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*By the Waters of Minnetonka* by Eric Dregni (review)

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a compelling portrait of her personal and historical past in the Midwest, but the sections of her book rendering contemporary life seem to have a tangential connection to the ostensible subject of *Flyover Lives*. Although perhaps intended to show the impressive life her Illinois roots nourished, these sections occasionally suggest that Johnson may want to spend more time back in Moline.

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Eric Dregni, *By the Waters of Minnetonka*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. 216 pp. \$29.95.

Mention Lake Minnetonka and most Minnesotans think of summertime recreation and the well heeled bedroom communities west of Minneapolis. The name conjures boating and waterskiing lazy summer afternoons away. A friend of mine comes from the area and her husband uses a shorthand to refer to it: Lake Tinky-tonky. It's hoity toity.

It's had that reputation since plush resort hotels began appearing in the 1870s. Minnetonka had long been regarded as one of the most attractive lakes in the state that boasts ten thousand plus. In 1853 Governor Ramsey called it "a perfect inland sea." Franklin Steele was an early well connected settler; we'd refer to him as an entrepreneur today. About Minnetonka, he said: "Here is the most beautiful climate and country I have ever seen, wanting only a touch of labor to make it a veritable paradise."

Author Eric Dregni grew up in the town of Minnetonka, Minnesota, and in his new book *By The Waters of Minnetonka*, he takes a deeper dive into life and lore along the more than one hundred miles of winding shoreline. The lake looks more like a rorschach inkblot than a nice round kettle lake like Lake Calhoun or Lake Harriet, its Minneapolis neighbors. Minnetonka is actually made up of many kettle lakes, connected by a series of bays and inlets.

Dregni sets out a goal: to show that Lake Minnetonka is a microcosm of the development of Minnesota and the United States as a whole. Dregni specializes in the history of the curious detail. Here he does it again, and covers a lot of ground in a series of "Did you know?" moments. Did you know that one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People worked as a waiter at the Lafayette Hotel? Did you

know that an early quack and phrenologist set up shop in Excelsior, along the lakeshore? Did you know that the University of Minnesota and Carleton College considered locating on the lake, too? And did you know that those sturdy metal Tonka toy trucks take their name from Lake Minnetonka? The plant in which the toys were made was in nearby Mound, Minnesota.

An inevitable part of exploring the lore of a place is tracing the myths that grow up around it. Like so many places in the Midwest, Dregni argues that at Lake Minnetonka the “wistful, stereotypical” images of Native Americans were used to attract tourism and development, while covering up the more “unsavory” aspects of the history, including the plowing under of ancient burial mounds for development. The mythmaking extends beyond Native American lore and continues in early accounts of the place, including those by early European explorers Hennepin, du Lhut, and de la Salle. Dregni does a good job including the good stories and the tall tales and debunking them as needed.

Once the settlers arrived and got established in the nineteenth century, it didn’t take long for Minnetonka to become a regional crossroads of the famous and powerful. Railroad magnate J. J. Hill built the grand Lafayette Hotel. Former President Ulysses S. Grant attended a big banquet there and was apparently hit with a pie plate thrown in a brawl by drunk and disorderly kitchen workers. There are interesting episodes concerning the tumultuous love life of Frank Lloyd Wright and even the Rolling Stones. Apparently only 283 showed up for the Stones’ 1964 appearance at Big Reggie’s Danceland in Excelsior Amusement Park. But the next day, did Mick Jagger really hear an Excelsior drug store patron who could not get cherries in his coke say: “You can’t always get what you want?” It is a good and durable Minnetonka story we are told only Mick knows the answer to.

By *The Waters of Minnetonka* is the kind of book you can always dip in to and get a good story. Did you know that Governor John S. Pillsbury once ordered a statewide day of prayer for a grasshopper infestation in the area? But if you want to dig deeper on the flora and fauna of the lake, or the politics behind its development, you will need to find another source from the useful bibliography. Dregni is clearly captivated by the stories and has matched them with plentiful evocative illustrations. As he puts it in an epilogue: “Some of these stories are rife with embellishments and half-truths, such as the Dakota legends we can’t confirm, but should we stop telling them?”

Dregni has done his digging and tells us a bunch of these stories. And most of them illustrate his opening premise and show that Minnetonka is

a microcosm for the development of the state and, more broadly, the United States. The big themes of Minnesota and American history are there: relations between Native Americans and white settlers, industrial development, class divisions, even the cereal and grain business of the region. The tales can seem loosely knit at times, but taken as a whole, Dregni does what he set out to do. At the beginning of the book he says he was drawn to the stories about the lake, “the history I missed in school.” Dregni likes the place and its lore, and from the tone of his book, he likes sharing those good yarns.

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Nina Freedlander Gibans and James Gibans, *Cleveland Goes Modern: Design for the Home, 1930–70*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2014. 232 pp. \$50.00.

*Cleveland Goes Modern* is a regional study of Cleveland’s notable contributions to midcentury architecture and design. The book grew out of a 2007 exhibition of the same name. Organized by the Cleveland Artists Foundation under the leadership of curator Nina Gibans, the exhibition commemorated the sesquicentennial of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Amply illustrated with beautiful interior and exterior color photographs and scaled floor plans of midcentury houses, the authors of this volume attempt to relate Cleveland’s contributions to broader avant garde trends in modern American domestic architecture. Although Clevelanders will certainly find much in this book to appreciate, it will also be of interest for midcentury aficionados more broadly, particularly midwestern architectural scholars and enthusiasts who will certainly recognize some of the designers’ names and stylistic features of the houses.

It would be surprising if Cleveland’s midcentury housing were not subject to this kind of study given the growing interest in modern design during the last decade. DOCOMOMO-U.S.—the American branch of the international DOCOMOMO, which stands for “The Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites, and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement”—has sixteen chapters, including several in the Midwest. Regional groups have formed to study midcentury design, including in Texas