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Review of *Happy as a Big Sunflower: Adventures in the West, 1876-1880*. By Rolf Johnson.

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moved, with other Swedish settlers from Knox County, Illinois, out to Phelps County, Nebraska,. Rolf recounts the excitement and hardships of pioneering on the Plains, including plagues of grasshoppers, prairie fires, lawlessness, and Indian unrest. But he also tells of courage, neighborliness, and community-building. He works the harvests in eastern Nebraska and hunts buffalo to the west.

Rolf was popular with the girls, for whom he had a good eye. Apparently to escape the avid attentions of one young lady he decided to "go west for a season" in June 1879. His wanderings took him up to the Black Hills of South Dakota, down into Colorado, and eventually to New Mexico. Rolf describes an Old West every bit as wild and woolly as its enduring legend. He roughs it in the sagebrush, frequents saloons and dance halls where fists and bullets fly, works on ranches, in mines, and on railroad gangs, yet finds time to admire the wonders of nature and even clime Pike's Peak. Along the way he falls in with a colorful gallery of "pardners," cowboys, bullwhackers, gunslingers, dance hall girls, Chinese, Indians, and Mexicans.

The diarist proves an interesting and attractive cicerone—cheerful, enthusiastic, and tolerant. He was, as he described a couple of his pals, "generous, openhearted, and manly." He was also keenly intelligent and observant. His diary frequently mentions his reading, including Victor Hugo, Sir Walter Scott, and Charles Dickens. One is impressed with his polished and expressive English style, manifested in descriptive passages memorable for their verve and color. He provides, moreover, a wealth of local and ethnographic detail, not least on the Hispanic and Indian areas of the Southwest.

The diary is a highly absorbing read, surely one of the best of its kind. It is enhanced by Richard E. Jensen's illuminating introduction and detailed notes.

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Happy as a Big Sunflower: Adventures in the West, 1876-1880. By Rolf Johnson. Edited and with an introduction by Richard E. Jensen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. xxix + 270 pp. \$15.00 paper.

In December 1876, Rolf Johnson, the twenty-year-old son of Swedish immigrant parents in Henderson Grove, Illinois, began writing a diary he would continue until it ended without explanation four years later in Cubero, New Mexico. In March 1876, the family