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Review of *Going It Alone: Fargo Grapples with the Great Depression* By David Danbom

Sean Taylor

Minnesota State University Moorhead

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sion. Danbom was drawn to this study by his interest in the city in which he has lived for thirty years and by the impact the Great Depression had on his parents, his mother in particular. She, along with many other people who lived through that decade, carried the habits and attitudes shaped by the Depression throughout her adult life. The author notes correctly that any event “powerful enough to mold one’s life is worthy of careful attention.”

Danbom begins his study by outlining a series of myths Fargoers believed about themselves at the beginning of the Depression, noting that these myths “helped shape their response to the economic challenge and the social disruption that accompanied it.” First, Fargoers viewed themselves as “can-do” people with material and moral resources, as well as a strong sense of independence, to overcome any problems their community faced. Second, residents of Fargo perceived themselves as caring neighbors, people who lent a hand to one another as needed. Many Fargoers, moreover, believed that theirs was a “classless city, in which cordiality reigned between rich and poor, employers and employees.” Finally, Fargo was a city of families made up of traditional gender and hierarchical relationships.

Seven chapters provide an overview of the Depression in Fargo. Danbom starts by examining the economic and social state of the city and then moves on to describe the “can-do” attitude of Fargoers as they initially tried to meet the challenges the Depression presented. As the Depression deepened and lengthened, the New Deal split the community into those who viewed the government as a customer and those who felt the federal relief programs threatened the city’s tradition of self-help and independence. After briefly examining work relief projects in the city, the author focuses on how work relief disrupted local traditions of independence and self-help, ultimately challenging “the correct relation among social classes.”

The chapter on labor relations illustrates the changes in the traditionally “open-shop” city when economic hardship deteriorated the relationship between employers and employees. Conflict came to Fargo in the form of gender relations, too, in the 1930s. Danbom masterfully details how the need for women to work during this period to help make ends meet clashed head on with preconceived notions of the proper role of women in society. Finally, the book examines how the behavior of children challenged preexisting notions of what constituted good and moral family life in Fargo.

Going It Alone: Fargo Grapples with the Great Depression. By David Danbom. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005. xv + 277 pp. Map, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.95.

Going It Alone provides an in-depth examination of Fargo, North Dakota, during the Great Depres-

Going It Alone argues persuasively that despite all the problems they confronted during the 1930s, Fargoens did not perceive themselves much differently at the conclusion of the Great Depression. Eager to put behind them the decade of tension and hardships, they looked forward again to a future based on their strong sense of identity as independent and self-reliant people. Danbom's exploration of Fargo in the Great Depression, his excellent use of newspapers and oral history, and the extensive bibliography, combined with very readable prose, make *Going It Alone* an important contribution to twentieth-century Great Plains history for scholars and lay people alike.

SEAN TAYLOR
Department of History
Minnesota State University Moorhead