

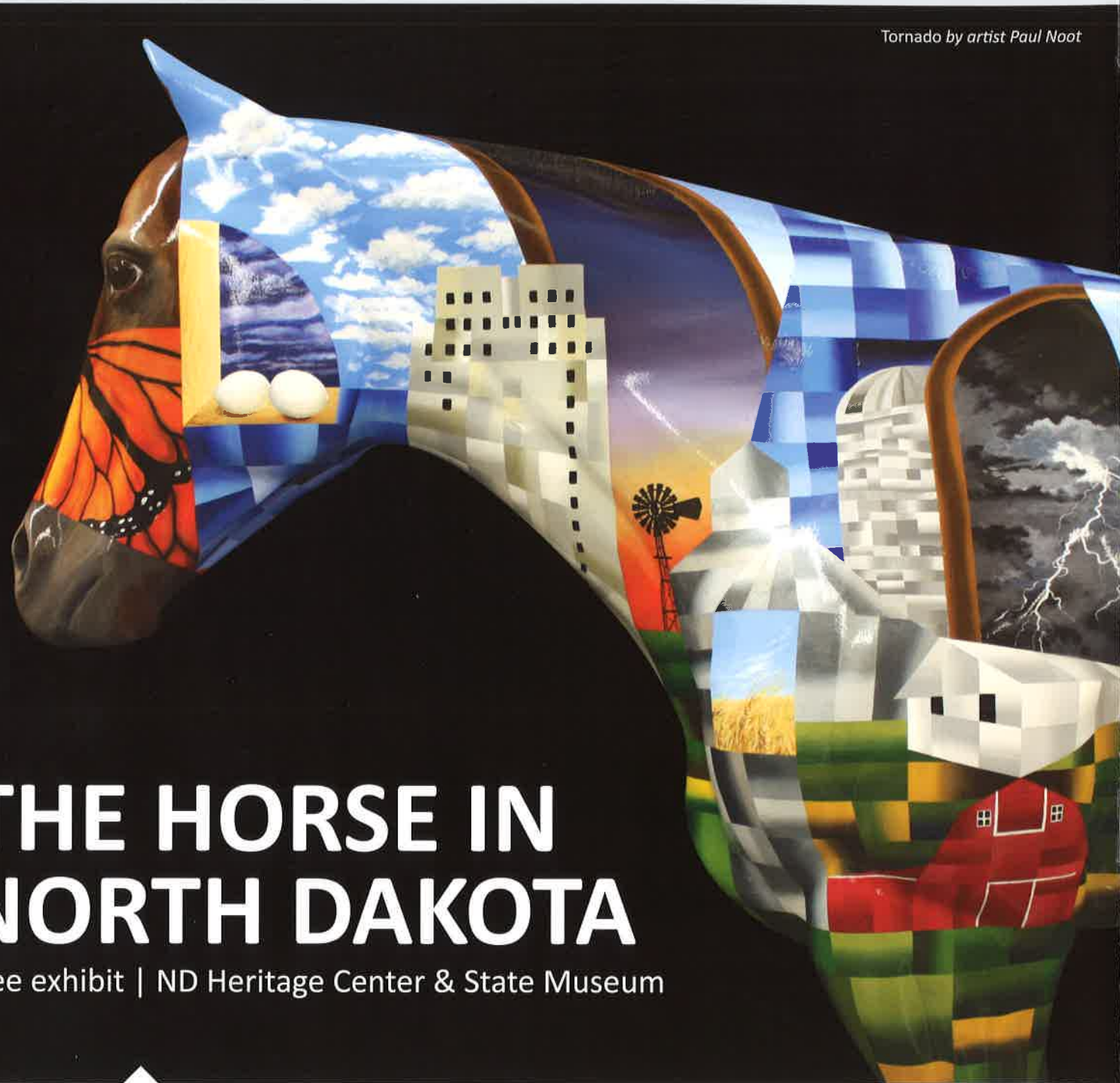
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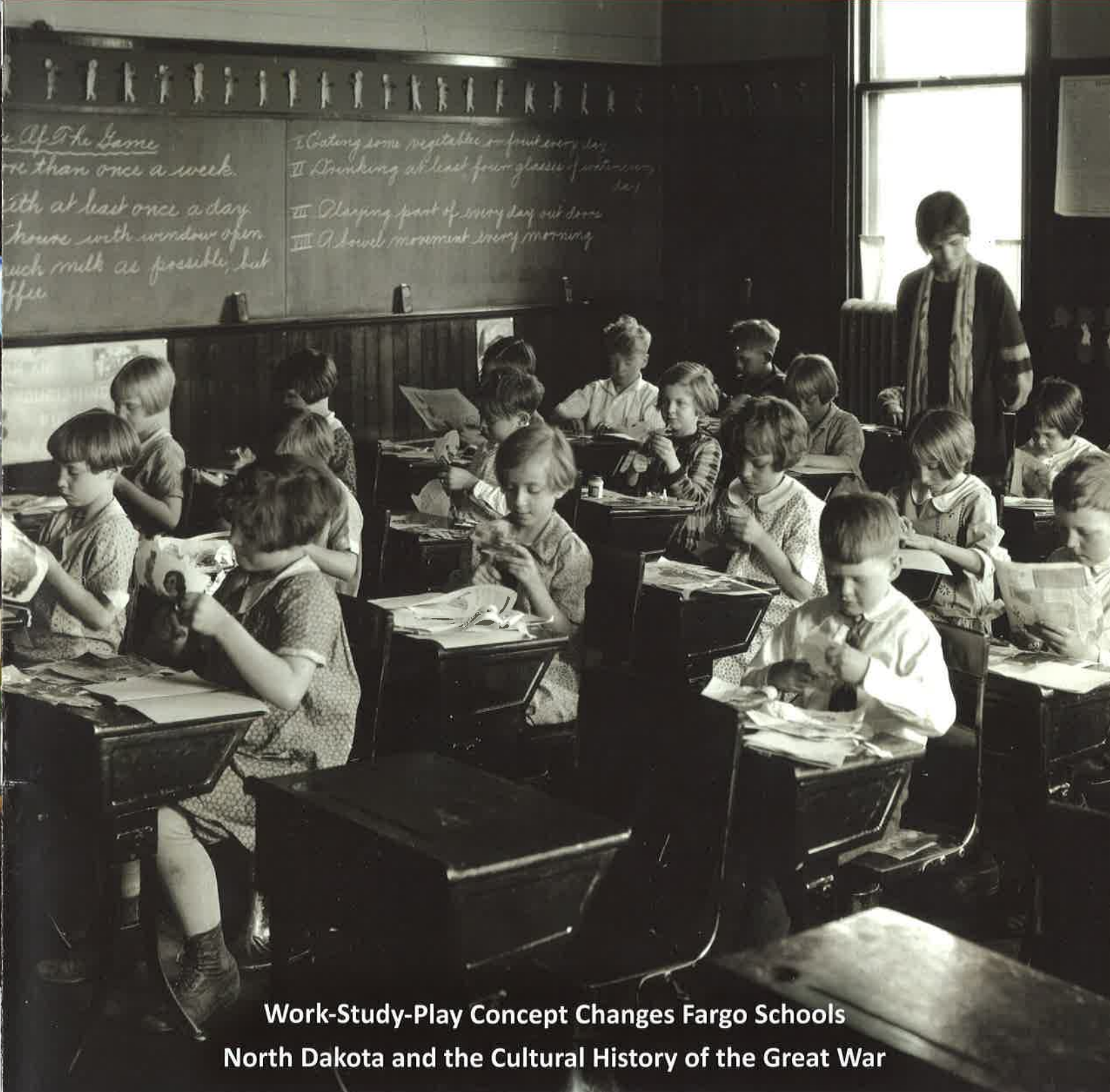
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Work-Study-Play Concept Changes Fargo Schools
North Dakota and the Cultural History of the Great War

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

Colors of the Rainbow: Pendants of the Past and Present

Red catlinite pendant from Bagnell Village site near Washburn, North Dakota. SHSND 2-140



Sir Isaac Newton is credited with distinguishing the colors of the rainbow—refracting white light with a prism into its component spectrum—in a series of experiments published in 1672. The phenomenon of color terminology and naming in cultures with written and unwritten languages attracted the attention of researchers beginning some two hundred years later in the 1880s. The publication of *The World Color Survey* brought this long-term research to fruition in 2010, and some of its universal findings remain topics of continuing debate among investigators in the sister disciplines of psychology and anthropological linguistics.¹ Brightly colored stones have caught the attention and appeal of humans for millennia. Modern stone jewelry continues this tradition into the twenty-first century.

Color terms in the Mandan and Hidatsa languages include blue, green, and red as recorded by Prince Maximilian, Lewis Henry Morgan, and Washington Matthews, among other nineteenth-century visitors to the Missouri River Valley. Correspondingly, the contemporary tribal flag of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation incorporates motifs with these color designations as well.

The archaeological records of the Mandans and the Hidatsas contain examples of exotic stone pendants expressing preferences for some of these same color hues. Amazonite is a green- or blue-feldspar mineral exposed in outcrops in the Rocky Mountains near modern-day Denver, Colorado. Catlinite is a red argillite that was quarried at Pipestone National Monument in southwestern Minnesota.

*Paul R. Picha, chief archaeologist,
Archaeology & Historic Preservation Division*

¹ Paul Kay, Brent Berlin, Luisa Maffi, William R. Merrifield, and Richard Cook, *The World Color Survey* (Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 2009).



Glass beads and pendants replaced stone ornaments among the Mandans and Hidatsas. This blue fused-glass pendant is from near Stanton, North Dakota. SHSND L-24

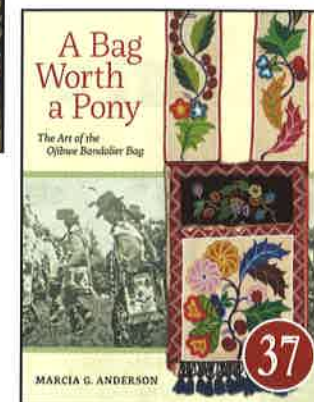
Green amazonite pendant from Boley Village site north of Mandan, North Dakota. SHSND 1986.226.7471



Features

North Dakota HISTORY

Vol. 83.2
Winter 2018



3 North Dakota and the Cultural History of the Great War
BY JOSEPH T. STUART

18 Work-Study-Play Concept Changes Fargo Schools
BY STEVE GRINESKI

35 From the Collections

37 Book Reviews

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On the cover: Hawthorne School, Fargo, 1927. From the 1920s to the 1960s, Fargo elementary schools used platoon school organization, also called the Gary Plan. In platoon schools, groups (or platoons) of students rotated between classrooms, where general homeroom and specialist teachers worked cooperatively to link learning across multiple subjects. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

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NORTH DAKOTA AND THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR

BY JOSEPH T. STUART



Howard Huston (1892–1955) of McHenry County served with the Fourth Division in France. He graduated from the University of North Dakota with a liberal arts degree before his enlistment in 1917. Huston saw combat, was wounded, and received three citations. He later served as an aide to General W. D. Conner. His 1918 letter home is screened in the background, and the entire text is on page four. SHSND SA 10895-00023



Howard Huston's letter to his sister Mildred from page three.

Aug. 12, 1918

Dearest Mildred & all:

It has been some time since I have written to you but I know you see the letters I write home and I intend them for all of you.

I've had a fine time here at the hospital and have really enjoyed it very much. Have had a nice rest and plenty to eat. I don't know when I will go back or where I will be sent when I am discharged here but I think it will be back to my old organization the 59th. Guess you will be in the midst of harvest when you receive this letter. I'd like to be there to drive a binder for you a couple of days and have some fried chicken. I hope you have good crops. You had better address me Co. M. 59th Inf until I send a change of address. Alls well.

A world of love

Howard

Burleigh County selected men, prior to entrainment, Bismarck, North Dakota, March 29, 1918. SHSND SA E0071-00001

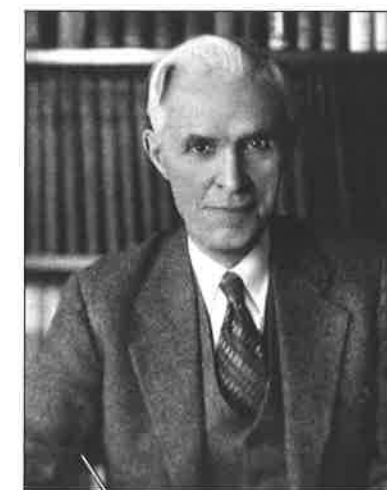
Despite all the predictions that the Great War could not last more than six months, Orin Grant Libby wondered in a 1917 essay why it had lasted for so long. The historian chaired the Faculty War Committee at the University of North Dakota (UND), and like most North Dakotans, Libby had earlier opposed involvement in the conflict. After the US declaration of war against Germany on April 6, 1917, however, Libby and much of the state shifted to strong support. In his essay, he examined the deep cultural forces that explained the origin and prolongation of the war. Among other factors, he blamed Germany for its outbreak due to a "sinister philosophy" there that glorified violence as a means of progress. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had attacked Christianity as weak, and German leaders, caught in a "practical atheism," exulted in Nietzsche's ideal of the superman. With this view, Libby anticipated the work of later cultural historians such as the Canadian Modris Eksteins, who also saw in Nietzsche's influence in Germany deep roots of the Great War. Nietzsche helped inspire the desire to revolt against the norms of Western civilization and a fascination with power and rebellion among German cultural elites.¹

This historiographical perspective on the deep cultural roots of the Great War exemplifies the practice of "cultural history." Cultural history attempts to understand the meaning of the war as a whole—for those at the time as well as for us today. While mid-twentieth-century German historians spread the idea that all major belligerents held about equal blame for the Great War, historians today have moved closer to the view of Libby and Eksteins. Leaders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and especially of Germany possessed a particularly strong war spirit, as cultural historian Alan Kramer of Trinity College Dublin shows in his *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*. The leaders of those powers held special responsibility for escalating the July 1914 crisis, partly due to the dangerous mentalities prevalent in their cultures. Ultimately ideas have consequences through the people who act on them. Kramer argues that the Great War mobilized cultures, targeted cultures (e.g., the destruction of the medieval University Library at Louvain in 1914), and changed cultures significantly during and since the end of the conflict a century ago. Thus, the concept of "culture" as the common way of life of a people—their values and customs and acts, not just their artifacts—must play an important role in interpreting the significance of the Great War.²

Cultural historians since the 1990s have attempted to do just that: interpret the cultural significance of the Great War. Characteristics of their work include eschewing national perspectives in order to gain a more comparative and international understanding of the deep cultural roots and consequences of the war as a whole. By examining the meaning that participants and survivors saw in the war, these historians attempt to grasp something of the "spirit of the age" behind it. That spirit is located in a "society's sense of priorities," as Eksteins put it. In his provocative 1989 book *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, Eksteins notes how the cultural history of the war is interested in weapons, generals, and politicians only to the extent that they illuminate the manners and morals,

customs, and values of the time, as well as the motivation of the common soldier or nurse, in an attempt to understand in broad terms the relationship between war and culture. Its method is to examine the records of ordinary people from the time with the hope of understanding more fully how the Great War functioned as the "original sin" of the twentieth century, as cultural historian Simon Schama once called it.³

How does evidence from North Dakota illuminate the cultural history of the Great War? At first this may seem an unlikely question, because much of the cultural history of the war written by Eksteins, Kramer, and others does not focus on American experience or even mention North Dakota at all. They examine mostly European sources. After all, the United States played no role in causing the war and stayed out of it until 1917. Even then, US troops did not actually engage in a major battle until Cantigny (in France) on May 28, 1918. The Americans did not participate in much of the war, and due to this, many of them manifested unbound and naive enthusiasm at a time when Europeans no longer thought of glory but only of resolve. The farmer Clarence O. Kittleson from Sheridan County, North Dakota, wrote to a friend in June 1918: "War still holds some of its old-time romance for us—but there is nothing romantic



Orin G. Libby, PhD, (1864–1952) worked as a professor of history at the University of North Dakota from 1902 until 1945. SHSND SA B0839-00001

The University of North Dakota (UND) Army ROTC Fighting Sioux Battalion cadets marching with rifles at UND, 1918. SHSND SA 00113-Bk 5-00137



Twenty percent of all North Dakota registered nurses served—a higher percentage than from any other state.

about it now for the French people. When our comrades left for the battle front, we sent them away with laughter and cheers—but there were no smiles on the faces of the dark-clad mothers and daughters of France. There were tears in the eyes of many of them as they waved our boys good bye.” This divergence of short US and long European experience of the war suggests that evidence from North Dakota—and the United States in general—may not illuminate much about the cultural history of the conflict.⁴

However, the question about the cultural history of the Great War as viewed from North Dakota is sound, I would argue, because North Dakotans witnessed and participated in the war from the beginning by travelling, studying abroad, crossing the border early on to join with the Canadians, receiving letters from friends and family in Europe, or—as in the case of Alexander Papelpu of Stark County—fighting unwillingly for their country of origin (in Papelpu’s case, Russia), all well before official US involvement in 1917.⁵ The emerging global trade system made it difficult to ignore the conflict, because it connected the United States to Europe in previously unnoticed ways. Through the press, North Dakotans could not help but absorb many of the ideas, values, and propaganda associated with the war as early as its outbreak in 1914. Their membership in a wider Western civilization, made up of mutually influencing regional cultures, meant that even farm boys and small-town nurses, far from the scene of action, became emotionally embroiled in the conflict long before they stepped into a trench or a field hospital.

