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Revisiting Elwyn B. Robinson's *History of North Dakota*: How the State's History Created a Community

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Abstract

In his *History of North Dakota*, Elwyn B. Robinson described six themes of North Dakota's history: remoteness, dependence, radicalism, a position of economic disadvantage, the Too-Much Mistake, and adjustment. Robinson also concluded that these six themes of the state's history influenced the state's people and produced the North Dakota character, which included such traits as pride, stubbornness, and radicalism. Robinson's scholarship did much to illuminate the complexities and interconnectedness of the state's history, geography, and society, and his *History of North Dakota* is considered to be the cornerstone of North Dakota historical discourse. But given changes in approaches and interpretation in years since the original 1966 publication, are Robinson's conclusions still applicable? How did the events and experiences of North Dakotans create a unique sense of community?

This paper will answer these questions by exploring how Robinson's ideas continue to provide valuable insight into the North Dakota character. In addition, this paper will analyze how the events, issues, and factors within North Dakota's history created a community of individuals who seek to prosper economically, socially, and politically in a challenging environment.



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North Dakota is commonly described as a place of endlessly rolling prairies and rugged, intense natural beauty. But the climate of the state has shaped more than just the landscape—both the course of its history and the character of its people have been molded as well. North Dakota historian, Elwyn B. Robinson stated that “semi-aridity was and is the most important aspect of the North Dakota environment” and that the history of the state can be explained through themes related to that semi-arid climate.¹ In addition, Robinson concluded that “the themes, the fundamentals, and probably the winnowing process of pioneer settlement itself have placed a stamp upon the people, producing the North Dakota character.”²

The interconnectedness of the land and the people is starkly illustrated in the controversy surrounding a January 2008 article for *National Geographic Magazine*, which interpreted North Dakota as “the place where American assumptions about the land proved to be wrong.”³ The article was intended as a survey of the rural North Dakota landscape and a “by-gone era of farming,” but many North Dakotans objected fiercely to what was perceived as another negative portrayal of their state. According to some, the article and pictures implied that the state itself was in decline and slowly reverting back to native prairie.⁴ Two critical points can be derived from this article and the deluge of responses to it. First, the climate and geography of North Dakota have profoundly influenced its history, as Robinson outlined in his landmark 1966 book, *History of North Dakota*. One aspect of that history can be seen in the ruins of abandoned homes and deserted towns that dot the North Dakota prairie. Second, the people of North Dakota, through characteristics described by Robinson, represent a community created by shared experiences and history; and that community has come together to defend their state from an alleged outside attack.

Robinson’s scholarship did much to illuminate the complexities and interconnectedness of the state’s history, geography, and society and his *History of North Dakota* is the cornerstone of North Dakota historical discourse. The purpose of this paper is to revisit Robinson’s analysis and determine how he concluded that North Dakota’s history created a community, and whether or not those conclusions

are still applicable in the 21st century. This paper will show, through Robinson's six themes that North Dakota's history and the shared experiences of its people, created a sense of community that continues to this day.

Robinson and the Themes of North Dakota History

Preeminent North Dakota historian, Elwyn B. Robinson, moved to the state from Ohio in 1935. He taught courses in American and North Dakota history at the University of North Dakota and in 1966 published his best known work, *History of North Dakota*, which grew out of a 1959 article, "The Themes of North Dakota History." In his comprehensive investigation of the state's history, Robinson identified six recurring patterns or themes within North Dakota's history: remoteness, dependence, economic disadvantage, agrarian radicalism, the "Too-Much Mistake," and adaptation. According to Robinson, "All the themes are tied to the most fundamental facts about the state: its location at the center of the continent, its cool, subhumid climate, and the climatic differences between the eastern and western parts of the state. The influence of these facts is seen in every aspect of North Dakota history."⁵ Robinson's book set the standard for later works on the history of the state, and no North Dakota historian writes about the state's history without even a passing reference to Robinson and/or his themes.⁶ A closer look at each of the themes, their appearances throughout North Dakota history, and their relation to each other and North Dakota's climate and geography, will provide an understanding of how Robinson concluded that the history of the state created a community of North Dakotans.

