

## They Sang for Norway: Olaf Oleson's Immigrant Choir

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tion for their survival and success. Mapping techniques help assess community formation, ethnic concentration, places of origin, and other information important for community success. The digitization of land records, which is bringing voluminous and often scattered documents together and making them accessible to everyone, the application of geographical tools such as GIS, and innovative techniques such as analysis of claim proof witnesses create a world of research possibilities.

*Homesteading the Plains* is an important book. The authors apply new tools and innovative techniques to an old, nearly moribund topic. A regeneration of the field should certainly follow. Anyone interested in the history of the Great Plains will benefit from this exciting research.

*They Sang for Norway: Olaf Oleson's Immigrant Choir*, by Ane-Charlotte Five Aarset. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2017. ix, 266 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Kristin Elmquist teaches history at Park Center Senior High School in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. She earned an M.A. in cultural anthropology at New York University, specializing in immigration history.

*They Sang for Norway* tells the story of the author's ancestor Olaf Oleson, who emigrated from Norway in the 1870s and rose to prominence in Fort Dodge, Iowa, as a businessman and philanthropist and as the driving force behind Norwegian men's choirs in the United States. Oleson's life is a classic example of an immigrant success story. Trained as a gardener and botanist in Norway, after arriving in the United States he established a successful pharmacy in the growing city of Fort Dodge. He became one of the city's most successful early residents and shaped its development in lasting ways: he financed a department store and other real estate projects, supported a church, became politically active, and made many charitable contributions. At the same time, he devoted much of his energy and resources to his passion for music. He began by forming a small singing quartet. Later, he was instrumental in promoting Norwegian male choirs through supporting organizations and planning festivals throughout the United States and abroad where these choirs would perform. Music was the medium he used to promote the influence of Norwegians in the United States.

Oleson's story is one of many examples of immigrant success in the United States. But in the context of his family and political events in Norway it becomes exceptional. One of Olaf's brothers who stayed behind—Ola Five—was the founder of an armed militia rooted in Norwegian nationalism and liberal politics and devoted to independence from Sweden. He is the subject of a previous text by this author.

Nationalism took two very different paths in these brothers' lives. Their stories connect in interesting ways—at times directly when proceeds from concerts helped finance the militias. The conflict between Norway and Sweden over their separation—while very tense at times—manifested itself in conflict between these two immigrant communities in the United States. One example included here is of the pointed removal of a Swedish song from a concert program. These are interesting details that reflect the complexity of immigrant communities' relationships to their home countries and to each other. The shift in focus—from success in the United States to the larger context of Norwegian identity—is interesting and refreshing; often the immigrant success story seems to leave the homeland behind. Being reminded of the continuing connections between immigrant communities and the politics of the homeland is an important part of this text.

For those interested in the place of immigration history in the development of Iowa, this will be an invaluable contribution. Oleson's life had a lasting impact on Fort Dodge. The author provides detailed historical evidence about his life and contributions, including extensive accounts of his business dealings, names of his associates, details of the programs of each choir concert, and each trip he took. This level of detail and the inclusion of all the archival research will be invaluable to others researching related topics. The text includes far less interpretation of these details; the connections between topics are not always present but are left for the reader to put together. The context and significance are not clearly established, and the text would have benefited from a stronger narrative thread. I appreciated the detailed treatment of the history of Fort Dodge and Oleson's impact on the male choir movement; on the historically important context of nationalism and immigrant identity and on the interesting ways communities retained links to their homeland, I would have liked to read more.

*The Midwestern Moment: The Forgotten World of Early-Twentieth-Century Midwestern Regionalism, 1880–1940*, edited by Jon K. Lauck. Rediscovering the American Midwest Series. Hastings, NE: Hastings College Press, 2017. xv, 287 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$24.99 paperback.

Reviewer Charles Johanningsmeier is professor of English at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is the author of numerous works of scholarship about regionalist authors of fiction, with a special interest in Willa Cather.

Editor Jon K. Lauck has, during the past decade, served as a prolific booster of midwestern studies. The present volume is a collection of 16 essays that deal with various elements of the region's history during a