Furthermore, North Dakotans left behind hundreds of letters from every county in the state. Recording the authors’ experiences, with some published in local newspapers, these letters found their way into the World War I Scrapbooks Collection held by the North Dakota State Archives, assembled (probably) by archives staff.⁶ Relying on these sources and others, this article argues that it is possible to view North Dakota’s experience of the Great War from the vantage point of cultural history in at least three ways: North Dakotans interpreted the Great War as full of meaning, as a decisive moment in history; they fought in it for national security, to serve others, and to defend the innocent against “Prussianism” and its perceived violation of civilized norms; and they lost their idealized view of Europe or Russia as the motherland, leaving a heightened sense of American identity and a reaffirmed narrative of the material and democratic progress of the New World. One could choose other themes or examine each of these particular themes in much greater depth than is possible here. However, the broad outlines of this article will suggest that these three

themes of meaning, motivation, and identity—central concerns of cultural history—link the state story to a much larger one of civilizational conflict in which North Dakotans fully engaged.

The Meaning of the War

“When a battle stretches away along a front of more than sixty miles; when a battle which marks a turning point in the history of the world is being fought, no living man can tell its tale. But one who has been in the thick of it can tell at least what he has seen and heard.”⁷ Thus wrote UND graduate Howard Huston to his folks back home, signaling one of the themes of the cultural history of the Great War as a “turning point” in modern history. People at the time remembered the prewar years as a lost age of peace and innocence. “Whatever comes,” the German-language poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote in 1915, “the worst of it is that a certain innocence of life in which after all we grew up, will never exist for any of us again.” In Britain, most agreed that the prewar summer “was the most idyllic for many years.” Many remembered the prewar world as a “perfect summer,” which became the symbol of “anything innocently but irrecoverably lost.” Out of that perfect summer “marched a unique generation,” American cultural historian Paul Fussell writes. “It believed in Progress and Art and in no way doubted the benignity even of technology. The word *machine* was not yet invariably coupled with the word *gun*.”⁸ The machine gun ended the “age of innocence,” because it revealed the truth that science and technology can threaten—not just benefit—the human future. It revealed the dark side of modern life.

One gains a poignant sense of “before and after,” of the loss of civilization, peace, and a generation of young men, in the testimony of three North Dakotans travelling or living in Europe during the summer of 1914. While touring European medical clinics, the cultured and respected Dr. E. P. Quain of Bismarck found himself caught up in the conflict. In London, he witnessed the crowds of thousands cheering British General Herbert Kitchener during the initial review of troops; for days the city of London scarcely slept. Quain said that during his medical tours on the Continent he could



Eric P. Quain, MD (1870–1962), went to Europe and organized a Red Cross hospital unit in France and staffed the hospital with volunteer doctors and nurses from Bismarck. He was made chief of surgical services in military hospitals of the US Army in France. SHSND SA 00029-00145



Nurses of Camp Hospital No. 6, Camp Barisey la Cote, France. SHSND SA 11086-05-00001

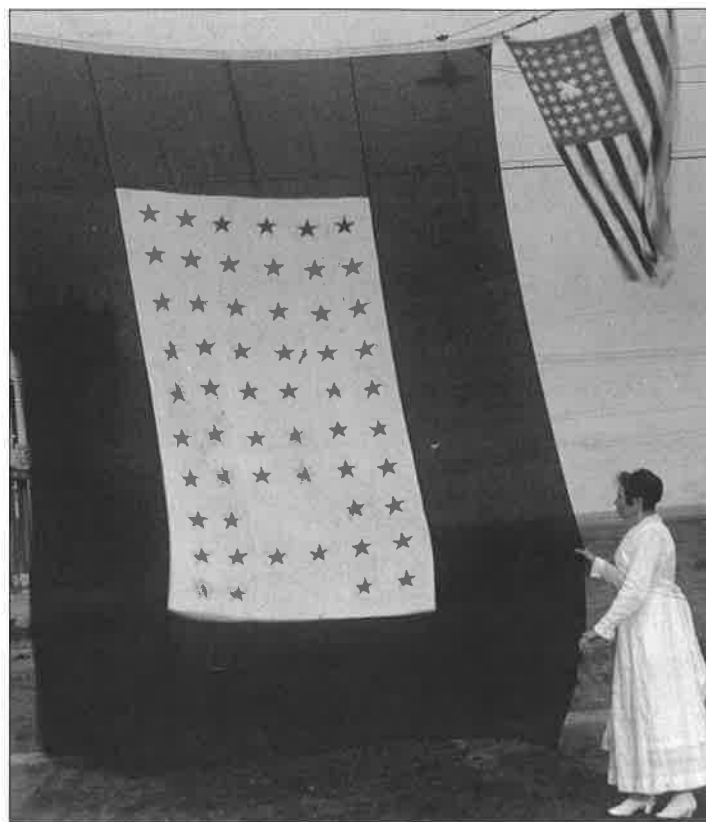


US Army Nurses before leaving for Base Hospital No. 60 in France, in front of Judson Church, New York City, New York, September 29, 1918. Sarah Sand (1885–1950) of Bismarck is fourth from right in second row of those standing. She was director of nurses at Bismarck Hospital before enlisting to serve with an overseas surgical unit organized by Dr. Eric P. Quain. Her nursing uniform is on exhibit at the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck. SHSND SA 10205-00008

see that people in Germany, Austria, and Belgium had achieved a “very high type of civilization. Their cities are beautiful, with clean streets, fine buildings, great, airy parks, and their hospital buildings are models. Germany was making wonderful progress industrially, everybody was happy, busy, prosperous.” By late August, that “high type of civilization” had created thousands of widows and orphans. “The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our life-time,” British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey remarked to a friend on the eve of the conflict. Nevertheless, shortly after the US declaration of war, Quain moved to organize a Red Cross hospital unit (Base Hospital No. 60) in France staffed by doctors and nurses from Bismarck and equipped by Bismarck organizations. Quain’s surgical section followed the line of battle and witnessed directly the horrors of the war. The seemingly endless slaughter would—over time—destroy the faith of Europeans in their own values. It ended an age, and Quain saw it happen—both at the outbreak, and at the exhausted end in 1918, as his surgical section worked to clean up the mess.⁹

Gertrude Forester, who later enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps in Minot, was also travelling in Europe in the summer of 1914—to Norway, visiting family. “I had a delightful trip,” she recalled years later, signaling the “perfect summer” theme of cultural history, “as it was then at the peak of peace and contentment throughout the world.” She attended the great Centennial Exposition in Oslo along with many other Americans, which displayed, among other exhibits, developments in science and industry. While touring one of Norway’s great fjords she learned of the nearby presence of the German kaiser’s yacht on holiday. “Only a few days later war was declared,” she remembered. Such excitement prevailed, commerce of all kinds was paralyzed, “and so rapidly was the North Sea mined and made unsafe for sailing, that the big steamers had to take a northern course that same month.” The perfect summer had ended.¹⁰

Hubert Beard of Fargo, son of Rev. R. A. Beard, pastor of First Congregational Church, was studying in Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar when war broke out. He returned to North Dakota in September 1915. His comments about the departure of many of his English classmates for the front anticipated the idea of the “lost generation” popularized by Ernest Hemingway in the mid-1920s. Hubert predicted a long war, since “England cannot stop until Germany is whipped as it would only mean another war later on and I believe that the British government fully realizes this.” He reported that the university had furnished many volunteers—those who, in the history of war, stood for “commitment to a cause.”¹¹ Though the laboring classes of England paid little attention to the war, about one-third of his Oxford class had joined. There is “hardly a family of the upper class that has not someone in the war,” he noted.



Anna Charlotte Splitgerber Thompson (1891–1987) with gold star flag on Main Street, Fairmount, North Dakota, 1917. SHSND SA 2013-P-052-00012

The young men of the English elite enthusiastically rushed off to war out of a sense of duty and idealism. Subsequent research has shown that while initially the working classes paid less attention to the start of the war than the middle and upper classes, war propaganda eventually won them over to nearly universal support. Nevertheless, no social group welcomed the war as enthusiastically as did the British elites, and research has confirmed that 29.3 percent of those who entered Oxford between 1905 and 1914, and who served in the military, died, compared with 12 percent of all men mobilized. This “lost generation” would have played important roles in England as well-educated political and economic elites. Instead, they went to the front and perished. Hubert Beard of Fargo, North Dakota, saw them off.¹²

The Motivation for War

Cultural history often examines the values of a people that motivated them to act in certain ways. Along with their strong patriotism, many North Dakotans (about one-fifth of German stock) opposed the war from its outset in 1914 as pointless and unjust. Skeptical of accounts of German atrocities, they strongly desired peace, believing Eastern US financiers and industrialists talked up war for their own selfish advantage.¹³ As soon as the government declared war, however, enthusiasm spread through the state. More than thirty thousand officers and men from North Dakota (including more than two hundred Native Americans, most of whom were not yet US citizens) served



Carl J. Tulberg (1891–1985) of Mott, North Dakota (kneeling, far right), with the US Army in France, 1917. The sign reads, “American bridgehead boundary. Passage beyond this point forbidden except by proper authority.” The sign is also printed in German. SHSND SA 2013-P-042-00006



Concrete dugout, France, 1917–19. SHSND SA 00171-00009



Bismarck Tribune, September 3, 1918, p. 4.

in the armed forces, with more than nineteen thousand of those volunteering.¹⁴ Twenty percent of all North Dakota registered nurses served—a higher percentage than from any other state.

Why? For some, the sense of adventure seemed to satisfy. The cigar-smoking salesman Harry E. Cosgriff from rural McHenry County, North Dakota, wrote to his mother, Mrs. P. Tiegen, and declared—despite a wound—“it sure is great sport up there in the trenches.”¹⁵ For others, though, struggle for values defined the Great War, and North Dakotans felt that in their souls. “Can you imagine a young soldier writing a letter in a hole in the ground about six feet long, two feet wide, three feet deep, with a shelter tent over it, rain pouring down and so dark that one must have a candle to see by? If you can imagine this then you can see me,” John (last name unknown) wrote to his cousin Esther in Golden Valley County. Reflecting in his letter on the possibility of his own death, he notes, “This war has completely upset my former ideas of things. The order of things seems to be reversed. . . . The world is uncivilized as never before. Never in previous years has such crimes been committed as are being committed now.” John saw the war not only as a decisive moment in history, but as a threat to civilized values.¹⁶

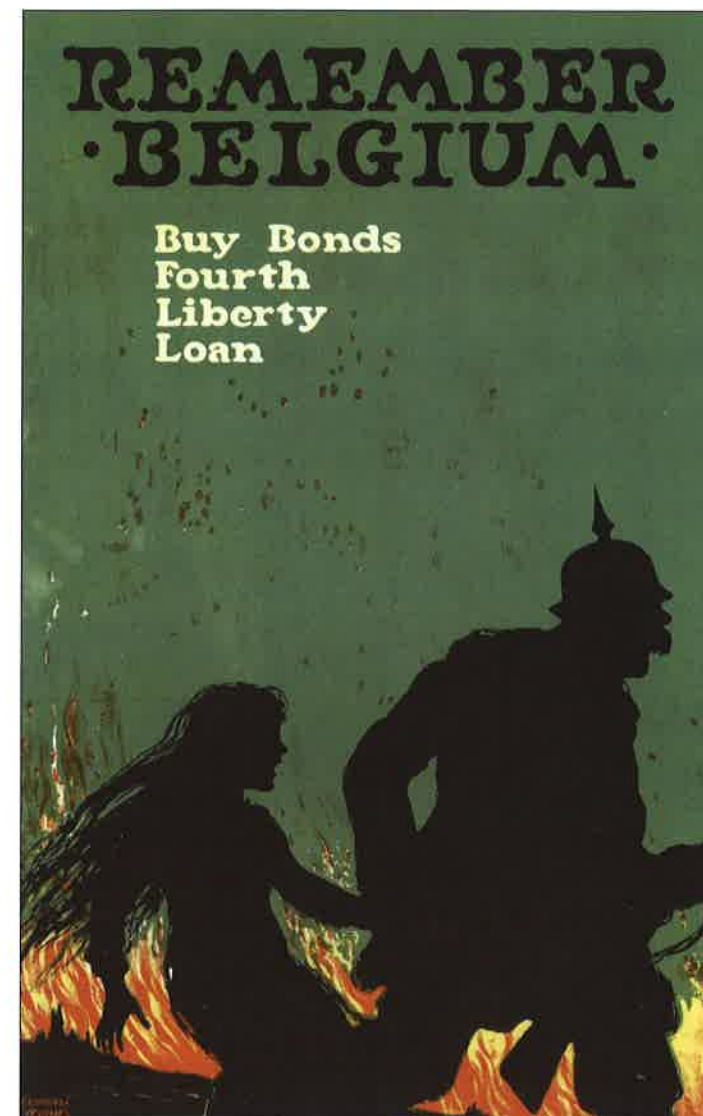
What values? Historian Michael Neiberg notes that Americans often remember the Great War as a mistake, foisted on them by propaganda and financial interests.