The first theme, remoteness, is directly related to the state's geographical location in the center of the nation. With remoteness, Robinson referred specifically to "the influence of the great distance between North Dakota and the chief centers of population, industry, finance, culture, and political decision in the nation and the Western World."⁷ Robinson provided numerous examples of the ways in which North Dakota's remoteness affected the state's history and people. For example, Native Americans in the state were late in gain-

ing access to horses “which spread northward from Spanish sources in Mexico.”⁸ In addition, because of the distance between North Dakota and the centers of population, the state experienced settlement later than other Great Plains states, such as Kansas and Nebraska. Moreover, the remoteness of North Dakota limited its economic opportunities, particularly in the manufacturing sectors, as transportation costs were, and continue to be, prohibitive.⁹ The theme of remoteness is also significant in that it has led the state to depend on outside resources.

The theme of dependence can be seen throughout North Dakota’s history. Robinson noted that soon after fur traders moved into the area, North Dakota’s Native American tribes became dependent on them for supplies, as well as for markets in which to sell their furs. Like the Native Americans before them, white settlers in North Dakota had to rely on outside markets to sell their wheat and buy necessities. “But access to the markets was controlled by outsiders—the owners and managers of the railroads, the flour mills, the elevators, the grain exchanges, the wholesale houses, and the banks of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.”¹⁰ As a result of this reliance, especially on railroads to transport supplies and grain, North Dakota, according to Robinson, became a hinterland of the Twin Cities.¹¹ Like all relationships between a metropolis and its colonies, the economic activities are interdependent to some extent, but tend to benefit the metropolis more than the hinterland—a point Robinson was sure to make. “I believe, then, that ‘dependence’ is a better word for the relationship [between North Dakota and the Twin Cities] than ‘interdependence.’ For many years Minnesota law regulated the grain markets in which North Dakota’s wheat was sold; North Dakota was long a suppliant, begging for fair treatment in those markets.”¹² North Dakota’s status as the colonial hinterland of Minneapolis-St. Paul aggravated the state’s situation of economic disadvantage.

As North Dakota’s economy was, and is, based primarily on agriculture, it is at a disadvantage to more diverse economies. The state’s semi-arid climate has made the traditionally low-profit farming business even less profitable during years of severe drought. For example, “in 1929 the per capita (not per family) personal income

was \$375 in North Dakota and \$703 in the United States.”¹³ “The relatively low income of farmers, the dominant group in the state, made wages and salaries paid in nonagricultural occupations, except mining, lower in North Dakota than in the nation. In 1958 the average [per capita income] in North Dakota was \$3,873, in the nation \$4,531.”¹⁴ This trend continues into the 21st century, as the economy of North Dakota continues to be based on agriculture, and efforts to bring manufacturing into the state have largely failed. A theme of economic disadvantage paired with dependence has caused many North Dakotans to push back in the form of agrarian radicalism.

Robinson explained the theme of North Dakota radicalism as “an attack upon the middlemen or, as they were commonly called, the ‘interests’ who stood between the farmer and his market. It was a revolt against exploitation, a struggle to change the status quo, or more simply, a determined effort to get a fair price for wheat.”¹⁵ It appears that people in North Dakota were already thoroughly frustrated with the meddling of outsiders even before statehood was achieved. The North Dakota Constitution contains some unusual components that illustrate this distrust—“The legislation in the constitution placed a heavy responsibility upon the whole body of voters, for changes could be effected only by constitutional amendment, decisions which had to be made by the people themselves.”¹⁶ The Constitution also places severe limits on the powers of the governor and the state legislature.¹⁷ Moreover, the people of North Dakota made extensive use of their initiative, referendum, and recall powers.¹⁸

In addition to constitutional limitations, North Dakotans created a series of organizations throughout the years to protect their livelihoods and increase control over agriculture in the state. In the 1880s, North Dakota farmers organized the Dakota Farmers Alliance to combat “the extortions of the railroads and the grain trade.” In 1906, Democratic and Republican progressives united to elect “Honest John’ Burke as governor and to overthrow the McKenzie machine, the minion of the outside exploitive interests.”¹⁹ The Nonpartisan League and the North Dakota Wheat Growers Association (both organized in the 1920s) along with the North Dakota Farmers Union (created in the 1930s) continued the tradition of agrarian radicalism.

