality. At the same time Grange activities gave rural women a chance to socialize with one another and cooperatively to serve their common interests as mothers, wives, and farm women—sisterhood.

By looking at the activities, writings, and lives of leading women in the Grange, Marti outlines the roles women played in that society and tries to explain what the organization meant to its women members. He traces the evolution of women's roles from the symbolic offices of Ceres, Pomona, and Flora, which positions women held in Grange ritual in the early years, to their more substantial participation as lecturers and assistant stewards. In the 1880s they gained a place in the regional and national levels of the organization, and by the twentieth century women were a majority of the lecturers and even filled the highest offices at local and state levels.

Marti develops a collective portrait of active women in the Grange. He finds that they tended to be well educated and were generally religious. They shared a domestic focus and were concerned with the need to reduce the drudgery of farm women's work through efficient and modern methods. The women's writings in the Grange publications that Marti surveyed frequently touched on this topic and offered myriad suggestions for improvements to the farm home. Although most of these women saw their responsibilities as principally domestic, they were also attentive to issues of

“public housekeeping.” Active Grange women supported temperance and suffrage and persuaded the organization (contrary to assurances of its founders) that this latter cause was a “clear implication of its first principles” (p. 148). They also engaged in a variety of community improvement campaigns through their Women’s Committees and their work with the juvenile Grange.

Marti makes use of a wide variety of sources and provides a strong introduction and an informative bibliographic essay, both of which comment upon recent work in the history of rural women and the Grange movement. *Women of the Grange* is a useful addition to the scholarship on rural life.

KATHERINE A. TINSLEY is assistant professor of history, Manchester College, Manchester, Indiana. She has published jointly authored articles on the history of literacy and is currently working on a project that explores the interactions of parents and children in midwestern families.

Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880–1940. By Deborah Fink. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992. Pp. xxiii, 242. Maps, tables, illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. Clothbound, \$34.95; paperbound, \$12.95.)

Rural anthropologist Deborah Fink’s *Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880–1940* is a provocative contribution to debates among researchers on rural women. Contrary to the view that rural women experienced more egalitarian marriages because of their shared labor and essential economic contributions to the family farm, Fink concludes that rural women in Boone County, Nebraska, were not “insulated from gender oppression,” their physical labor (and that of their children) was exploited, and their isolation deprived them of community support that made them more vulnerable to domestic violence (p. 190). Fink has no patience for the continuing glorification of agrarianism. Defining it as “the belief in the moral and economic primacy of farming over industry” and the “superiority of farm life” over urban life, she asserts that this “false” and “irrelevant” ideology, which incorporates women only as subordinate appendages to men, has provided a woefully inadequate basis for public policies (p. 11, 12, 194).

Her case study assesses the impact of geography, class, and gender on the lives of rural women and illustrates why the experiences of agrarian women defy facile generalization. The bleak, treeless, and arid plains of Nebraska presented special challenges to farm families—difficulties not encountered in the more humid cornbelt regions of Iowa, Illinois, or Indiana. Without trees, settlers lived in dugouts or soddies; without water, their crops failed. One finds abundant evidence of neighborliness among rural