However, he suggests, this is to remember wrongly. Many Americans of the time gave their moral consent to the war. They chose to fight it because, Neiberg argues, they came to believe by 1917 that the Atlantic Ocean no longer protected them sufficiently from Europe’s wars, and that their leaders had tried every other option. In addition to defending national security, many Americans felt they needed to do their part to defend civilized values. In their thoughtful moments, North Dakotans expressed those values as democracy, freedom, serving others, and defense of the innocent. Fighting for these ideals would lead to a happier world: “We are fighting this war so that we may never have to fight another,” said UND professor of law Hugh Willis.¹⁷ The cook Clyde Earl Bunnell from Bismarck enlisted in the National Guard and then wrote to the editor of the *Bismarck Tribune* from France expressing gratitude to the people of his home city for their kindness in sending him care packages. His time in the army, he noted, had “made a man of me, and I love it; love everything and most of all love that which we are fighting for, to make this beautiful world safe and free for civilized persons to live in.”¹⁸

Many Americans characterized the system of values they fought *against* as “Prussianism.” This concept referred to the evil of German authoritarian government and ant-like society in which the individual counted for little. Many Americans at the start of the war believed in the “two Germanys”—the militarist Prussian elite on the one hand, who held captive the generally decent, and good German people on the other.¹⁹

Yet the invasion of Belgium in the first month of the war not only reinforced the narrative about evil Prussianism but also cast doubt on German *kultur* as a whole. Stories of cruelty toward the Belgian civilian population and cultural destruction circulated through the English-language press—stories that, Kramer shows, have proved largely true through subsequent historical research. We now know that, acting on orders from above, German soldiers destroyed towns in Belgium and killed their civilians in mass executions, including women and children, such as at Dinant, Les Rivages, and Ardenne. In 1916, they deported twenty thousand women and girls from the French city of Lille into forced labor. Propagandists used atrocities such as these to great effect among the Allies, but one cannot simply reduce them to propaganda.²⁰

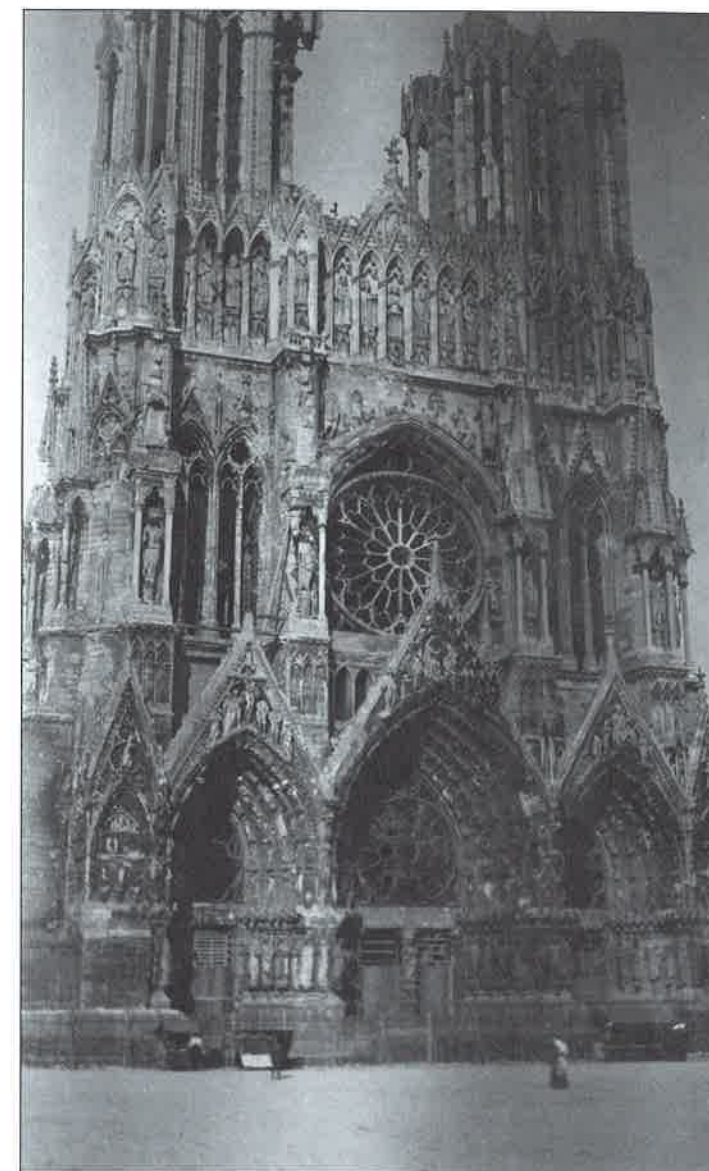
In response to militaristic and barbaric “Prussianism,” Ed Cleveland, likely a drug clerk from Wilton, described in a letter to his uncle Chris going “over the top” across no man’s land (the unoccupied area between two opposing trench systems), the barrage of machine guns and heavy artillery, long lines of Yankees, and the Germans throwing down their guns begging for mercy. “They were Prussians, the same men that ruined Belgium and murdered little



“Remember Belgium—Buy bonds—Fourth Liberty Loan,” 1918. During World War I, Allied nations relied on propaganda images and accounts of German atrocities to motivate their citizens to participate in the war effort. Subsequent historical research has shown that this propaganda had a firm basis in the reality of German military behavior in Belgium. SHSND SA 10935-P65

babies, women, and helpless old men, and burned their prisoners at stake. And believe me, we had that all in our memories when we clashed with them, too. More than one woman and child avenged that day.”²¹ Whether motive or later justification for machine-gunning enemy soldiers, many North Dakotans understood their use of deadly violence in the Great War as a defense of civilization and of innocent civilians.

Prussianism came to symbolize attacks on the innocent and on the very memory and monuments of Western civilization—as in the destruction of Rheims Cathedral by the Germans in September 1914. This shocking event motivated antipathy toward Germany as far away as Italy, Russia, and North Dakota. Howard R. Huston, the UND student already introduced, snapped a picture of Rheims Cathedral in ruins. He typed these words on the back of



Rheims Cathedral, France, 1916–17. On back of the photo, presumably written by Howard Huston, McHenry County, are these words: “The picture does not show half the damage done to it.” SHSND SA 10895 Box 1- File 5-00019

the photo: “Here is the much famed Rheims cathedral. It was one of the finest bits of architecture in the world. The picture does not show half the damage done to it. The stained glass is all broken and this it is impossible to replace for the glass cannot be duplicated. The back is all broken down and the statuary ruined.”²² The implication of these words by a North Dakotan is that German cultural destruction posed a threat to civilizational identity. German soldiers attacked the very memory of the West as they sought to remake it in their own image. Kramer notes that architects, artists, and other intellectuals from the United States and around the world loudly protested against German cultural atrocities such as the destruction of Rheims and of the medieval library at Louvain—symbols of French national culture and of Belgian Catholicism, respectively. That is also why Ernest Orchard, writing to his father in Dickinson, said, “I hope America has learned



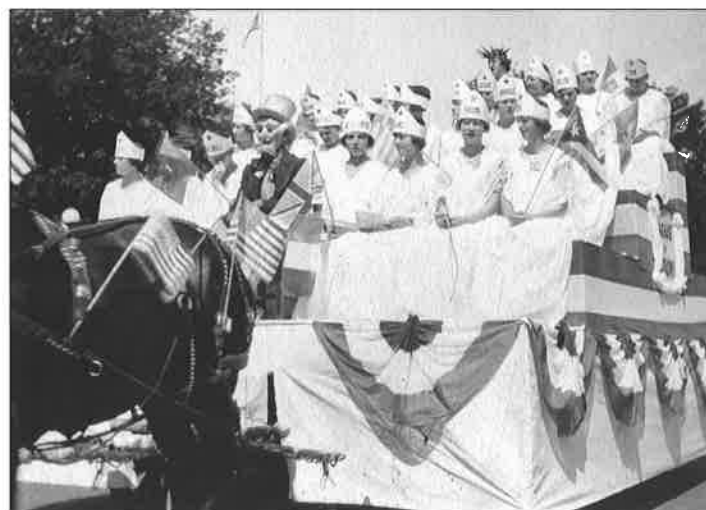
American and Canadian soldiers disembark and head to the American Red Cross canteen in England, October 28, 1918. SHSND SAA4624-00001



to hate, and will continue to hate everything German for years to come, until the arrogant pups find out what they have developed with their kultur and ego, and are willing to see the necessity for kindness to their fellow men, and the frowning of the world on brute force.”²³

Americans learned to hate too well, however. They participated in a mild form of cultural destruction themselves against Germans in the United States as super-patriots pushed to end the teaching of the German language, ban the speaking of German in public, monitor German-language newspapers, withdraw or even burn German-language books, and avoid German composers or performers on stage. This hit North Dakota’s large German-Russian community particularly hard, since the German language had helped maintain their cultural identity over generations as they migrated from Germany to Russia to the American plains.²⁴

Besides the defense of civilized values, a sense of service also motivated soldiers. A merchant from Divide County, Harry Malcolm Pippin, wrote nobly to a friend, “It’s the chance of a lifetime to render some service to those sorely in need of it in a critical and serious time. Individually, ours is a simple service, simply given, but the sum total of all our services means such a difference to these people here [France]. The difference between freedom and slavery, democracy and autocracy, the right to live and have their being as they desire, and not as dictated to by military authority.” While ironically the outcome of the Great War would not make the world safe and free for civilized people to live in, these simple motives nevertheless offered compelling reasons to fight.²⁵



View of Grandpré showing the destruction wrought by German shellfire, Ardennes, France, October 19, 1918. SHSND SA 00171-00010

Corner of one of nine encampment wards, American Red Cross Hospital, Mossley Hill, Liverpool, England. SHSND SAA4631-00001

US Army nurses in a Bismarck parade on April 19, 1917. SHSND SA 10205-00002

Right: American Red Cross general headquarters staff at foot of statue of Léon Gambetta, Paris, France, November 18, 1918, seven days after Armistice Day. SHSND SAA4627-00001



The sense of service toward their own people often propelled North Dakota nurses to join. “Each time I saw a bunch of boys go [off to war], I cried because I wondered who would take care of them when ill,” Diomah Cecilia Yunker of Cass County remembered. The public health nurse “called me by telephone,” Mathilda Hoff of Grand Forks County recalled later. “She asked me if I would be willing to do war service. . . . My reply was somewhat to the effect that I did not know the first thing about war service, but was willing to do anything I could for my God, country and fellow men in time of need.”²⁶

National Identity and the War

While immigrants in America disagreed on the right course for America to take in 1914, Michael Neiberg argues that by 1917 global and domestic changes created a remarkable amount of pro-intervention consensus in favor of the Allies. Even German, Irish, and Jewish Americans, who might have had reason to support neutrality or the Central powers, adopted the pro-Allied and “American” position. In North Dakota, one sees this process of American identification even among the Native American population. When Captain Alfred B. Welch, the adopted son of Chief John Grass, sought to raise a company on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation for service in France, he met with the aged chief to receive his support in mid-July 1917. “I never counseled war unless my people were struck first,” Grass told Welch, who was surprised at the chief’s grasp of events. “We have been struck now,” the chief said, possibly referring to the attack on the *Lusitania*, “and a man should fight.” Speaking to Welch, he added, “You tell the people

that they must fight with happy hearts and that John Grass, the Sioux, believes our country will win with honor, because we are in the right.” The chief’s reference to “our country” is striking. The rest of the people received this news of Grass’s support with great enthusiasm. In council, Native American elders at Fort Yates accepted Welch as the commander of their young men, thereby incorporating American foreign policy concerns into their traditional ceremonies for the raising of a war party. In ways such as these, the years 1914 to 1917 played an important role in assimilation of immigrants and at least some American Indians into the United States—due not only to government efforts or to propaganda and persecution but also to the willing identification of immigrants and Native populations themselves with an American identity.²⁷

In addition, the war dimmed an idealized view of Europe and Russia as civilized places and, through contrasting cultural experience, heightened a sense of the uniqueness of America. A more negative perception of the “old country” emerged as a place immigrants did not want to live in any longer, despite their roots there. Many German-Russian North Dakotans, for example, longed to return to Russia before the Great War, but during and afterward, as they learned of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent widespread famine, they gradually appreciated their lives on the North Dakota prairies more. Furthermore, North Dakota soldiers and nurses realized more deeply, through their experiences abroad, the uniqueness of their own land. They often commented, for example, on the old-fashioned agricultural practices of the French and on how far the French trailed in technological development. They were one hundred years behind the United States, a shocked John (last name unknown) wrote to his cousin in Golden Valley County. Otho Harding from Slope County noted to his brother, “Harvest is on here in full swing and the wheat crop is great. It sure looks funny to see the French cutting grain with a cradle and binding by hand as granddad used to tell us about.” Little observations such as these accumulated and confirmed a new sense of American progress and global leadership.²⁸

Some North Dakotans projected their heightened sense of American identity onto a global stage. Due to his transformative experience in training camps, UND student William H. Greenleaf came to view America as “the composite of the world’s best ideals, the promise of the world’s future.” It is an ideal that “forces itself into the consciousness of the soldier.” This soldier, for one, “finds himself more positively American than ever before.”²⁹ In addition, some clergy went beyond this to give a transcendent meaning to the Great War. Herbert J. Markley, minister and chaplain who registered with the military in Pembina County, wrote to the parents of Ernest Mathiesen from Richland County with good news. “At a recent meeting held at the Y.M.C.A. hut in one of the great American

training camps here in France, your son came forward with a stern resolution to stand firm for God and to keep his life free from the unclean things.” The chaplain put Mathiesen’s act in the context of a larger mission:

Over here in the land of France, America has sent her troops by the thousands in order to uphold the great cause of humanity. The best young men of our country have entered into the great fight for the establishment of world democracy and these same young men are willing to sacrifice to the utmost. . . . You have sent one of your loved ones over to do his share in this great task.

Hosts of progressive Protestant clergy interpreted the Great War in this way—as a kind of “holy war,” Richard Gamble argues. They came to view America as the world’s political messiah. This exaggerated sense of American identity would often influence American foreign policy over the following century.³⁰

The cultural history of the Great War opens up fascinating ways to approach North Dakota history. It links experience of meaning, motivation, and identity to a wider context. Ordinary North Dakotans saw the war as highly meaningful, as a major break in time, a watershed kind of event. Many consented to it, *willed* it, in fact, for the sake of important values they sought to defend. Many embraced not only the sacrifice that war-making demanded, at home and on the front, but also an American identity in ways that both inspire us and trouble us today—such as in the loss of cultural diversity for German-Americans or later interventionist foreign policy. The cultural history of the war joins knowledge of exterior events to the inner lives of ordinary protagonists, yielding insight into the intimate connection of war and culture, even on the distant plains of North Dakota.



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He co-produced the play *North Dakota Voices from the Great War* that premiered in Bismarck, North Dakota, the weekend of November 11, 2018, to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the armistice.

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ENDNOTES

1. O. G. Libby, “The Background of the Great War,” in *The University of North Dakota and the Great War*, North Dakota Quarterly Reprint Series (Grand Forks: The Digital Press at the University of North Dakota, 2015), 16, 25–26, http://thedigitalpressbooks.com/NDQ_The_Great_War_Reprint.pdf, originally published in *North Dakota Quarterly* 8, vol. 1 (October 1917): 24–35; Modris Eksteins, “Paris,” chap. 1 in *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989). Orin Grant Libby served as professor and chair of history at the University of North Dakota from 1902 to 1945; he also served as secretary of the State Historical Society of North Dakota for more than forty years, during which time he organized the State Museum and edited the Society’s journals—the predecessors to *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains*. Gordon L. Iseminger, “Libby, Orin (1864–1952),” in *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed. David J. Wishart (Lincoln: University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 2011), <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.edu.022>.

2. Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–5, 83, 88–91.

3. John Horne, “Introduction,” in *A Companion to World War I*, ed. John Horne (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012): xxiv–xxv; Simon Schama, “Flaubert in the Trenches,” *New Yorker* 72, no. 6 (April 1, 1996): 97; Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, xiv. The cultural histories I have in mind here include Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), Eksteins’s *Rites of Spring*, George L. Mosse’s *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), Jay Winter’s *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Kramer’s *Dynamic of Destruction*. The cultural historian Peter Burke shows that cultural history excels in the symbolic interpretation of texts and artifacts and in bringing together disparate evidence and disciplines in an attempt to understand cultural “wholes.” Weaknesses of cultural history, which could apply to the present essay, include treating evidence as an unproblematic reflection of its time, and impressionistic or anecdotal writing that tends to overestimate cultural homogeneity. “Is it possible to study cultures as wholes without making false assumptions about cultural homogeneity?” Burke asks. That is a challenge. Cultural historians

have attempted two kinds of solutions, he notes: to approach culture as (1) constituted by multiple traditions handed down over time and as (2) comprised of different “sub-cultures,” partially but not wholly separate from each other. Peter Burke, *What Is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 20–25.