But perhaps the most peculiar feature of North Dakota politics was the establishment of the North Dakota State Mill & Elevator and the Bank of North Dakota. In 1919, the North Dakota legislature, under the direction of the Nonpartisan League, passed a series of laws, including one establishing a state mill and elevator in Grand Forks “to engage in the manufacturing and marketing of farm products.”²⁰ This was an unconcealed attempt to sever the bond of dependence on the Twin Cities. Another law supported by the League was the creation of a state-owned bank. “The law required that all state and local government funds be deposited in the bank. It was to provide low-cost rural credits, to finance state departments and enterprises, and to serve as a clearinghouse and rediscount agency for banks throughout the state.”²¹ Again, this move was a blatant attempt by the people of North Dakota to lessen their dependence on outside financial services. Although efforts were made to reduce the impact of dependence and economic disadvantage, these two themes were closely tied with the theme of remoteness and North Dakota’s geography and semi-arid climate to produce what Robinson coined as the “Too-Much Mistake.”

During the two great booms of North Dakota’s history (1879-1886; 1898-1915), pioneers moved into the state and began rapidly building without taking North Dakota’s climate and geography into consideration. These pioneers “quite naturally expected the state to develop as such lands had in the past, to have as dense a population and to be able to support as many institutions. In other words, they brought ideas and expectations from humid regions which were unsuited to the semiarid country.”²² Robinson described the “Too-Much Mistake” as his “name for too many farms, too many miles of railroads and roads, too many towns, banks, schools, colleges, churches and governmental institutions, and more people than opportunities—numbers of all that history shows have been far beyond the ability of the state to maintain.”²³

One example of the “Too-Much Mistake” is the over-building of railroads in North Dakota. “By 1915 the state had three times as many miles of railroads in proportion to its population as the United States as a whole had, creating a problem of small use and

high cost; by the 1950's North Dakota had almost six times as much railroad mileage."²⁴ The number of newspapers and banks also illustrate the mistake: in 1911, North Dakota had 357 newspapers; by 1958, there were only 120. "In 1920 North Dakota had 898 banks, more in proportion to its population than any other state, in 1958 it had only 154—744 had disappeared."²⁵ Schools also demonstrate the "Too-Much Mistake": "There are, and long have been, too many schools with low enrollments and high costs per pupil. One result has been the disappearance of many of them." The effects of the mistake continue to be felt in the state through the continued high cost of education and low teacher salaries. The sixth and final theme is connected to the "Too-Much Mistake," as North Dakotans adapt to their environment and the challenges it creates.

The theme of adaptation has two main parts: adjustment to life on the semi-arid plains and correcting the "Too-Much Mistake" of North Dakota's history. Adaptation to life on the northern plains has been made easier by modern conveniences. "North Dakota fell in love with the automobile. It provided an excellent means of traveling long distances over the prairies; it reduced isolation; it helped to overcome remoteness; it freed North Dakotans and gave them mobility, just as a century and a half earlier the acquisition of horses freed the Plains Indians."²⁶ "North Dakotans drove fast, and distance came to mean little to them."²⁷ As is common in many western states, North Dakotans have a tendency to measure trips with time rather than mileage. Many North Dakotans will not be able to tell how many miles are between two towns, but they will be able to report how long it takes to get from one to the other. Improvements in communications technology over the last 50 years have further reduced North Dakota's isolation and remoteness.

