

White Birch, Red Hawthorn: A Memoir

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White Birch, Red Hawthorn: A Memoir, by Nora Murphy. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017. xvi, 179 pp. Illustration, resources and further reading. \$17.95 paperback.

Reviewer Greg Olson is curator of exhibits and special projects at the Missouri State Archives. He is the author of several articles and books on the Ioways, including *Ioway Life: Reservation and Reform, 1837–1860* (2016).

While growing up in a middle-class neighborhood in Minneapolis, Nora Murphy never questioned the comfort of the Victorian houses on the street where she lived or the belief that everything she could see from a nearby hilltop naturally belonged to her, her family, and other white people like her. However, Murphy's complacency about her place in America slowly began to be challenged when, as an adult, she started working at the Minneapolis American Indian Center. There, Murphy's Native colleagues invited her to become part of a circle that showed her the world from a new perspective and led her to question many of the conventions she had grown up with. She was forced to consider the extent of her white privilege—a phrase Murphy avoids—and to wrestle with “the embarrassing but fuzzy recognition that non-Natives have some unpaid debt to Native Americans” (10). This realization sent Murphy on a journey to “uncover a different way of understanding what it means to be an American in this land” (10).

White Birch, Red Hawthorn is Murphy's frank account of that voyage. In some instances, her journey involved physical travel. She visited her family's homestead in northern Minnesota and her ancestral home in North Tipperary, Ireland. In part, her travels helped satisfy her longing to reconnect with her past and with the earth. “The conqueror's thirst,” Murphy writes, is “to connect, to belong” (55).

The most difficult and painful segment of Murphy's journey involved self-reflection. She shows rare courage in her willingness to question her assumptions and to examine the process by which she and those like her have labored to erase the lives of Native people who had lived on the land before her family arrived. This exploration takes Murphy back to her ancestors, who, as immigrants, worked hard to put their own heritage and their connection to nature behind them in order to assimilate. Along the way, Murphy revisits stories she read as a child about Paul Bunyan, who cleared the north woods in order to rid it of its wildness, and Laura Ingalls Wilder, whose family took the newly domesticated land as their own without considering the Native people who had called it home for centuries.

This, in turn, causes Murphy to consider the process by which the U.S. government removed Native people from their land in her home

state. She examines the Doctrine of Discovery, the 1819 Indian Civilization Act, and forced assimilation and lists the more than 40 treaties that took place in Minnesota alone between 1805 and 1847.

When a Native elder asked Murphy, "When you find the truth, what are you going to do with it?" (138), she realized that she was on a journey with no end. She understood that she was obliged to tell the true story of how the United States was settled in hopes that it would help heal the scars of the land and the people. She also concluded that she must learn to listen to those who were not like her if she was going to become a more effective ally.

Murphy has engaged in a process of self-examination that few white people seem willing to undertake in public. She acknowledges her fears and the shame she felt over her privilege and articulates her struggle with clarity. *White Birch, Red Hawthorn* is a work of great insight and bravery that manages to challenge readers' beliefs without becoming strident or arrogant. No matter where we live on this continent, this work serves as a valuable guide for all who want to understand the process by which our cities, towns, and houses were built on top of someone else's home.

A Spectrum of Faith: Religions of the World in America's Heartland, edited by Timothy Knepper, photography by Bob Blanshard. Des Moines: Drake Community Press, 2017. ix, 126 pp. Full-color photographs. \$30.00 paperback.

Reviewer Bill R. Douglas lives and writes in Des Moines. His article on Des Moines's Calvary Baptist Church in the 1920s appeared in the Summer 2017 issue of *Baptist History & Heritage*.

This lavishly illustrated book is the result of sending Drake University students to 15 Des Moines religious communities: three of the four Jewish congregations (no Chabad), two Sikh groups, three Muslim mosques (Bosnian, primarily Arab, and international), two Buddhist and two Hindu temples (including an ethnically Nepali Bhutanese refugee community), and three Christian churches (Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant but no Pentecostal).

With subsections on history, identity, space, and practice, the project should be seen as an exercise in lived religion, as the introduction makes clear. The book also succeeds in its aim of uncovering the spectacular contemporary diversity of religious practice in one midwestern city. Concentrating on practice leaves at least one major question unresolved: why the degree of diversity *within* religions in Des Moines? Of