4. Clarence O. Kittleson to Mac, 25 June 1918, in *Goodrich (ND) Citizen*, September 12, 1918, in World War I Scrapbooks Collection 10327 (hereafter cited as WWI Scrapbooks), box 1, vol. 1, p. 19, North Dakota State Archives, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck; Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 184.

5. The story of Alexander Papelpu: “Dickinson Man Three Years Prisoner of War Finally Home Again,” *Bismarck Tribune*, August 6, 1917, 8. I am grateful to Jim Davis at the North Dakota State Archives, State Historical Society of North Dakota, for alerting me to this story.

6. The World War I Scrapbooks Collection (SHSND 10327) at the North Dakota State Archives consists of four volumes and around 1,400 letters. These letters appeared in newspapers around the state and dated from August 1918 through February 1919, with a few scattered letters from 1914 through the first half of 1918. Because this collection has no accession file attached to it, the head of reference services, Jim Davis, believes that State Historical Society staff likely put it together from archived newspaper copies.

7. Howard R. Huston to parents [no date], in *Courtenay (ND) Gazette*, September 19, 1918, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 28.

8. Rainer Maria Rilke to Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe, 2 August 1915, in *War-time Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke 1914–1921*, trans. M. D. Herter Norton (New York: W. W. Norton, 1940), 39; Fussell, *The Great War*, 24; Juliet Nicolson, *The Perfect Summer: England 1911, Just before the Storm* (New York: Grove, 2006); Juliet Nicolson, *The Great Silence: Britain from the Shadow of the First World War to the Dawn of the Jazz Age* (New York: Grove, 2009).

9. Edward Grey, *Twenty-Five Years, 1892–1916*, vol. 1 (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1925), 20; “In London When War Broke Out; Dr. Quain, Who Returned Yesterday, Describes Experiences,” *Bismarck Tribune*, September 4, 1914, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, pp. 1–2; Grace E. F. Holmes, *North Dakota Nurses over There, 1917–1919* (Fargo: American Legion Auxiliary Department of North Dakota, 2017), 191, 201.

10. Gertrude Forester, quoted in Holmes, *North Dakota Nurses*, 22–23.

11. Ernest Hemingway popularized the phrase “lost generation” as an epigraph in his 1926 novel *The Sun Also Rises*; Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 16.

12. “Fargo Student Tells of War,” *Jamestown*

Alert, September 25, 1915, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 9; Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*, 41; George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 69–71.

13. Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 354–57.

14. While some American Indians were granted a path to citizenship through land allotment from the 1887 Dawes Act, most Native Americans did not receive US citizenship until 1924. A 1919 federal law provided citizenship for American Indian soldiers and sailors who had served in World War I. “Indian Citizenship and the Indian Reorganization Act,” North Dakota Studies, 2018, State Historical Society of North Dakota, <https://www.ndstudies.gov/gr8/content/unit-iv-modern-north-dakota-1921-present/lesson-4-alliances-and-conflicts/topic-1-indian-citizenship-and-indian-reorganization-act/section-1-introduction>.

15. Harry Cosgriff to Mrs. P. Tiegen, 19 August 1918, in *Rugby News*, September 26, 1918, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 42.

16. John [last name unknown] to his cousin Esther, 2 August 1918, in *Golden Valley Progress* (Beach, ND), September 20, 1918, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 38.

17. Michael S. Neiberg, *The Path to War: How the First World War Created Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 8, 235–37; Hugh E. Willis, “After the War—What?” in *The University of North Dakota and the Great War*, 127, originally published in *North Dakota Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (October 1917). Willis describes the “permanent objects” of the war as permanent peace, disarmament, prevention of the rebarbarization of the world, and establishment of the oceans as a great international domain. I have so far only found evidence in the records of North Dakota soldiers and nurses of the third object (prevention) acting as an actual motivation to fight.

18. Clyde Earl Bunnell, letter to the editor, 23 August 1918, in *Bismarck Tribune*, October 5, 1918, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 55.

19. Neiberg, *The Path to War*, chap. 1.

20. Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*, 15–17, 222.

21. Edward C. Cleveland to Chris Cleveland, 22 August 1918, in *Wilton (ND) News*, October 4, 1918, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 48.

22. Howard R. Huston, photograph of Rheims Cathedral ruins, Howard R. Huston Papers 1917–1955, SHSND SA MSS 10895, box 1, file 3, no. 00019, North Dakota State Archives, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck. In addition, Jennie Mahoney, a nurse from Grand Forks County, recalled passing by Rheims Cathedral in 1918: “The beautiful

Cathedral was a pathetic sight from enemy guns” (quoted in Holmes, *North Dakota Nurses*, 156).

23. Ernest Orchard to John Orchard [no date], in *Dickinson (ND) Press*, October 10, 1918, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 58; Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*, 18–20.

24. Gordon L. Iseminger, “Are We Germans, or Russians, or Americans?” *North Dakota History* 59, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 2, 4.

25. Harry Malcolm Pippin to T. L., September 3, 1918, in *Halliday (ND) Promoter*, October 4, 1918, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 55.

26. Diomah Cecilia Yunker and Mathilda Hoff, quoted in Holmes, *North Dakota Nurses*, 122, 167.

27. Michael K. Knudson and Ann G. Knudson, *Warriors in Khaki: Native American Doughboys from North Dakota*, 2nd ed. (Fremont, CA: Robertson Publishing, 2012), 3–4 (the authors cite unpublished notes of Welch); Neiberg, *The Path to War*, 179–80.

28. Iseminger, “Are We Germans,” 12; John [last name unknown] to his cousin Esther, 2 August 1918, in *Beach (ND) Progress*, September ?, 1918, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 38; Otho Harding to Roland Harding, 30 July 1918, in *Slope County (ND) News*, September 20, 1918, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 37.

29. William H. Greenleaf, “An Alumnus of the University Who Did Not Get Across,” in *The University of North Dakota and the Great War*, 86, originally published in *North Dakota Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (January 1919).

30. Herbert G. Markley to the parents of Ernest Mathiesen, n.d., in *Wyndmere (ND) Pioneer*, October 4, 1918, in WWI Scrapbooks, box 1, vol. 1, p. 49; Richard M. Gamble, *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2003), 15, 137.

31. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this article do not necessarily represent those of Humanities North Dakota or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Work-Study-Play Concept Changes Fargo Schools

BY STEVE GRINESKI



In a book titled *Jefferson School: A History of Growth*, Bill Snyder reminisces about his early schooling experiences in Fargo, North Dakota:

I, Billy Deane Snyder, at age six, entered the first grade of my formal educational years at the Central School in Fargo, North Dakota. The year was 1922 . . . I do remember my mother and father talking about the new Jefferson School building that was then under construction. My mother said that I would be going there when construction was completed. . . . The Jefferson was to be something brand new in school operating systems. The “Jeff” as Fargo kids called it, would be the first school in North Dakota to be operated under the newly developed “Platoon” system. Ma remarked more than once that I would be going to a “test case” school. My mother was quite excited about the platoon system, because she had been a teacher in a one-room country school. . . . You are so lucky Billy, my mother used to say, “You are going to go to the latest kind of school, the platoon program.”¹

Snyder’s mom was right to be excited about this new, class-rotating, elementary school organizational plan. The Fargo School District’s Jefferson School, where first-grader Billy Snyder and about three hundred elementary-age students enrolled in 1923, became North Dakota’s first school to use the platoon system, or Gary Plan. In platoon schools, groups (or platoons) of students rotated between classrooms, where general homeroom and specialist teachers worked cooperatively to link learning across multiple subject areas. Incorporating the auditorium, library, and gymnasium into daily routines, which included many opportunities for hands-on learning, defined the platoon concept of work-study-play.

The National Auditorium Committee of the National Platoon Association identified several important goals for platoon schools. Providing breadth and depth of cultural studies, offering opportunities for emotional learning thought storytelling, and creating common experiences to develop positive social interaction skills were three essential aims. Also included were using auditorium activities to develop student leadership and celebrate special days that emphasized history, for example a musical about the country’s Founding Fathers. Platooning districts continually wrestled with how best to use this innovation.²

Child-centered education framed platoon school teachers’ decision-making. Often classrooms were transformed to support student learning, such as this second grade model cafeteria at Woodrow Wilson School, 1927. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

Platoon schools were the nation's longest running urban progressive education experiment, created by Gary, Indiana, School Superintendent William Wirt in 1906. Wirt's progressive (child-centered) reform model was known by four designations: platoon system, Gary Plan, continuous use, or work-study-play. Overcrowding, due to sizeable numbers of immigrants traveling to urban areas for industrial work, produced hardships for urban schools during the close of the nineteenth and opening of the twentieth centuries. Wirt's experiment responded to the traditional urban schooling plan of the day.

Many traditional public schools provided teacher-directed instruction in large group settings and strict disciplinary measures, while emphasizing rote memorization and textbook-guided curricula. The self-contained, or traditional, model for elementary-school instruction has a long history, beginning in nineteenth-century one-room, rural schools and moving into larger, multi-grade schools located in various settings. In the self-contained model, a single teacher is responsible for all instruction. Typically she (or he) uses teacher-directed instruction for the large group of students, with a textbook guiding many instructional decisions.

The Gary schools applied philosopher and educator John Dewey's progressive ideas with great depth and breadth during the first half of the twentieth century. Progressive education essentially emphasizes learning by doing. Dewey believed students learn best through a hands-on approach.³

This essay examines origins of the Gary Plan and its development as it rapidly spread to the northern plains. The Gary Plan represented a radical departure from traditional schooling and is remembered as one of the most innovative schooling experiments



William Wirt, known as the father of platoon schools, studied with progressive educator John Dewey. Wirt's radical ideas about social efficiency and progressive education reformed schooling in America for decades. He developed the platoon school organization system in 1906. LOC 25341u

during the first half of the twentieth century. A case study of platoon schools as operated in Fargo, North Dakota, describes how the district adapted this system to its existing and traditional curriculum, instruction, and facilities. The Fargo School District continued the platoon experiment begun in 1923 for nearly forty years.

In platoon schools, groups (or platoons) of students rotated between classrooms for the first time.

Available archival records reveal that by 1960, most Fargo elementary schools had resumed a more traditional one-teacher, self-contained plan, while continuing to utilize content-area specialists (e.g., physical education). This experiment ultimately ended due to a lack of local administrative and school board support, paired with teacher activism challenging the platoon plan. School funding disagreements only exacerbated these tensions. Changing national political and social landscapes also added to the plan running its course.⁴

Platoon School Origins

The roots of platoon schools are found in Bluffton, Indiana. William Wirt, appointed superintendent in 1898, realized that the current, traditional organization of curriculum, instruction, and facilities did not follow the progressive traditions (e.g., child-focused learning) of his mentor John Dewey. As a result, Wirt began to tinker with ideas related to "work-study-play," administrative efficiency, and a school organization system he termed *platoon* in order to orchestrate change and create schools more fitting with progressive ideals. Dewey's notion of adapting schooling to the students' experiences steered Wirt's thinking away from teacher-directed and large-group traditional schooling. Wirt became superintendent of schools in Gary, Indiana, in 1906, due to his successful experimenting in Bluffton's schools.⁵

Wirt grew up on a family farm in eastern Indiana. He learned at an early age to value the countryside and love nature. Attending a regimented, teacher-directed high school in Bluffton did nothing to excite young Wirt academically. He entered DePauw University in 1892 and graduated in 1899, serving as teacher and administrator in nearby small towns during this period. It was not until enrollment at the University of Chicago, when Wirt was introduced to social reformers such as John Dewey and Jane Addams, that his questioning of current schooling practices took shape. While serving as superintendent in Bluffton, Indiana (1898–1906), Wirt began to put some of these ideas to practice. Expanding curriculum to include wide-ranging and enriching subjects, interjecting flexibility into school staffing methods, and vastly improving school facilities defined his work. Wirt's idea of linking learning across the curriculum (e.g., reading and art) and how classroom and specialist teachers could work cooperatively to achieve student learning was particularly noteworthy.⁶



In 1923, Fargo's Jefferson School was the first school in the state to use the platoon system, or Gary Plan. Jefferson School, 1928. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

These early twentieth-century curriculum and instruction innovations became accepted practices, beginning in Bluffton and later through platooning in Gary schools, and later in Fargo. Adopted by many urban schools nationwide, these innovations were unrivaled advantages of this system as they would not fit the traditional model of teacher-directed, large-group schooling. Wirt believed that learning is enhanced by linking basic subject learning (e.g., reading, mathematics) with special subject learning (e.g., music, industrial arts), which could then be taught effectively by classroom teachers and specialists in their particular field.⁷

Wirt's thinking about innovative schooling was formed by his own traditional schooling experiences, school experimentation, and writings of progressive educators such as Dewey. And yet it cannot be discounted that his conservative, rural upbringing shaped his belief that properly organized schools could protect students from the potential hazards of growing up in cities influenced by immigration, industrialization, and urbanization.⁸

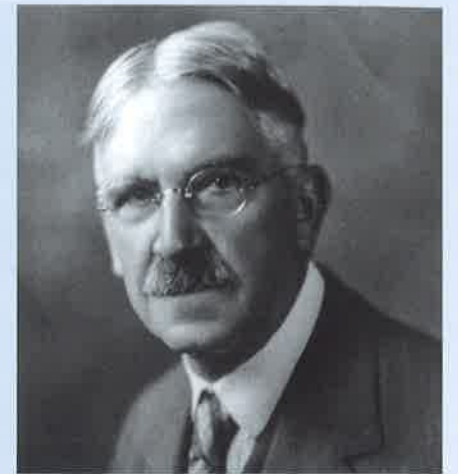
Platoon Schools in Gary, Indiana

Founded in 1906 by the U.S. Steel Corporation, Gary, Indiana, grew from a backwater region of

Lake Michigan to a multi-thousand acre city in a few years' time. U.S. Steel was the largest and most advanced steel plant in the world. Immigrants flocked to Gary for employment, and as a result, the population exploded from a few thousand residents in the early 1900s to about one hundred thousand by 1930.⁹

Wirt moved to Gary at its founding in 1906. Building on his experiments in Bluffton, Superintendent Wirt launched on an ambitious scale innovative and progressive schools that seized the nation's educational attention. The first school to employ the platoon system for Gary students was named after the second president. The Gary Jefferson School found its home in a remodeled conventional building. It opened in 1908 and served about five hundred Steel City pupils in grades one through eight.

Janette Baughman and her six siblings attended this initial entry into Gary's platoon school experiment. Baughman entered Jefferson School in 1925 and went on to graduate from Horace Mann High School in 1937. Baughman, at ninety-nine years old, told me she enjoyed platoon classes with the auditorium period being quite memorable. Jefferson School, joined by



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John Dewey and Progressive Schooling

John Dewey (1859–1952) came to be known as one of the great minds in philosophy and education. He made valuable contributions as a social commentator throughout his career.

At the University of Chicago (1894–1905), Dewey opened the educationally groundbreaking Laboratory School. Here Dewey trialed ideas that would later become known as progressive schooling. These ideas were framed by the belief that when school served social as well as educational functions that related to the day-to-day lives of its students, not only would schools be reformed, but so would the communities in which they resided. The practices Dewey developed included social-skills building cooperative activities, meaningful and relevant curriculum that reinforced and stirred student interests, and learning resulting from personal experiences rather than passively listening to a teacher talk. Dewey was a great believer in fostering positive social interactions among students while they learned in small groups.