"Retrenchment—the cutting back of the excess in farms, schools, banks, towns, newspapers, and churches—has been a necessary but painful and negative sort of adjustment."²⁸ The abandoned homes, deserted towns, and empty schools are proof that North Dakotans have accepted, perhaps grudgingly, the need for consolidation. Often, North Dakotans have recognized the oversupply, but resisted the needed correction. For example, some schools have closed only

after years of slow, painful decline. But while individual schools have closed or consolidated, the state government is often resistant to large-scale changes. "There was little support for the reorganization so badly needed. In 1937 the legislature turned down significant reforms proposed by the North Dakota Education Association."²⁹ Moreover, the state of North Dakota has more county governments than it needs, but no counties or their governments have ever been consolidated.³⁰

Robinson's insightful analysis of North Dakota's history provides readers with a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the pioneers and settlers, as well as the current residents of the state. Many of the difficulties and successes in the 21st century can be traced back to the six themes of North Dakota's history, including adaptation. Robinson's themes are also significant in that they describe the creation of the North Dakota character and a community of North Dakotans.

According to Robinson, the characteristics of the typical North Dakotan, "spring from the North Dakota experience and environment."³¹ He concluded that the common experiences of the people of the state led to the development of a distinct North Dakota character. "The conditions of existence, reflected in the history of the state, shaped the character of its people."³² There are two parts to Robinson's analysis. The first concerns the traits necessary for life as a pioneer and life on the plains in general, including "courage, optimism, warmhearted neighborliness, energy, individualism and self-reliance."³³ These traits have been strengthened by the North Dakota experience. In addition, North Dakotans value hard work because it is imperative to overcoming the challenges of an unforgiving environment. Moreover, North Dakotans take "pride in being able to withstand the rigors of the cold winters."³⁴

The second component of Robinson's analysis of the North Dakota character is derived specifically from the six themes of North Dakota history. The remoteness of North Dakota has led to the development of a friendliness not always found in other parts of the country. Robinson stated that the "very sparsity of the population made for a neighborly, helpful people given to hospitality." In other

words, because people are scarce, they are individually important rather than simply another nameless, faceless form in a sea of anonymity.³⁵

North Dakota's tradition of dependence and economic disadvantage has led to a variety of character traits including stubbornness and independence as well as a fear of dependence and feelings of inferiority. According to Robinson, the themes of dependence and economic disadvantage have created the desire to see North Dakota compete on par with other states; "no one wanted to see it lag behind the other states or below the national average."³⁶

The theme of agrarian radicalism, a backlash against North Dakota's colonial status, also manifests itself as distrust of outside interests, a fear of being exploited, and often in political isolationism, particularly in the realm of American foreign policy.³⁷ North Dakotans are generally reluctant to rush into war, as shown by opposition to entry into the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II (prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor).³⁸

Whether character traits were present in individuals who took up the challenge of North Dakota and those characteristics were strengthened by their experiences here, or if the experiences of North Dakota created new traits, "the harsh realities of North Dakota life, the sense of exploitation and minority status, and the unifying influence of the concentration on wheat—all gave many North Dakotans a feeling of community, a feeling of identification with the state."³⁹

Continued Applicability of Robinson's Themes

Since the publication of Robinson's landmark 1966 book, few have attempted to write comprehensive surveys of North Dakota's history into the 21st century. This section of the paper will examine the authors and works appearing after Robinson and determine if the six themes of North Dakota history, and therefore Robinson's analysis of the North Dakota character, are still applicable.

