

The challenge facing Pitzer was also substantial. How might he assure uniform coverage of groups that were anything but uniform? For example, barely twenty pages are devoted to the more than two centuries of Shaker history involving some twenty thousand Believers, whereas forty-seven pages focus on the much more modest Owenite experiment involving a few hundred members during two decades. Meanwhile, the task facing Lawrence J. McCrank, the author sketching the history of Roman Catholic orders and monastic groups in America, exceeded that of all the other essayists. Not surprisingly, one discovers some unevenness in the scope of the essays and in the amount of detail.

It is not completely clear who the primary audience is for this volume. Those already familiar with these groups will not discover much that is new. Those unfamiliar with these groups may find the extensive annotation intimidating and unnecessary, especially in view of the redundancy that exists among the endnotes, the selected bibliographies, and the bibliographical essay at the end of the volume. Yet both specialists and the uninitiated will profit from this collection.

In his opening essay Pitzer sketches what he calls a “developmental approach” to the study of communal groups. That approach, he suggests, ties together the essays in this volume and allows one to see how communal societies assume different forms at different stages of their development. He sees this notion as an alternative to formulas that talk of communal success or failure simply in terms of longevity. On the barrenness of the latter measure he is certainly correct. Some of the essayists in this volume nod in their closing paragraphs to his “developmental” notion, but those nods, frankly, do not add a great deal to an understanding of these groups on either a theoretical or a historical level. Good historical writing about such groups has always recognized that multiple influences gave rise to communal societies in America and that their legacies live on in a variety of ways even after the communities themselves have passed from the scene.

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“And Prairie Dogs Weren't Kosher”: Jewish Women in the Upper Midwest since 1855. By Linda Mack Schloff. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1996. Pp. x, 243. Illustrations, maps, graph, tables, bibliography, index. Clothbound, \$29.95; paperbound, \$14.95.)

Linda Mack Schloff's *“And Prairie Dogs Weren't Kosher”* offers readers an overview of the diversity of experiences of Jewish women and their families in the Dakotas and Minnesota from the mid-nine-

teenth century to the present. The first two chapters cover the Old World backgrounds and upper midwestern settlement patterns of Jewish Americans. Chapter three explores domestic life, with special attention given to the dilemmas of retaining Jewish religious traditions in isolated rural and small-town areas. Chapter four examines women's employment patterns, including work on farms and in family enterprises, in factories, and in white-collar occupations. The final chapters review women's participation in synagogues and organizations that nurtured the Jewish community. Schloff explores two major themes: women's roles in helping their families settle and adapt to rural, small-town, and urban life in the upper Midwest and the ways in which women developed new roles for themselves as women and as Jews. Much of Schloff's information pertains to the period from 1890 to 1920, but she extends her story to the present in order to survey changes in women's roles within Judaism, their families, and their communities.

With such an ambitious range of topics and chronological scope, not all questions of historical causation are clear. A much lengthier historical monograph would have been required to provide detailed analysis of the book's subject matter. Clearly, such an analysis was not the author's purpose. Schloff has succeeded in providing a provocative introduction to a subject that she contends has been neglected in both regional and Jewish histories. The primary source materials in the book are especially valuable. Schloff has collected voluminous photographs, several of which are extraordinarily illuminating. Each chapter also includes a section of "voices" that eloquently convey the diversity of experiences.

Schloff's comparisons between Jewish settlement in the upper Midwest and the overwhelmingly urban pattern on the East Coast underscore this theme of diversity. Although today only a few thousand Jews in the region live outside Minneapolis–St. Paul, significant numbers of Jews settled in small towns, especially in the Mesabi Iron Range of northern Minnesota, and about one thousand Jews also became homesteaders, an option available in the Dakotas as late as 1910. Preserving religious traditions posed challenges for Jewish families outside the larger towns and cities. A woman who grew up in Hebron, North Dakota, recalled:

We imported kosher meat from Minneapolis, but when it came out by train . . . the stationmaster said [to my father] "Jake, your package came." He said, "I know Pete. Dump it. It smells way over here already." No refrigeration. How my mother managed to feed all those kids with very little meat, I still don't know (p. 97).

Jews in many towns created synagogues, but in smaller communities and rural areas, families gathered in homes where either traveling rabbis or local religious men conducted services. Schloff's presentation of these stories of struggle "to create a Jewish life where little

or none existed” (p. 155) reveals much about the complex intersections of geography, religion, and gender.

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The North Western: A History of the Chicago & North Western Railway System. By H. Roger Grant. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996. Pp. x, 292. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$49.95.)

H. Roger Grant, one of the nation’s most prolific scholars in the railroad field, tells the story of the Chicago & North Western Railway through well-documented research and skillful, readable writing. Meeting objectives that he outlines in the preface, Grant describes the greatness of the company and the ways in which it shaped the West, helped develop Chicago, and contributed to the Dakota land boom. He also discusses the regulatory impact on rail lines in later years.

Grant traces the rise and decline of this one-time powerhouse of the prairies, which enjoyed solid success during its youth, suffered later under inept administrations, and staggered through its final days of downsizing and vainly attempting to reduce costs by absorbing major competitors.

The first railroad to extend west from Chicago, the North Western was organized as the Galena & Chicago Union in 1836 but did not become operational until 1848. It headed for the rich mineral deposits near Galena, Illinois, but terminated short of its goal and instead built to the Mississippi River and subsequently to Omaha and beyond. Despite important lines to Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Rapid City, South Dakota, and elsewhere, the western connection became the North Western’s lifeline. The road was unusually prosperous from the beginning, netting up to \$400,000 annually and paying a 22 percent dividend as early as 1856.

Meanwhile, a group of railroads in Wisconsin and northern Illinois became the Chicago & North Western in 1859 and in 1865 merged with the Galena & Chicago Union. The expanded system retained the Chicago & North Western name and peaked at more than ten thousand miles after expanding into the upper Midwest.

Two strong presidents, William B. Ogden, the original promoter, and Marvin Hughitt, who served from 1887 to 1910, constructed a strong foundation by managing conservatively, insisting on quality, and innovating wisely, yet in 1935, like many railroads during the Depression, the North Western slid into bankruptcy. Although reorganized successfully, it never regained its earlier solidity. In a startlingly frank discussion, Grant describes the parade of presidents, including Indianapolis native Paul Feucht, who were incapable of stemming the downward slide.