Dewey's ideas created controversy as they bumped up against the prevailing thinking of traditional schooling during the early twentieth century. This is one reason William Wirt's platoon schools met with resistance.⁴⁴



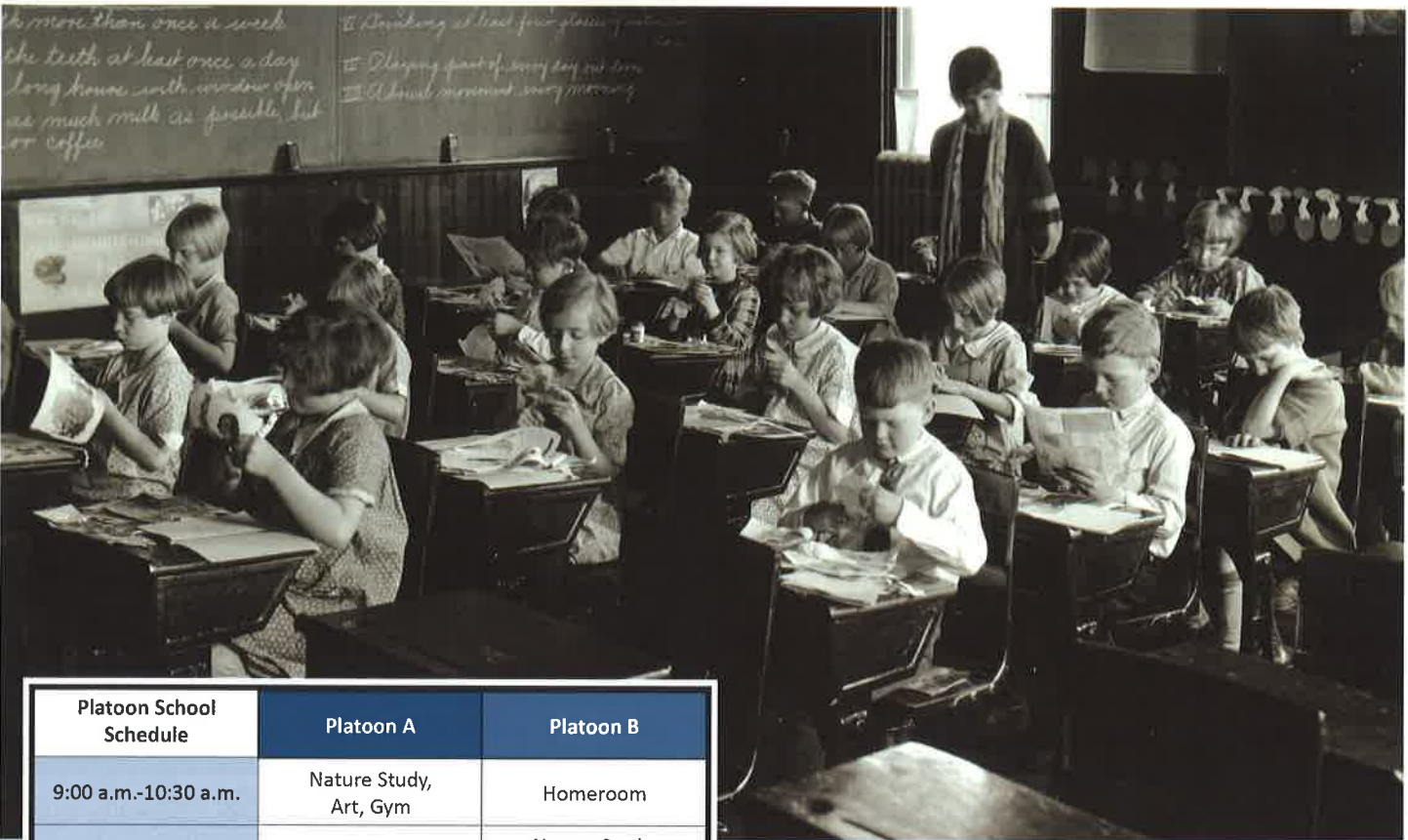
Students gained a wide variety of important academic and life skills, such as counting and cooperation, when participating in this second-grade classroom grocery store at Woodrow Wilson School, 1927. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*



An important goal for platoon school teachers was creating experiential and authentic learning that engaged students in meaningful lessons, as exhibited here by second-grade students with rabbits at Woodrow Wilson School, 1927. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

the newly built Emerson School (1909) and Froebel School (1910), made for a platoon school trio in Gary. Emerson and Froebel Schools alone served nearly six thousand kindergarten through high school students by 1929. Educational opportunities seemed limitless in Gary with school facilities specifically designed to support platooning. Wirt created efficiently managed schools offering varied facilities, while advancing curricula and instruction that engaged students with many new opportunities. Hylda Burton, former Gary student and teacher, recalled her impressions of the schools in Sarah Mondale and Sarah B. Patton’s 2001 book *School*:

They had a forge, and they had auto mechanics. There were all kinds of possibilities . . . another one was animal husbandry. The children learned how to take care of chickens and ducks. We had art classes, we had nature classes . . . there was so much going on beside our regular classroom work that it was really lovely to go to school.¹⁰



Handwritten on back: “Mrs. Hope Beatty’s pupils (II grade) cutting out magazine pictures which illustrate the Rules of the Game, Hawthorne, 2nd G,” 1927. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

Platoon School Schedule	Platoon A	Platoon B
9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.	Nature Study, Art, Gym	Homeroom
10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Homeroom	Nature Study, Art, Gym
12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.	Music, Library, Auditorium	Homeroom
2:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m.	Homeroom	Music, Library, Auditorium

Adapted from Roscoe David Case, “Model Platoon School Program for Grades 3, 4 and 5,” *The Platoon School in America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1931), 185.

A Typical Day in Platoon Schools

Gary, Indiana, School Superintendent William Wirt, in 1906, created this progressive reform model for elementary schools known by three designations: platoon system, continuous use, and work-study-play. This radical departure from more traditional schooling became known as the Gary Plan.

The entire school operated on a similar rotational schedule. This model illustrates the labels **continuous use** for building space usage and **platoon system** regarding the specific school organizational plan. Continuous use also referred to schools operating evenings, weekends, summers, and during vacations for students as well as adults. **Work-study-play** reflected Wirt’s belief in holistic curriculum and instruction within the platoon system: students spent time each day in careful study, intentional work, and recreational play. Supporting Wirt’s ideas about progressive schooling through public-private partnerships were facilities such as parks, pools, zoos, shops, and farms.⁴⁵

School Organizational Models

In the **self-contained**, or traditional, model a single teacher is responsible for instruction in basic skills as well as specialized curricular areas. Typically she or he uses teacher-directed instruction for large student groups, with textbooks guiding many instructional decisions.

The **departmental model** relies solely on content-area specialists for all instruction. Many junior and senior high schools currently use this model. In a given day, a student interacts with up to six different teachers. One Fargo elementary school is piloting this approach with its fifth graders in the 2018–19 school year.

A more common delivery system for elementary schools is the **semi-departmentalized model**. Here a homeroom teacher is responsible for delivering the basic skills curriculum in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. Specialists provide instruction in subjects such as music, physical education, cooking, art, instructional technology, vocational education, band, and choir. This model is similar to Wirt’s platooning. Currently, both the Moorhead, Minnesota, and Fargo, North Dakota, elementary schools use this model.⁴⁶



Curriculum correlation was an integral part of platoon schools. Typically, classroom teachers consulted with those teachers responsible for specialized instruction to create blended projects that were motivating for students, such as this second grade oral English and health telephone conversation at Roosevelt School, Fargo. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

Marie Edwards, another long-ago student and former Gary school teacher, also spoke highly of the schools and what they offered: "The Emerson School had at least two city blocks of territory. Large athletic fields. A beautiful playground area, and one of the things that I remember there was [the school's] zoo."¹¹ Gary students helped run their schools following Dewey's thinking about the importance of schools supplying authentic meaning to learning and work, as opposed to training for artificial purposes. Writing in *Schools of To-Morrow*, Dewey and daughter Evelyn recalled their observations of the Gary schools:

Every child in Gary, boy and girl, has before his eyes in school finely equipped workshops, where he may, as soon as he is old enough, do his share of the actual work of running and keeping in order the school buildings. All of the schools . . . have a lunch room where the girls learn to cook, and

a sewing room where they learn to make their own clothes; a printing shop, and carpenter, electrical, machine, pattern, forging, and molding shops, where boys, and girls if they wish, can learn how most of the things that they see about them every day are made. There are painting departments, and a metal working room, and also bookkeeping and stenography classes. The science laboratories help give the child some understanding of the principles and processes at work in the world in which he lives. . . . The buildings are kept in better repair than where all the work is done during the summer vacation, because as soon as anything needs to be fixed the pupils who are working in the shop that does that kind of work get at the repairs under the direction of the teacher.¹²

Edwards experienced similar Deweyan ideas as she recollected this student memory:

In the cafeteria you helped in the mass production of food. I can remember spending a week taking the eyes out of potatoes. I got a C for talking too much while doing it, but through those two years in the junior high I came to have a pretty good idea of the whole cafeteria function.¹³

The platoon school experiment proved so successful that by 1929 the Gary district opened seventeen platoon schools. Throughout the mid-1910s studies were completed by the US Bureau of Education and Teachers College at the University of Cincinnati to determine effectiveness of the platoon model, with positive results. Randolph Bourne illustrated the most favorable study through his 1916 publication, *The Gary Schools*. He declared that Wirt's platoon schools were the finest examples of Dewey's progressivism put into action. Progressive educator Alice Barrows, who worked for the US Bureau of Education from 1918 to 1942, devoted her professional life to

campaigning on behalf of platoon schools through speech making, organizing parent groups, mobilizing civic leaders, and writing papers. In 1925, Barrows established the National Association for the Study of the Platoon or Work-Study-Play School Organization. The association sponsored annual conferences and published a quarterly journal. Wirt's application of Dewey's progressive thinking, coupled with advocacy by Barrows and others, resulted in platoon schools rapidly expanding across the country. Platoon schools flourished. Between 1906 and 1930, 1,068 schools serving 730,000 students were staffed by over 20,000 teachers. These schools were located in 202 cities in forty-one different states.¹⁴

Platoon Schools Expand in the Midwest

Detroit, Michigan, became the model of platoon schools during this period. It earned the moniker "the outstanding platoon school city in the United States." It boasted a district-wide progressive program, very similar to the Gary Plan, of 121 platoon schools employing 3,042 teachers instructing 122,841 pupils.¹⁵

Charles Spain, deputy superintendent of Detroit schools, aptly described this plan in his 1924 publication, *The Platoon School: A Study of the Adaptation of the Elementary School Organization to the Curriculum*. The Detroit plan, a replication of the plan found in Gary, sought to solve overcrowding through efficient building use and resourceful administrative functioning. Additionally, the Detroit plan reached for four progressive aims that Fargo would also strive for in the near future:

1. Work-study-play each day for all students.
2. Ample time and learning conditions for basic and specialized skills instruction.



Hawthorne School, Fargo, 1928. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

Two students at Hawthorne School share their poster work. Many times students worked in small groups and pairs to not only learn more about the topic at hand, but also to practice positive social interaction skills. Fargo, 1927. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*



Roosevelt School, Fargo, 1960s. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

3. Special teachers for health, music, art, literature, science, manual arts, and home economics instruction.
4. Auditorium used for correlating basic classes with the special classes.¹⁶

By 1930, three North Dakota cities, including Fargo and Grand Forks, offered ten platoon schools that served 3,348 pupils taught by 114 teachers. Neighboring Minnesota had two cities platooning twenty-two schools, serving 10,140 pupils taught by 281 teachers. When the nation's city leaders using the platoon system were queried whether they would eventually platoon all of their elementary schools, about 80 percent answered "yes." Wirt's spirit of schooling experimentation and conviction for the benefits of school enrichment and administrative efficiency were enthusiastically shared across the country.¹⁷

Lawrence Cremin (1925–90), a well-respected progressive educational historian, championed platoon schools as "agents of opportunity,

freedom, democracy." Scott Nearing (1883–1983), high-profile progressive educator and radical activist, deeply honored these same values in his 1915 publication, *The New Education: A Review of Progressive Educational Movements of the Day*. Nearing traveled the country searching for progressive schools. He wanted to discover how these schools reorganized curriculum, instruction, and facilities to better meet the needs of the whole child. He found such schools in Gary. Nearing reported that "more consistently than anywhere else in the United States, the [Gary] school authorities are providing for the whole child in their schools." Dewey found kindred spirits in fellow progressives Nearing and Wirt.¹⁸

John Dewey and daughter Evelyn endorsed Wirt's ideas of creating the best schools possible through natural and meaningful learning, efficient building use, and platooning. Arguing that monies saved through efficient building usage could support an enriched curriculum, they also favored use of classroom teachers

and content-area specialists, adult evening education programs, and practical applications of learning. This duo provided evidence for the efficacy of platooning. Father and daughter reported that 57 percent of seventh graders or above remained enrolled in the Gary schools, while one-third of all Gary students enrolled between 1906 and 1914 continued their schooling in state universities, engineering schools, or business schools. In comparison, many students attending more traditional schools did not complete eighth grade or did not attend at all and went to work, as did the author's father.¹⁹

Because the Gary Plan marked a radical departure from current urban school practice, it proved controversial. Bourne clearly spelled out several criticisms in a chapter titled "Criticisms and Evaluation." Suspected faults included under-the-table financial support by U.S. Steel for Gary's schools in exchange for a vocationally trained and work-ready immigrant labor force. Exorbitant costs, curriculum overload for students, unrealistic demands on teachers, and an extended school day compounded these reservations. The most grievous concerns were religious instruction release time and racial and religious discrimination. Evidence exists to support these last three allegations with educational historians Ronald D. Cohen and Raymond A. Mohl arguing in favor of these criticisms. Wirt, they surmised, was driven more by devotion to efficiency and bureaucracy than motivation to progressively reform schools. As a result, these authors believed Wirt promoted a kind of industrialized and standardized education. Some critics, like educator Frederick Bonser, also shared concerns about the ineffective use of departmentalization and specialist teachers in developing projects involving several subjects. He felt a self-contained teacher could

blend learning from various subject areas (e.g., history, art, literature) into unified projects in less time by eliminating the communication time it would take for these subject-area specialists to plan, teach, and evaluate projects.²⁰ However, decision-makers in Fargo and other urban districts trusted that the platoon system actualized Wirt's dual school vision: saving money by creating an efficient school bureaucracy, and putting Dewey's progressive ideas and ideals to practice.

The Platoon System in Fargo

A rich educational history supports platooning in the Fargo schools. In the late 1800s, Fargo provided its children with a one-room schoolhouse education over an abbreviated three-month school year, like many emerging northern plains towns. On March 4, 1885, the North Dakota Legislature authorized an Independent School District for Fargo. The district would operate fourteen schools by 1928, including a modern high school named Central. Fire destroyed this school in 1917. Its reopening was delayed three years due to materials shortage caused by World War I. Central High School was immediately filled to capacity when it opened its doors to Fargo secondary students. Mid- and end-of-the-year graduations were initiated in response to overcrowding.²¹

The city of Fargo saw its population skyrocket from 9,589 to 21,961 citizens in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Understandably, this population surge placed a considerable burden on district decision-makers to meet the educational needs of its charges, which now numbered more than four thousand. Board of Education minutes dated September 7, 1921, reveal concern for elementary school overcrowding as board members grew ever more worried about congested

classrooms. These decision-makers called for portable classrooms, redrawn school boundaries, and school-day shortening in response to overcrowding. They knew well enough that the upcoming year would witness even more students requiring additional buildings and staff.²²

Board of Education meeting minutes from April 12, 1922, reveal Superintendent J. G. Moore offering a solution to the district's congestion problem: he proposed erecting a one-story elementary school on the existing Jefferson School site. This new, twelve-room building would use the platoon model and cost approximately \$135,000. Discussion continued throughout the spring, and with pending board approval, anticipation for a new school opening late in the school year surfaced.