While the majority of the works on North Dakota history published since 1966 generally support his conclusions, there are two notable exceptions to this trend. The first is an article written by North

Dakota State University Professor Thomas D. Isern, and is dedicated to understanding “a sense of place on the northern plains.”⁴⁰ Isern addressed Robinson’s “Too-Much Mistake” and reactions to it: “People finally gave up sniping at Robinson as a naysayer and embraced him as a prophet.”⁴¹ But according to Isern, Robinson’s conclusions are no longer valid. As he stated, “Robinson was right. In 1960. His disciples today are a burden and a hindrance... The agricultural landscape is virtually empty. Rural life on the plains is no more, but life on the plains is getting good again.”⁴²

According to Isern, North Dakota is entering “Renewal,” the “third era of Euro-American history on the Great Plains.”⁴³ The first era was “Settlement,” during which the waves of pioneers and speculators moved into the area. The next stage was “Consolidation,” in which the adjustment to life on the plains and the correction of the “Too-Much Mistake” occurred. Although Isern noted that the North Dakota is experiencing “some sort of economic and demographic revitalization,”⁴⁴ he leaves the reader in suspense as to how that renewal is playing out and how it overrides the long-established trends in North Dakota history. But whatever form Dr. Isern’s analysis takes, he appears to come to similar conclusions about the continuation of the North Dakota character traits into the 21st century, particularly the frequent resistance to needed change.”⁴⁵

Alan B. Fricker, as part of his Master of Science disquisition at North Dakota State University, included a short paper titled, “A New Analysis of Elwyn Robinson’s Too-Much Mistake in North Dakota History,”⁴⁶ which attempts to argue that “what Robinson called ‘too-much’ was actually necessary at the time.”⁴⁷ According to Fricker, “nowhere in Robinson’s book does he attempt to explain or understand why the too-much mistake was made.”⁴⁸ By examining the building of railroads and grain elevators in the state, Fricker is attempting to prove that the large numbers of each were a necessary step in North Dakota’s development. “The land [in North Dakota] was converted from prairie to subsistence agriculture and, as soon as possible, to market-oriented agriculture. When the switch to market production took place, the need for moving crops to market became more acute.”⁴⁹ Essentially Fricker is arguing that the large

number of towns and numerous miles of railroads which connected them were necessary during a time when transportation from the farm to the elevator was limited by animal power. But two major ideas disrupt Fricker's argument. The first pertains to the North Dakota-South Dakota comparison Fricker used. According to Fricker's own research, North Dakota had many more miles of railroads than South Dakota. It would therefore stand to reason that if North Dakota had so many more miles of railroad than other states, including South Dakota, that this may qualify as "too much." Furthermore, Fricker argues that many people, especially the railroad developers, did not care whether or not the towns survived; they were only concerned with the immediate economic issues.⁵⁰ Again, this suggests that whether or not the speculators were acting intentionally, there were too many towns for North Dakota to support because of its semi-arid climate. Fricker undermines his own argument in a footnote intended to acknowledge this fact:

It must be pointed out here that North Dakota's boosters fully expected more settlers to come than actually came (and stayed). Had the settlers come in the numbers anticipated, then the infrastructure being build up would make much more sense in today's world. Regardless of what the actual number of settlers was or was anticipated to be, the fact of the matter is that the infrastructure that was put in place was necessary, given the technology and economics available in the settlement era.⁵¹

This argument seems flawed to the rational reader because it leaves significant questions unanswered. Why initiate such a large build up, just to have it decline? If the purpose of the towns was to allow for the expansion of the railroads, how did the speculators intend to support the continued operation of those railroads if the towns died off? Also, if the speculators were expecting more people to move into the state and stay, does this evidence not, by definition, support Robinson's "Too-Much Mistake?" Overall, Fricker's arguments lack the depth and logical evidence to support the theory that the "Too-Much Mistake" was not a mistake but rather a matter of temporary necessity.

