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Fall 2001

## Review of *Baum's Road to Oz: The Dakota Years* Edited by Nancy Tystad Koupal

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DiMond, Patricia, "Review of *Baum's Road to Oz: The Dakota Years* Edited by Nancy Tystad Koupal" (2001). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2191.

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*Baum's Road to Oz: The Dakota Years.* Edited by Nancy Tystad Koupal. Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2000. Illustrations, appendix, selected bibliography, index. 182 pp. \$29.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

Students of Baum will appreciate Koupal's text, which not only provides samplings of his early writings, ranging from newspaper editorials to poetry to children's stories, but also furnishes critical essays preceding Baum's work. In addition to representing the multiple genres Baum employed, the volume offers insight into the writer's personal perspectives regarding religion, women's suffrage, and race. Illustrations and photographs compliment the text, serving the Baum scholar as well as anyone interested in a historical perspective of early South Dakota.

Readers will find in-depth coverage of the burgeoning town of Aberdeen and brief

commentary on surrounding areas. Climate, scenery, recreation, and attitudes of the inhabitants, particularly in regard to religion and the relation of baseball to the town's prosperity and growth, are highlighted.

The book does have several drawbacks. Its style is occasionally inaccessible, and typographical and grammatical errors at times add to the confusion. Coherence is often a problem, the text jumping from one major premise to another without clear transition. Quotes are not smoothly incorporated into the text, while marked differences in academic discourse and down home language are conspicuous. In the section on Aberdeen's baseball teams, names often appear with little or nothing about the players' backgrounds or why they are being mentioned.

The reader must also deal with Baum's racial perspectives, which at times surface in his materials as blatant contradictions of his spiritual proclamations.

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