Signe Hanson, born in 1886 in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, was selected as principal for the newly constructed Fargo Jefferson School. Her career began by completing the one-year teacher training course at Moorhead Normal School in 1907 and included sixteen years of teaching and administering in North Dakota and Minnesota. Superintendent Moore convinced his board to earmark funds to send Principal Hanson to Gary, Indiana; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Chicago, Illinois; and New York, New York. She was instructed to study how these cities adapted their districts to the platoon system for organizing curriculum, instruction, and facilities. Coupled with these site visits and district support, Hanson completed extensive reading about platoon schools, which she felt

School supplies used by siblings Ivan Bern (1904–2004) and Enid Bern (1898–1993). The scissors and crayons belonged to Ivan as a student in the 1910s at a rural township school near Burt and Mott, where Enid was a teacher. The watercolors and ruler belonged to Enid when she taught at Aneta, Sykeston, and Elgin in the 1940s.

SHSND 1995.25.170



SHSND 1995.25.113



SHSND 1995.25.279



SHSND 1995.25.116



Student-focused learning is on display at the Horace Mann School pet show, 1927. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

better prepared her to launch the Jefferson School experiment in 1923. Hanson began this northern plains platoon school experiment with a staff of ten. In Fargo, Hanson found a receptive audience to platooning.²³

Slow and steady progress resulted in the new Jefferson School opening for Billy Deane Snyder and his friends on Monday, April 4, 1923. Board representatives met at the school for a formal building inspection, which generated positive results. The headline "Platoon School System Praised by Students in Compositions" revealed student opinions similar to those held by board members. According to the April 14, 1923, *Fargo Forum* article, every student but one praised the school. In particular, students favored the daily auditorium and gymnasium periods: "In the gymnasium you learn to be strong and in the auditorium you learn to get up and speak," concluded a young female student. Another student enjoyed learning from superior teaching, which he thought stemmed from the new organizational plan. Employing a design similar to the exceptional one

used in Detroit may have contributed to these Fargo stakeholders responding positively.²⁴

In *The 1924 North Dakota Teacher*, Principal A. M. McCaine detailed an organizational plan she implemented in Fargo's second platoon school: Woodrow Wilson School. This principal advocated for platoon schools for several reasons:

1. Provided a balanced curriculum of creative expression and content learning.
2. Promoted social as well as educational aims.
3. Economized building space.
4. Afforded students opportunities for self-directed activity.

Students and parents responded positively to this organizational plan, as did others in the Fargo district.²⁵ The district, by 1931, had trialed the platoon system in six additional elementary schools: Horace Mann, Roosevelt, Hawthorne, Lincoln, Clara Barton, and Emerson H. Smith. This progressive model was adopted across the country, from schools in

New York to Oregon and from Florida to California. Clearly this educational experiment had taken hold.²⁶

Two competing and contradictory ideologies framed platoon schooling for decision-makers in cities like Fargo. Each ideology was grounded in a particular vision of progressive education: child-focused education and efficiency. Following Dewey's knowledge-constructing, active and experimental learning, child-focused wing of the progressive education movement, Fargo Principal McCaine stated "the platoon school's main purpose is to educate the whole child . . . therefore a balanced curriculum and a building and organization adapted to meet the requirements in social training are demanded." However, cost savings, increasing educational capacity, and administrative dexterity characterized the efficiency branch of the progressive education movement, which also played a motivating role in school leaders adopting this system. Platoon schools, simultaneously and somewhat ironically, were held by some as "the ideal implementation of . . . child-focused education, but for others it meant the full achievement of administrative and bureaucratic efficiency."²⁷

Superintendent J. G. Moore's motivation to bring platoon schools to Fargo sided with Wirt's original ideology as expressed by the efficiency advocates as well as the child-focused progressives:

When operating at full capacity, the system saves about 15 percent in school expenses. It also provides more all-around education in the various subjects than is possible under the standard system. Music is taught, for instance, by a teacher who specialized in that subject; penmanship by a teacher who specialized in that work; and so with art, gymnasium, and

auditorium subjects . . . the platoon school makes possible more frequent use of the gymnasium and auditorium . . . where we expect to gather the whole group together frequently with some attention to the development of school spirit which is all neglected in the grade schools.

Available records highlight his concerns regarding overcrowding, congestion, and budget woes. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Moore realized the potential social and educational benefits through platooning.²⁸

Tension created by these competing ideologies framed the twentieth century reform-minded progressive school movement. A report issued by researcher Roscoe Case reinforced the underlying theory supporting platoon schools: when 1,333 school leaders were surveyed about reasons for adopting the platoon plan, only 27 percent indicated motivation to solely reduce costs and relieve overcrowding. Yet, 65 percent of school leaders wanted to enrich the curriculum and make schools more progressive. Case concluded that the outstanding advantage to platoon schooling rested with the child-focused progressives, while the efficiency progressives were a secondary consideration. Detroit schools' Deputy Superintendent Spain concurred with Case and Moore when he wrote:

The feature of the Gary Schools which has attracted the greatest amount of attention is increasing capacity of buildings. In fact so much has been said about decreasing costs and relieving crowded conditions, that the real purpose of the organization . . . has been overlooked. The Gary schools represent an attempt on the part of

Mr. Wirt to realize modern educational ideals in a concrete way . . . he inaugurated an elaborate program of innovations which the test of a number of years has proven to be of value.²⁹

Platoon School Advantages

In a story featured in the January 1, 1932, issue of the *Fargo Forum*, Superintendent Moore, after opening the eighth platoon school in the city, declared the experiment "outstanding." Certainly efficient use of school building space through platooning—continuous use of classrooms—heralded a new era in cost savings. Jefferson School, opening with three hundred students, could actually provide schooling for more than six hundred when needed. The other side of this "outstanding" coin reflected the child-focused progressive nature of platooning. Innovations such as children receiving instruction from content-area specialists, incorporating the auditorium and library as integral curricular components, and more frequent gymnasium use for physical education advantaged students attending platoon schools. Use of homerooms for basic subject instruction and an enriched and correlated curriculum offering breadth and depth of thinking, through learning by doing, resulted in an enlightened school program. Inclusion of relief teachers who offered respite for classroom teachers illustrates yet

another innovation. Fargo schools leaned on the Gary and Detroit plans for organizational ideology; and as a result, reflected the best practices of platooning. The similarities between the Gary, Detroit, and Fargo plans were readily apparent.³⁰

The daily auditorium period was a unique, curriculum-based feature of the best platoon schools. Nowhere in the literature does a counterpart exist in more traditional schooling. The auditorium was not simply a place for all-school gatherings, but rather an integral part of the overall school's educational plan.³¹

Case concluded that Gary schools solved the problem of how best to use the auditorium period to engage students and promote relevant learning: "No other school system in the country has worked out an auditorium plan like the one in Gary." This plan included learning activities ranging from gymnasium demonstrations to music appreciation, from visual education to patriotic programs, and from holiday observances to outside speakers. Jean Chambers, longtime Gary platoon school teacher, passionately supported the auditorium period: "It was our daily bread—a speaking and listening chamber and laboratory. It was the most unique and one of the



Horace Mann School, Fargo, March 1967. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

outstanding features of the platoon system.” The auditorium period illustrated the progressive reality of platoon schooling.³²

Evidence revealing the important role auditoriums played in Fargo’s platoon schools comes from Roosevelt School teachers. These teachers devoted meeting times to discuss how best to use auditorium periods to create more holistic applied student learning. Teacher Miss Afinsom, following the lead of Principal McCaine, addressed the teachers on the educational benefits of auditorium use. She reminded them that the auditorium’s main advantage was providing an important opportunity to link student learning across all grade levels and subjects. Classroom teachers would cooperate with special teachers to bring together the learning occurring in both subject areas (e.g., science and art) and then apply this linked learning through activities, such as demonstrations or theatrical productions. As a result, students could interpret learning in the broader context of their lives. Wirt’s vision for radical ideas, like use of the auditorium as an integral and linking part of platoon schools, did not labor for educational acceptance in Fargo, Detroit, and many other locales.³³

Integrating or correlating student learning across the curriculum was another important component of platoon schools. Case fittingly described this schoolwide principle:

[It] operates in two ways; namely, the correlation of each year of work with the year preceding the present year and the year following the present year, and the correlation of each subject, or department, of the school with each other department. . . . Instead of one teacher’s efforts being spent in correlating work upon a single topic, the abilities of a larger number of teachers may

be centered upon a correlation project . . . the possibilities are almost unlimited.³⁴

Integrating student learning across the curriculum was another important component.

Fargo teachers working in platoon schools were masters at crafting linking or correlating lessons across the curriculum. In a discussion at the Jefferson School the importance of correlation was poignantly revealed:

The purpose of teachers meetings is to learn the meaning and aims of platoon school correlation. Correlation is the basis of our work . . . we seriously try to make our school work as one big unit with the Auditorium as the center. We have tried to make each department a help to every other department, to be used to strengthen what is already begun, rather than to add burdens to an already full program.³⁵

Evidence from the Detroit plan reveals a similar philosophy as practiced in Fargo’s platoon schools when it came to the importance of schoolwide correlation and its application during the auditorium period. Detroit’s Deputy Superintendent Spain declared a resultant “integrating, correlating force” when the auditorium period was used to achieve social as well as academic aims across all curricular areas. In Fargo, Jefferson School staff achieved this difficult yet integrative goal by creating a “Correlation Outline” for the school:

1. Correlated subjects originate within the homeroom.
2. Correlating subjects are communicated to school staff through principal and via the schoolwide bulletin board.
3. Special subject staff add enrichment and integrative

experiences to specific correlated subjects.

4. Auditorium period used to synthesize correlated learning through dramatic or musical productions.

Clara Barton School staff regularly met to discuss these platooning practices and brainstormed ways to best improve them. Following are illustrations of how Fargo platoon school teachers adapted their curriculum work to reflect the Gary and Detroit plans.³⁶

Inside the Schools: The Gary Plan in Fargo

Fargo teachers working in platoon schools between 1923 and at least 1961 practiced the ideas and ideals of the Gary and Detroit plans. A review of the district-produced document “Creative Activities, Fargo Public Schools, 1932–1933” illustrates platooning activities organized by school. It reveals day-to-day curriculum linking or correlation efforts made by Fargo teachers. This work occurred as a result of effective administrative leadership supporting a unified commitment by staff to create blended and meaningful student learning. Below are four curricular snapshots from 1932–33 representative of platooning in Fargo.

CLARA BARTON SCHOOL

Students in grades three and four used homeroom sand tables to illustrate historical stories situated in countries they were studying in geography. These stories were transformed into scripts and then used to create dramatizations that were presented during the auditorium period. Students assembled booklets in homerooms demonstrating new knowledge gained from this study. Booklet covers were designed and drawn in art class and used to illustrate talks given in science class.

EMERSON SMITH SCHOOL
Auditorium teachers planned a

student performance titled *The Spring Festival* that included all grade levels. Dances and games were developed and practiced during gymnasium periods, while songs and instrumentation were the music teacher’s responsibility. Costuming, including research and sewing, occurred under the watchful eye of homeroom teachers. Scenery was built and painted during art time. Speaking parts were practiced during auditorium periods. *The Spring Festival* was shared in the auditorium following a blending of these learning tasks.

HAWTHORNE SCHOOL

Grades five and six students, following reading lessons about steam production that piqued the students’ interest, went to the school’s heating plant and listened to the custodian explain its operation. In cooperation with homeroom and specialist teachers, this learning drove instructional decisions across the curriculum: arithmetic (temperature gradients), English and history (historically based compositions), and geography (locales important to the history of steam making).

HORACE MANN SCHOOL

A fascinating example of work-study-play used the concept “creativity” as the curricular hook across several departments. This study began with local writers talking to auditorium groups about processes used to generate manuscripts. Following up in homerooms, students searched for examples of creativity in topics ranging from art to inventions. Physical education, music, and art teachers and students worked cooperatively to create dances, music, and costumes for an auditorium performance.³⁷

Voices from Fargo Platoon Schools

Evidence from interviews collected from a Fargo platoon teacher and several platoon students suggest that platooning was practiced and embraced in at least five schools until at least 1961. Available school district records do not reveal an explicit district-wide decision to forgo platooning in elementary schools. However, Fargo elementary and middle schools currently use homeroom teachers to provide



Teachers identified ways to enhance student learning through the platoon school model. Clara Barton School teachers, Fargo, June 4, 1938. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

instruction in basic subjects, such as social studies and science, while specialists teach in their specialty-content areas, like art and physical education.³⁸

Mary Polasky-Johnson, born in a claim shack near Tappen, North Dakota, received the rural scholarship to attend Valley City State College. Following graduation she taught one year in Ray, North Dakota. Polasky-Johnson tells an interesting story about how she came to teach at the Washington Platoon School in 1955:

I was recruited from my teacher education program at Valley City State Teachers College in spring of 1954.

Mrs. Grace Weber had become pregnant, and God forbid that a teacher disgrace the North Dakota classroom in such a condition! Mr. Tom Blair and Mr. Ernie Anderson were in a panic to replace her. They observed me, hired me on the spot, and told me to be at the school the next Monday. I packed my modest possessions, rode standing on the Greyhound to Fargo, and the rest became history.

Polasky-Johnson’s initial assignment was teaching science to fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. She found the Washington Platoon School staff to be “lovely, lovely people . . . just like a family.” This teacher cohort,



Student dramatizations were a fun way for students to apply their health education learning. Typically, this kind of performance occurred during the auditorium period. Lincoln Elementary health play, Fargo, 1927. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

according to Polasky-Johnson, worked effectively together while sharing many curricular ideas. She recalled conducting a rat-feeding experiment with her elementary science students. The Ben Franklin Junior High School shop class supported the experiment by building cages. Polasky-Johnson then became the auditorium teacher for seventh and eighth grade students. Her passion for the arts was launched here. She worked with various interdisciplinary teacher groups to produce operettas, plays, choral readings, and musical numbers across the curriculum. Although Polasky-Johnson came to know Fargo as a “good school system,” she was fired when she became pregnant. She and two colleagues, who were fired for the same reason, were hired in 1953 to teach at the nearby Dilworth, Minnesota, elementary school. This trio of innovators helped transform

this traditional school into one more characterized by platooning. Soon, Polasky-Johnson engaged in correlating arts across the school’s curriculum through theater, music, history, and geography blended lessons. She then taught in the Moorhead schools, beginning in 1958. She continued interdisciplinary teaching with her Moorhead colleagues, like she had done in Fargo and Dilworth, until retiring in 1988. Two teaching stops were yet to be made—one in El Paso, Texas, and the other overseas in the Slovak Republic. A major conclusion Polasky-Johnson drew from her forty-year teaching career was that the “arts education movement came out of the platoon system.”³⁹

Marcia Nelson, along with classmate Eric Johnson, attended the Clara Barton School from 1950 until 1956. This pair remembered moving

from class to class, with heartfelt recollection for a strong music program and one-of-a-kind school orchestra. When I asked Nelson about platooning at Clara Barton, she told me, “I had heard our system referred to as platoon, but just thought it was because we followed a day that moved between classrooms.” Nelson recalled the regular auditorium period, staffed by an auditorium teacher. This teacher organized speeches, taught grammar, and encouraged free reading times. Interestingly, the school library found a home in the auditorium. Nelson reminisced about the “good relationships” among the Clara Barton School teachers.

Norval Lee attended Horace Mann School from 1949 to 1954 and responded this way when asked about platoon schools:

We had separate class meetings for music, art, physical education, and also had a “home room” teacher. Our classes were split [in to two groups] . . . which was basically an alphabetical system with an even split of students. Sometimes, we would be asked if some of us would like to change to the other group, likely to even out the numbers in each section.