It is interesting to note, however, that although Fricker opposed the basis of the “Too-Much Mistake,” he concluded that it affected the character of the people. “It has led to their becoming afraid to try big projects because of the fear that the project(s) will become ‘too-much’ in a state that is already marginalized by much of the rest of the United States.”⁵²

As mentioned above, most of the works published after Robinson’s *History of North Dakota*, support his conclusions and continue the analysis. For example, Robert P. Wilkins and Wynona Wilkins co-authored the North Dakota edition of the *States and the Nation* series⁵³ printed as part of the nation’s bicentennial celebrations. Throughout the work, the authors acknowledged the continuation of Robinson’s six themes. The Wilkins’ addressed the difficulties the state has faced in its attempts to diversify the economy by attracting manufacturing. In addition, the authors specifically noted the issue of the “Too-Much Mistake” and their concerns for the continued lack of action on the part of the North Dakota government to make better use of its resources. “If these wealthier states [such as Ohio and Iowa] wish to continue the pattern of local government developed in days of slower transportation and communication, they can afford to do so, wasteful though it might be. North Dakota cannot indulge in such luxuries.”⁵⁴

D. Jerome Tweton and Theodore B. Jelliff, in another bicentennial look at North Dakota,⁵⁵ also generally supported Robinson’s conclusions. The authors also remarked on the continued agrarian radicalism among the state’s farmers. “Although its membership has declined from its all-time high, the Farmers’ Union was named by the state’s political leaders in a poll taken in 1973 as the single most powerful organization within the state.”⁵⁶

In 1989, in honor of the state’s centennial, the North Dakota State Historical Society, in its scholarly journal, *North Dakota History*, published a series of articles which looked back at the state’s history in an effort to make predictions about the next 100 years of statehood. D. Jerome Tweton, in “The Future of North Dakota: An Overview,” set out to evaluate Robinson’s themes “and to assess their appropriateness for 1989 and for the 21st century.”⁵⁷ Accord-

ing to Tweton, the theme of remoteness continues to haunt the state through its inability to attract large-scale manufacturing because of the high transportation costs.⁵⁸ Dependence as well, continues to be an issue for the state: "Whether one is on the farm, strip mines, or oil fields the price is determined somewhere 'out there.'"⁵⁹ Just as Robinson linked remoteness and dependence to economic disadvantage, Tweton saw economic disadvantage as an on-going problem. "Only twice since 1957 has per capita income fluctuated above the national average—1974 and 1975."⁶⁰ Tweton also described North Dakota's continued struggle with the "Too-Much Mistake" and the necessary adjustment by examining county government and public schools in the state. "In the 1960s the legislature provided enabling legislation for the consolidation of counties. No county considered this."⁶¹ Schools, according to Tweton, have done a better job of correcting the "Too-Much Mistake," although there is still room for improvement. "During the last generation...the number [of school districts] has dropped to 296. The number of private and public high schools has declined from 630 in the 1920s to 244 in 1988. Yet, nearly half of those have less than 100 students."⁶²

The only theme which Tweton believed was no longer applicable was agrarian radicalism, but it is more of a difference in interpretation than indisputable evidence. "The fact that in 1989 North Dakota has the highest per capita cooperative membership of all the states is," according to Tweton, "testimony not to radicalism but to business sense."⁶³ But Tweton is willing to entertain the idea that radicalism could re-appear more forcefully if the people feel it is necessary. "If, however, as the decades tick off in the 21st century and North Dakota remains in a colonial and dependent status, radical solutions may once again have appeal to a state's people who reject that condition."⁶⁴

David D. Danbom, in the Postscript to the 1995 edition of *History of North Dakota*, argued that the six themes of North Dakota history remain—although some of the details of the story have changed. In addition, Danbom concluded that the North Dakota character is alive and well at the dawning of the 21st century: "Because they share an ethnic heritage, or because they share a physi-

cal place and a political entity, or because they experience the same environment and social milieu, or because of some combination of these, North Dakotans feel that they have something in common that distinguishes them from other Americans.”⁶⁵

As this paper has shown, Elwyn Robinson’s analysis of the history of North Dakota and the themes which dominated it, continue to be applicable in the 21st century. In addition, the history and shared experiences of the people created a distinct community of individuals. North Dakotans can be proud, loyal, and perhaps a bit radical. They are people who resent their dependent status and often bristle at outside criticism, a character trait which the editors of *National Geographic Magazine* discovered first hand.