Lee recalled that he moved from first grade all the way through sixth grade with the same group of twenty-five students. According to John and Evelyn Dewey, this is quite an effective way to build community within a school. Maureen Kerce (1952–59), a schoolmate of Lee’s, remembers how exciting it was to change classes throughout the school day.⁴⁰

Sylvia Harness and her brother Greg moved from Moorhead, Minnesota, to across the street from Woodrow Wilson School in 1957. Sylvia completed fifth and sixth grade, while her younger brother completed second through sixth grade, at their new school. Harness fondly recalled her time platooning from class to class, as did her brother:

I loved the new school. . . . Being in a departmentalized elementary made a departmentalized junior high school seem normal . . . there was no adjustment. I had many different teachers. . . . In art we made burlap curtains for the classroom and in fifth grade we did a history play . . . it was fun, we were not sitting in desks. . . . In Moorhead I had one teacher all day. If I didn’t like her, tough. You didn’t tell your mother because your parents always sided with the teachers. . . . Greg says he only knows platoon teaching. He remembers nothing else. He always loved school. . . . In later years I would drive by the school and have a warm feeling.

That fancy new school I attended in Moorhead didn’t hold a candle to that old school in Fargo.

David Martin, launched from his small neighborhood Hawthorne School (1951–57), went on to earn a bachelor of arts degree from West Mar College, a master of science degree from Purdue University, and doctorate from Georgia State University. He told me all the names of his Hawthorne teachers and felt that his elementary education provided a “strong background for college and graduate work.” In contrast, he has few memories from Agassiz Junior High School and Fargo Central High School, where he graduated in 1963. His mother, Helen, taught at the Moorhead State College Laboratory School that was connected to the college, where Sylvia and Greg Harness attended and later graduated.

Longtime teacher L. Grondahl delivered another positive endorsement of the Hawthorne School. In 1950 he enrolled as a first grader, but only for one-half of the school year. His family moved across town in January 1951 to a school in which each room was staffed by a single teacher, much to his disliking. To this day, he remembers all of his Hawthorne teacher’s names and none of his self-contained teacher’s names.⁴¹ Although these Fargo school patrons are few in number, they voice a resounding endorsement of platoon schooling.

Looking Back

William Wirt is rightly famous for his schooling vision. Platooning as a unique organizational system, coupled with continuous use and work-study-play, revolutionized schooling for nearly fifty years. The revolution, driven by the dual desire for administrative efficiency as well as child-focused progressive schooling, reformed many schools, including those in Fargo, North Dakota. Remaking the auditorium into an integral part of the school curriculum

and promoting curriculum correlation were effective reform ideas. When active and experimental learning, collaboration, and enriched courses of study were coupled with the above innovations, the Gary Plan, as endorsed by Bourne and Cremin, represented the best of progressive education.⁴²

Platooning symbolized values consistent with the Progressive Era—student-centered learning, cooperation, and community. This educational reform was spirited by those educators who championed a thorough transformation of American schooling.

Wirt’s continuous-use platoon schools of the early to mid-twentieth century, which sought to offer efficiently operated schools and student-focused, holistic learning through work-study-play, illustrated a fine example of progressive thinking about schools. Conversations with Fargo Elementary School Principal Becky Folden and the district’s associate superintendent, Robert Grosz, revealed that Fargo’s fourteen elementary schools utilize Wirt’s progressive ideas, even now in 2018. Each school uses the semi-departmental model, which shares an important ingredient with Wirt’s platooning. Students receive specialized instruction in visual arts, instructional technology, library/media, music, and physical education from specialist teachers, and receive instruction in reading, mathematics, social studies, and science from their classroom teacher in homeroom. The path that 1923 Fargo Superintendent J. G. Moore set the district on ninety-five years ago continues.⁴³



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ENDNOTES

1. *Jefferson School: A History of Growth* (n.d.), 32–39. This chapter was shared with the author by Robert Grosz, associate superintendent, Fargo Public Schools, Fargo, North Dakota.

2. Mildred Harter, “Auditorium Round Table,” *Platoon School* 2, no. 1 (1929): 35.

3. Adam Jordan, “John Dewey on Education: Impact and Theory,” Study.com, accessed September 25, 2018, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/john-dewey-on-education-impact-theory.html>.

4. Fargo, N.D. Public Schools Records, 1874–1980, MSS 263, Box 5, Folder 10, Institute for Regional Studies & University Archives, North Dakota State University Libraries (hereafter NDSU), Fargo.

5. Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 3–23; Joel Spring, *The American School: 1642–2004*, 6th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005), 271–73; John Dewey, *The School and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1900); Ronald D. Cohen, *Children of the Mill: Schooling and Society in Gary, Indiana, 1906–1960* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 1–3; Roscoe David Case, *The Platoon School in America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1931), 20–21.

6. Case, *Platoon School*, 18–25.

7. *Ibid.*, 11–14.

8. Cohen, *Children of the Mill*, 1–4, 120–127.

9. Case, *Platoon School*, 20.

10. *Ibid.*, 19–21; Cohen, *Children of the Mill*, 7–11; Janette Baughman, interview by author, February 26, 2018; Case, *Platoon School*, 21–35; Sarah Mondale and Sarah B. Patton, *School: The Story of American Public Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 86.

11. Mondale and Patton, *School*, 83.

12. John Dewey and his daughter Evelyn provided a thoughtful and supportive analysis of William Wirt’s progressive school experiment in Gary, Indiana. See John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of To-Morrow* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1915), 164–204, 252–53.

13. Mondale and Patton, *School*, 89.

14. Case, *Platoon School*, 21–35; Randolph S. Bourne, *The Gary Schools* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), iii, vii; Raymond A. Mohl, “Alice Barrows and the Platoon School, 1920–1940” (paper, Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, Washington, DC, April 1975), accessed December 1, 2017, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED104767.pdf>; Ronald D. Cohen and Raymond A. Mohl, *The Paradox of Progressive Education: The Gary Plan and Urban Schooling* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1979), 10–34.

15. Case, *Platoon School*, 26, 29.

16. “Platoon System Advance Features Schools’ Year,” *Fargo Forum*, January 1, 1932; Charles L. Spain, *The Platoon School: A Study of the Adaptation of the Elementary School Organization to the Curriculum* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 44–45.

17. Case, *Platoon School*, 29, 36. One of the other North Dakota cities to use platoon schools was Grand Forks, as noted in Alice Barrows,

The Platoon School, Vols. 1–3, ed. Julia A. Spooner and Roscoe David Case (National Association for the Study of the Platoon or Work-Study-Play School Organization, 1927), 56, 175.

18. Cremin, *Transformation of the School*, xx, 155; Scott Nearing, *A Review of Progressive Educational Movements of the Day* (Chicago: Row, Peterson and Company, 1915), 82.

19. Dewey and Dewey, *Schools of To-Morrow*, 176–94.

20. Bourne, “Criticisms and Evaluation,” chap. 8 in *The Gary Schools*, 144–77; Cohen and Mohl, *Paradox of Progressive Education*, 8; Frederick G. Bonser, *The Elementary School Curriculum* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 103–05.

21. “The First 50 Years of Fargo Public Schools,” 1957, Fargo, N.D. Public Schools Records, 1874–1980, MSS 263, Box 16, Folder 51, Institute for Regional Studies & University Archives, NDSU.

22. “City History,” The City of Fargo, accessed December 14, 2017, <https://fargond.gov/explore/about-fargo/city-history>; “Superintendent’s Reports,” 1938–1939, Fargo, N.D. Public Schools Records, 1874–1980, MSS 263, Box 13, Folder 16, Institute for Regional Studies & University Archives, NDSU.

23. Signe Hanson, interview by Ann Rathke, Fargo, ND, May 17, 1976, 10157-0228AB, North Dakota State Archives, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck. Hanson’s staff included Elsie Bauer, Ivy Brandt, Thekla Carstens, Ruth Knudson, Agnes Levorsen, Louise Luther, Mrs. H. W. Murfin, Ruth Odell, Mary O’Brien, Mrs. John Rose, and Clara Undseth.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 447; Fargo, N.D. Public Schools Records, 1874–1980, MSS 263, Box 5, Folder 10, Institute for Regional Studies & University Archives, NDSU; “Platoon School System Praised by Students in Compositions,” *Fargo Forum*, April 14, 1923, 14.

25. A. M. McCaine, “The Platoon School,” *North Dakota Teacher* 3, no. 6 (1924): 4.

26. *Ibid.*; “Platoon System Advance Features Schools’ Year,” *Fargo Forum*, January 1, 1932, 22; Case, *Platoon School*, 3, 30; David J. Hoff, “A Blueprint for Change,” *Education Week* (April 21, 1999): 37–43.

27. McCaine, “The Platoon School,” 3, 5; Cohen and Mohl, *Paradox of Progressive Education*, 3–9; Mohl, “Alice Barrows and the Platoon School,” 1.

28. “Platoon System May Be Extended to More Schools Next Year,” *Fargo Forum*, April 25, 1923; Fargo, N.D. Public Schools Records, 1874–1980, MSS 263, Box 5, Folder 10, Institute for Regional Studies & University Archives, NDSU.

29. Case, *Platoon School*, 13; Spain, *Platoon School*, 42.

30. “Platoon System Advance Features Schools’ Year,” *Fargo Forum*, January 1, 1932.

31. Alice Barrows, “First National Conference on the Work-Study-Play or Platoon Plan,” *Bulletin* no. 35, US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1922).

32. Case, *Platoon School*, 165–81; Hoff, “A Blueprint for Change.”

33. “Creative Activities, Fargo Public Schools, 1932–1933,” Fargo, N.D. Public Schools

Records, 1874–1980, MSS 263, Box 13, Folder 25, Institute for Regional Studies & University Archives, NDSU; Harter, “Auditorium Round Table,” 35.

34. Case, *Platoon School*, 199–200, 248.

35. “Creative Activities, Fargo Public Schools, 1932–1933,” NDSU.

36. Spain, *Platoon School*, 85, 87; “Creative Activities, Fargo Public Schools, 1932–1933,” NDSU.

37. “Creative Activities, Fargo Public Schools, 1932–1933,” NDSU.

38. “The First 50 Years of Fargo Public Schools,” NDSU; Becky Folden (principal Clara Barton School, Fargo Public Schools, Fargo, North Dakota), interview by author, February 14, 2018; Robert Grosz (associate superintendent, Fargo Public Schools, Fargo, North Dakota), interview by author, September 5, 2017.

39. Mary Polasky-Johnson, interview by author, February 20, 2018.

40. Marcia Nelson, interview by author, February 16, 2018; Eric Johnson, interview by author, February 18, 2018; Norval Lee, interview by author, February 23, 2018; Maureen Kerce, interview by author, March 15, 2018; Dewey and Dewey, *Schools of To-Morrow*, 177–92.

41. Sylvia Harness, interview by author, February 24, 2018; David Martin, interview by author, February 25, 2018; L. Grondahl, interview by author, May 16, 2018. The Harness children graduated from Fargo North High School and later Moorhead State College. Greg became Senate librarian in Washington, DC, and Sylvia taught middle school mathematics and history.

42. Bourne, *The Gary Schools*, 144; Cremin, *Transformation of the School*, 154–55.

43. Folden, interview by author; Grosz, interview by author. For an overview of contemporary thinking about platooning in elementary schools, see Catherine Gewertz, “‘Platooning’ on the Rise in Early Grades,” *Education Week*, February 18, 2014, https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/02/19/21department_h33.html; Jennifer L. W. Fink, “Platooning: Subject Specialization,” *Scholastic*, accessed January 20, 2017, <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/2017/platooning/>; Lucy Hood, “‘Platooning’ Instruction,” *Harvard Education Letter* 25, no. 6 (November/December 2009), http://hepg.org/hel-home/issues/25_6/helarticle/platooning%e2%80%9d-instruction_426.

44. Cremin, *Transformation of the School*, 135–42; Spring, *American School*, 207–08, 273–76, 279–80.

45. Case, *Platoon School*, 39–63. For a thorough examination of William Wirt’s thinking regarding the Gary Plan, see Bourne, *The Gary Schools*, which includes an introduction by Wirt.

46. Cristina Zeppos, “Classroom Departmentalization: Is It the Most Effective Way to Teach Upper Elementary Students?,” unpublished capstone essay, Vanderbilt University, June 2015; Becky Folden, interview by author, February 14, 2018; “About Our K-12 Instructional Program,” Moorhead Area Public Schools, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://www.moorheadschoools.org/About/District-Office/Departments/Learning-and-Accountability/Curriculum/>.

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

Intrigue behind a Sitting Bull Painting

Sometimes the curious, behind-the-scenes stories of museum objects are as intriguing as the actual pieces. Inside the little-known story of this painting, the art, the subject, and the artist all share remarkable roles.

The 2018 film *Woman Walks Ahead* stimulated a new interest in our oil painting of Sitting Bull by amateur artist Caroline Weldon (1844–1921). The film is loosely based on Weldon’s life from 1889 to 1890, when she traveled from her East Coast home to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation as an activist to help Hunkpapa Lakota leader Sitting Bull and additional tribes resist US government proposals to break treaties.

Weldon served unofficially as Sitting Bull’s translator and lobbyist, and even lived in his household for a time. She also painted up to four portraits of Sitting Bull. This unconventional Indigenous rights campaign by a single, white woman of the Victorian era created a national stir, and she was unjustly vilified in headlines nationwide.

Weldon left the reservation just weeks before Sitting Bull’s death and became a footnote in history. Weldon’s painting was hanging in Sitting Bull’s cabin on December 15, 1890. On that morning a gunfight broke out when Indian agency police came to arrest him. Sitting Bull and others were killed. Shortly afterward, a police officer whose brother had just been



View Caroline Weldon’s Sitting Bull painting at the State Museum in Bismarck. SHSND 12319

killed smashed the painting with his rifle, tearing the canvas. US Cavalry officer Matthew Steele stopped further destruction, took the painting, and purchased it from Sitting Bull’s widows.

Donated in 1953 by the Matthew Steele estate, this painting is displayed at the State Museum in Bismarck.

Kimberly Jondahl, director, Audience Engagement & Museum Division

Platinum Printing Process Captures Living History

In some ways, digital photography has leveled the playing field by allowing anyone with a phone to be a photographer. The rarity of practitioners of non-digital, historic photographic processes is illuminated amid the sheer volume of digital photographers.

Cleveland native Herbert Ascherman Jr. is a great example of a professional photographer who uses a historic photographic process. Ascherman has been refining his work for over forty years. In addition to the beauty of his subjects, Ascherman's compositions are created using the platinum printing process, known for its aesthetic appeal and archival stability.

Platinum prints are made by placing a photographic negative and emulsion-coated paper in direct contact. This results in a softer, more gradual toned image, because the platinum image is slightly absorbed into the paper. In contrast to the automation of digital photography and printing, nearly all aspects of platinum printing can vary widely based on the photographer's preference and artistic vision. For example, the image tone can range from cool to warm. All steps, from producing the negative on glass to the final print, involve hands-on mastery.

The State Historical Society of North Dakota is honored to steward the Herbert Ascherman Jr. Photograph Collection, which includes thirty-two platinum images. The collection consists of individual and group portraits taken at the United Tribes Technical College International Powwows of 2011 and 2012, as well as portraits of members of the Three Affiliated Tribes at the Fort Berthold Reservation and members of the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana. Along with the photographs, four published books of Ascherman's work are available for viewing in the North Dakota State Archives.

Emily J. Ergen, archives specialist, State Archives

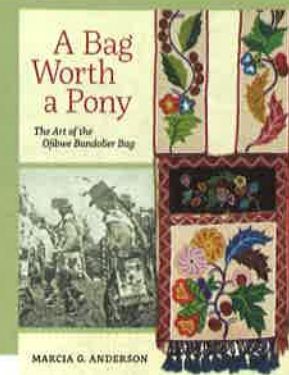


Native American Women Warriors. Portrait taken at the September 2012 United Tribes Technical College International Powwow by Herbert Ascherman Jr. SHSND SA 2018-P-065-00028

BOOK Reviews

A Bag Worth a Pony: The Art of the Ojibwe Bandolier Bag

Marcia G. Anderson. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2017. 265 pp. \$34.95 (paperback). Map, illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index.



In the summer of 1986, *American Indian Art Magazine* dedicated an entire issue to beadwork of the Great Lakes people. For most Americans, this was their first introduction to the material culture of the Chippewa, or Ojibwe, people. Missionaries, military officers, government officials, and historians have been writing about the Chippewa for well over two centuries. Marcia G. Anderson's magnum opus is the first work to move from viewing Chippewa beadwork solely as art to placing it in the context of tribal culture. Anderson has been learning from Chippewa artists and elders about Chippewa beadwork for over thirty years, and this book is a beautifully illustrated snapshot into her journey of discovery.

Gashkibidaagan, or Ojibwe bandolier bags, were exchanged for horses to Dakota, Arikara, and Hidatsa people in North Dakota. These pieces of Chippewa women's beadwork were traded as far west as the Salish people between the Gallatin and Bitterroot Ranges of southwest Montana. The State Historical Society of North Dakota is privileged to have some examples of these bags in the collections.

In November 1897, the Reverend Joseph A. Gillfan wrote to a Minnesota Historical Society executive, "One of the bead-work pouches is the great ornament of an Ojibway, and any person wearing it is considered to be in full dress; it is worth a pony among the Sioux" (25).

This work is a case study on bandolier bags from Minnesota. Minnesota has a significant population of Chippewa people, and they are committed to keeping their culture alive by the teaching of language and traditions to children from preschool on up. The traditional arts are alive and well in Minnesota, still practiced by Chippewa people.

Anderson takes us through a contextual history and discusses form, technique, and design in her study of the

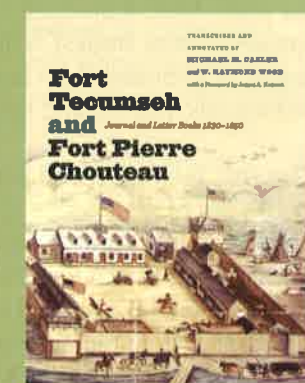
bandolier bags from the seven Chippewa reservations in Minnesota. Over the course of the last three decades Anderson was privileged to connect with beadwork artists and elders who shared their knowledge.

The scholarship in this work is evident in the detailed notes and bibliography. I will be mining this information for the next decade. I suspect that the two-page "Bandolier Bag Care, Handling, Storage, and Cleaning" will result in many copies of this book becoming dog-eared by aficionados, collectors, and curators. Casual readers will quickly become entranced with the extensive color and black-and-white photographs. My copy already has been read numerous times by friends, colleagues, and tribal artists interested in the culture of Chippewa people. This book is worth adding to your library.

Mark J. Halvorson is curator of collections research at the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

Fort Tecumseh and Fort Pierre Chouteau: Journal and Letter Books 1830–1850

Michael M. Casler and W. Raymond Wood, eds. Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2017. xiv + 269 pp. \$29.95 (paperback). Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.



Fort Tecumseh (1822–32) and its successor, Fort Pierre Chouteau (1832–55), were major fur trade hubs on the Missouri River (in present-day South Dakota) in the nineteenth century. Employees of trade posts commonly kept journals as well as letter books (collections of all outgoing mail written at a trade post). Some of these documents from Forts Tecumseh and Pierre Chouteau have survived and are held in the Missouri Historical Society's archival collections. The editors have transcribed these original documents to produce an entertaining historical exploration of day-to-day life during the nineteenth century fur trade.

The fort journal (covering periods between 1830 and 1833) consists primarily of brief daily entries describing the weather, the river (e.g., ice, water level), the comings and goings of trade partners and company employees,

visitors, the location of buffalo herds, the results of hunting expeditions, repair and construction activities, illnesses, births, and deaths. The letter books (Fort Tecumseh, November 1830–May 1832; Fort Pierre, periods within 1832–35 and 1845–50) contain letters directed at company employees at other forts, as well as the company’s home office in Saint Louis. They include requests for provisions and responses to such requests from other posts, discussions of trade strategies to stay ahead of the competition, news and intelligence, and updates on the credit of trappers and other employees as they traveled between posts. The editors transcribed all words as accurately as possible, excluding those letters originally written in French, which were translated into English by James A. Hanson.

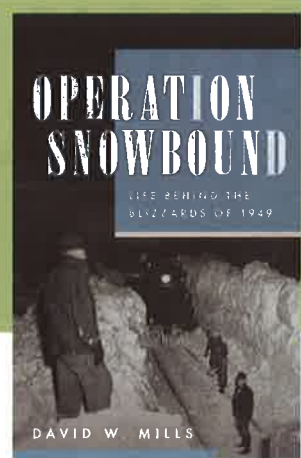
Although the material does not cover the entire lifetime of the forts, all surviving documents are included in the volume. This is the first time the Fort Tecumseh and Fort Pierre archival material has been published as a whole. By transcribing and publishing the Fort Tecumseh and Fort Pierre journal and letter books, the editors of this volume have made these archival materials vastly more accessible. The book also provides introductory material (including overviews of fur trade history inserted in some of the larger gaps between letter books), a detailed index, and fifteen pages of endnotes with background information on individuals, places, and events mentioned in the text.

The Fort Tecumseh and Fort Pierre journal and letter books are of great value to fur trade researchers interested in tracing the movements of individuals, determining the sequence of events in a certain place, or any number of related subjects. Subtle differences between letters recounting the same events provide glimpses into the relationships between various company employees. Some of the material (e.g., the detailed discussions of accounting issues) will no doubt be a little dry for readers with a more casual interest in the fur trade. Nevertheless, the overall volume offers a fairly riveting read for a general audience. Not only does this book offer unique insight into the daily life of mid-nineteenth century trade posts, it is also full of intrigue, office politics, theft, the occasional murder, and even some explosions.

Lotte Govaerts is an archaeologist and PhD candidate at Vrije Universiteit Brussel in Belgium. Her dissertation involves a comparative study of artifact collections from six nineteenth-century trade posts on the Missouri River.

Operation Snowbound: Life behind the Blizzards of 1949

David W. Mills. Fargo: North Dakota State University Press, 2018. 276 pp. \$29.95 (hardcover). Map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.



David Mills opens *Operation Snowbound: Life behind the Blizzards of 1949* on a balmy New Year’s Day in 1949. Within hours, the spring-like weather transformed into one of the largest blizzards to blanket the American West in living memory. Over eight chapters, Mills chronicles how residents endured the blizzards of 1949, which dropped dozens of feet of snow, burying highways, killing livestock, stranding travelers, and cutting off the region’s inhabitants from the outside world and leaving destruction in their wake. The absence of governmental preparation intensified the storms’ devastation, Mills argues, displaying the region’s resilience and bringing about changes in federal and state approaches to disaster response.

Observing the 1949 blizzards occurred within the lifetimes of many people living today, Mills smartly notes that those who lived through the months of ceaseless snow still had one foot firmly planted in the previous century. In many communities, horses were as common as automobiles, and more people owned ice boxes than refrigerators. But most importantly, much of the rural West relied upon scattered highways to connect them to the outside world. North Dakota saw sixty-three inches fall by the first week in February, meaning those thin connections were severed, leading to a herculean effort to first save people and livestock, and then to dig out.

One of the reasons the blizzards devastated the region, Mills notes, was the federal and state governments’ lack of a methodical approach in how to deal with natural disasters of such scale. Those lessons learned during the storms of 1949 and their aftermath prompted changes in disaster responses over the next several decades, he argues in his conclusion. This is a worthy point—one that Mills could have further expounded upon. Yet, *Operation Snowbound* focuses primarily on the tales of people’s survival, struggle, and resilience.

A narrative history, *Operation Snowbound* is intended for a general rather than an academic audience. Mills offers little in the way of analysis but provides a number of engrossing stories drawn from newspaper accounts of the time. Mills opens in chapter one by describing the surreal impact of the first blizzard, in which rural residents often

took in strangers stranded by the storms. In chapter two, he tells how the blizzard killed wildlife, cattle herds, and even dogs.

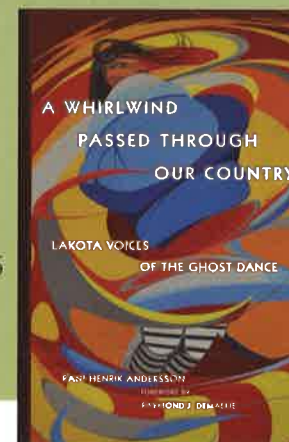
Mills pivots from scenes of survival and devastation in the following two chapters, describing the federal government’s efforts clear the highways and help ranchers. One of the more interesting stories is North Dakota’s use of military aircraft to airdrop hay and other supplies to ranches cut off by five-foot drifts. Playing out like Operation Vittles (Berlin Airlift, 1948–49) in Europe, US Air Force C-47s dropped tons of feed over the state, though even such efforts proved insufficient in meeting the storms’ ferocity. Chapters five, six, and seven discuss the blizzards’ impacts on American Indian reservations, the railroads, and people’s health, respectively.

Operation Snowbound is an enjoyable read that proves a thought-provoking glimpse into what happens when natural disasters occur. The stories of how people endured the blizzards tell both of western hardiness and the need for comprehensive planning when facing such enormous storms.

Michael Childers is assistant professor of history at Colorado State University. An environmental historian, he is the author of Colorado Powder Keg: Ski Resorts and the Environmental Movement.

A Whirlwind Passed through Our Country: Lakota Voices of the Ghost Dance

Rani-Henrik Andersson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018. xv + 416 pp. \$39.95 (hardcover). Map, illustrations, notes, appendix, bibliography, index.



In his introduction, Rani-Henrik Andersson of the University of Helsinki writes that the purpose of his book is to “give a voice to the Lakota” on events surrounding the Ghost Dance phenomenon that culminated with the massacre of over two hundred *Tituwan* at Wounded Knee Creek on December 29, 1890. The author attempts to do this by using the personal statements of Ghost Dance participants, like *Sicangu* Short Bull, who brought the Ghost Dance from Nevada to his and other reservations in the state of South Dakota.

Unfortunately, while the author’s intent is admirable, his book falls short. One issue is that he is not as discerning

in the non-Native sources he cites as he should be. For instance, the author cites a letter by land speculator Charles L. Hyde to Secretary of the Interior John W. Noble about a potential *Tituwan* uprising. This is problematic as Hyde advocated for and benefitted from the dismantling of the Great Sioux Reservation in 1889, and thus was not a reliable source on *Tituwan* intentions. The same is true of Indian agent and ardent assimilationist James McLaughlin, whose animosity toward Sitting Bull—with McLaughlin engaged in a protracted struggle to undermine the latter’s influence among his people—predated the Ghost Dance. Nor does the author remind the reader that newspaper reporting during this period can be characterized as yellow journalism, and was not above using exaggerations or fearmongering in order to influence public opinion and government actions as occurred during this period or later prior to the War with Spain in 1898.

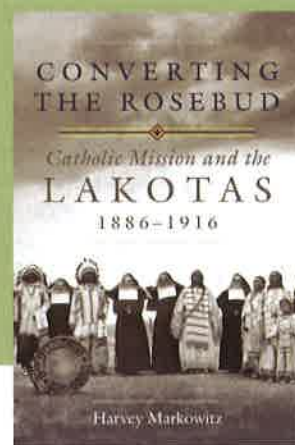
The author does not provide any real insight into the thoughts or actions of tribal members; instead in his footnotes Andersson repeatedly makes what can only be considered assumptions as to a person’s words or intent. Also, instead of offering any new information, he simply recycles the same incorrect assumptions that other non-Native historians who have written on this topic have made. Andersson might have benefited by conversing with the living descendants of those whose statements he cites, as often oral tradition can uncover new information or fill in gaps found in the written record. Yet, he only mentions conversations with Natives Ernie LaPointe, a descendant of Sitting Bull, and Harvard University American studies professor Philip Deloria, son of noted Dakota author Vine Deloria Jr., in his conclusion.

Finally, while the book claims to provide a broad Lakota voice to this historical event, it would be more accurate to subtitle the book “Oglala and *Sicangu* Voices of the Ghost Dance,” as most statements come from members of these two bands. This book is not without some value as it provides a reader with no prior knowledge of the topic with many first-person accounts of individual *Tituwan* involved in the Ghost Dance. But for historians it is no more insightful or informative than ethnographer James Mooney’s 1896 book *The Ghost-Dance Religion and Wounded Knee*. Nor does the author provide a better Lakota perspective than the written accounts by Natives like Black Elk, Charles Eastman, or Luther Standing Bear.

Billie Kingfisher Jr., PhD, is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and is an independent scholar whose specialization is federal Native policy. He is currently working on an oral history project on Native basketball in South Dakota and a history of the Cheyenne River Reservation.

Converting the Rosebud: Catholic Mission and the Lakotas, 1886–1916

Harvey Markowitz. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018. xvi + 303 pp. \$34.95 (hardcover). Map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.



Harvey Markowitz's detailed and nuanced ethnohistory charts the challenges faced by the St. Francis missionaries with the *Sicangu* Lakotas on South Dakota's Rosebud Indian Reservation. Early chapters summarize historical contexts, including President Ulysses S. Grant's 1868 peace policy, federal strategies of removal and assimilation, the effect of Otto von Bismarck's restrictions on German Catholics, basic elements of Protestant and Roman Catholic approaches to work with Native Americans, and the foundation of the St. Francis Mission at the Rosebud Reservation. Subsequent chapters concern the conflicts missionaries encountered with other Christian missions, government officials, and *Sicangu* beliefs and practices. The final and most compelling chapters explain how the *Sicangu* negotiated a path between their traditions and that of Catholics and Americans.

Grant's policy toward Indian management provided Christian groups with food, clothing, and financial resources to "civilize" (and Christianize) the Native population. While the government divided territories among Christian denominations, Markowitz shows that Catholic missionaries still competed with Protestant and government agencies to retain students in their churches and mission schools. Catholics shared prevalent prejudices about Native Americans, but rejected Protestant aspirations to immediately convert and "civilize" Natives. While it did not prevent personal frustrations, Jesuits understood their work to be a multigenerational project. Markowitz attributes this to different understandings of salvation, but the long history of Jesuit missions with Native Americans also affected their position. (Problematically, Markowitz tends to lump Protestant beliefs into one basket, when the Episcopalians and Baptists he mentions would not have agreed on fundamental theologies of salvation.) The Office of Indian Affairs expected religious workers to encourage agricultural family homesteads, but St. Francis missionaries privately recognized that the poor land, government supplies of food and clothing, and insufficient farming equipment doomed their project. They could not recover the mission when it succumbed to fire in 1916.

The book's organization hinders what could be a compelling narrative. In order to show how different groups challenged the mission's goals, events and practices are reexplained with few embellishments. Certain ritual practices like dances and gifting are described from the perspective of missionaries and Indian agents, but the Native American reasoning behind their actions is often unclear. Readers must wait until the final chapters to learn about the *Sicangu*'s Native belief system in any depth. While a problem of lesser concern, at least one typographic error was discovered: after narrating an incident between Brave Bear and High Forehead, the author confuses the names and writes of High Bear (35). He also makes no critical use of the included photographs, nor does he explain their origin or purpose, which would have provided greater nuance to his discussion of attempts to inculcate patriotism at the missions.

While the author refrains from comparing these events and outcomes to those of other Native American missions, the book provides researchers with an excellent model of methods worth replicating and provides ample information with which to relate other histories. This book will appeal to anyone interested in the complex tensions between religion, the federal government, and Native Americans, as well as to historians of the Great Plains.

Anne M. Blankenship is an assistant professor of religious studies at North Dakota State University. Her research examines religion, race, and social justice in nineteenth and twentieth century US history.



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