Notes

- 1 Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (1966. Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 9.
- 2 Elwyn B. Robinson, “The Themes of North Dakota History,” *North Dakota History* 26, no. 1 (Winter 1959): 22.
- 3 Charles Bowden, “The Emptied Prairie,” *National Geographic Magazine* (January 2008): 146.
- 4 Chris Johns, “Editor’s Note,” *National Geographic Magazine*, Comments, http://ngm.typepad.com/editors_note/2008/01/ive-been-follow.html (accessed March 28, 2008).
- 5 Robinson, “The Themes of North Dakota History,” 6.
- 6 The most recent student textbook on the state’s history, *North Dakota: Legendary* (Fargo: North Dakota Center for Distance Education, 2007), even includes a textbox dedicated to Robinson and his themes, 232
- 7 Robinson, “The Themes of North Dakota History,” 6.
- 8 Elwyn B. Robinson, “The Meaning of North Dakota History,” Elwyn B. Robinson Papers, OGL #198, Box 26 Folder 3, Elwyn B. Robinson Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, 6.
- 9 Robinson, “The Themes of North Dakota History,” 7.
- 10 Robinson, “The Meaning of North Dakota History,” 6.

- 11 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 122-123.
- 12 Robinson, "The Themes of North Dakota History," 10.
- 13 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 374.
- 14 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 452.
- 15 Robinson, "The Themes of North Dakota History," 11; see also Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 275.
- 16 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 210.
- 17 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 212-215.
- 18 David B. Danbom, postscript, *History of North Dakota*, 585.
- 19 Robinson, "The Meaning of North Dakota History," 8.
- 20 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 342.
- 21 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 342.
- 22 Robinson, "The Meaning of North Dakota History," 4-5.
- 23 Robinson, "Themes of North Dakota History," 6.
- 24 Robinson, "Themes of North Dakota History," 18.
- 25 Robinson, "Themes of North Dakota History," 18.
- 26 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 379.
- 27 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 564.
- 28 Robinson, "Themes of North Dakota History," 18.
- 29 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 482.
- 30 Robinson, "Themes of North Dakota History," 20.
- 31 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 550.
- 32 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 547.
- 33 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 552.
- 34 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 553.
- 35 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 553.
- 36 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 558.
- 37 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 550-552, 353.
- 38 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 234, 353, 421-424.
- 39 Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 554.
- 40 Thomas D. Isern, "Thorfinnson Rides Again: A Sense of Place on the Northern Plains," *North Dakota History* 67, no. 1 (Winter, 2000): 2-9.

- 41 Isern, 6.
- 42 Isern, 6.
- 43 Isern, 6.
- 44 Isern, 6.
- 45 Isern, 8.
- 46 Alan B. Fricker, "A New Analysis of Elwyn Robinson's Too-Much Mistake in North Dakota History," (Unpublished M.S. Paper, North Dakota State University, 1995): 1-27.
- 47 Fricker, 1.
- 48 Fricker, 5.
- 49 Fricker, 13.
- 50 Fricker, 22-23.
- 51 Fricker, footnote #35, 24.
- 52 Fricker, 25.
- 53 Robert P. Wilkins and Wynona Huchette Wilkins, *North Dakota: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977).
- 54 Wilkins and Wilkins, 194.
- 55 D. Jerome Tweton and Theodore B. Jelliff, *North Dakota: The Heritage of a People* (Fargo: Knight Printing, 1976).
- 56 Tweton and Jelliff, 171.
- 57 D. Jerome Tweton, "The Future of North Dakota—An Overview," *North Dakota History* 56, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 7-13, specifically page 9.
- 58 Tweton, 9.
- 59 Tweton, 9.
- 60 Tweton, 10-11.
- 61 Tweton, 12.
- 62 Tweton, 12.
- 63 Tweton, 10.
- 64 Tweton, 10.
- 65 David B. Danbom, "Postscript," *History of North Dakota*, 592.