

Attebery, Jennifer Eastman, ed. 2015. *Pole Raising and Speech Making: Modalities of Swedish American Summer Celebration*. Logan: Utah State University Press. Xi + 184 pages. ISBN: 9-780874-219982.

In *Pole Raising and Speech Making: Modalities of Swedish American Summer Celebration*, Jennifer Eastman Attebery describes the ways in which Swedish ethnic communities in the United States' Rocky Mountain region incorporated summertime celebrations, and especially a Midsummer festival reflective of their Swedish heritage, into a developing seasonal holiday calendar representing both their immigrant and American identities. In doing so, she reveals the variations in celebration experienced by different communities due to population size and location, religious practices, commercialism and group sponsorship, or lacks of each thereof. Attebery focuses primarily on the last two decades of the 19th and first two decades of the 20th centuries (the peak of Swedish immigration to America), and draws from a vast array of sources, including oral histories, diaries, contemporary newspaper accounts and advertisements, and fieldwork at a modern midsummer festival in New Sweden, Idaho. The result is a well-written account of the role of spring-summer celebrations in the lives of Rocky Mountain Swedish Americans and the set of traditionalized practices associated with the Midsummer festival in particular that continue to develop over time.

The first three chapters provide the contexts in which the celebration came to exist among Swedish Americans, especially among those living in the Rocky Mountain states of Colorado, Utah, Montana, and Idaho. Midsummer became an important celebration, even though for many, it previously had little to no significance in Sweden. However, beginning around the 1880s, the festival became important on both sides of the Atlantic when Swedes at home and abroad underwent a period of "ethnic renewal" (13). Its placement on a roster of seasonal spring-to-summer holidays and its competition with and correlation to American and Mormon (also known as Latter-Day Saints, or LDS) celebrations are of great importance. In Chapter 2, the Midsummer practices fostered in the urban regions of Denver, Colorado, and Salt Lake City, Utah are presented to illustrate the ways in which Swedish American urbanites networked, used public areas to stage events, and adjusted Swedish traditions to fit American and Mormon practices and norms. These events, highlighted as public and formal by Attebery, were marked by the sponsorship of social and cultural organizations such as the Knights of Pythias and grew to incorporate American festival practices. Chapter 3 reveals Midsummer's placement in the regional summer holiday calendar including American Independence Day (July 4), Decoration Day (Memorial Day, the last Monday in May), and Pioneer Day (July 24, a commemoration of the date on which Mormons arrived to Utah's Wasatch Valley). This holiday calendar reflects the

social values of groups and individuals that can claim, both all at once and in alternating patterns, to identify as Swedish, American, or Mormon.

The next three chapters reveal important typical features of the festival practices. Chapter 4 explores the centrality of oral performance and literary practices in early Midsummer celebrations, including “speeches, recitations, proclamations, poetry, singing, theatrical performance, and prayers” (77). These stand in contrast to more modern conventions of Midsummer celebration that emphasize “kinesthetic and material expressive performance” (76). The role of the written word in event scripts, letters, and diary entries is also key to illustrating the uses of Midsummer as both a celebration and as a point of personal or small-group reflection. Chapter 5 focuses on the ways in which Midsummer incorporates both sacred and secular practices. American practices of sacralization of the secular, as seen in then-developing ethnic celebration, is an important point of discussion here. The use of religious customs, the intensification of the Swedish flag as a symbol, and poetic reference to Sweden and its land in oratory and song are several examples of venues in which the sacralization takes place. Chapter 6 is dedicated to private, small-group celebrations often found in communities smaller than Denver and Salt Lake City. The balance between necessary farm labour (such as making hay) and a desire to mark the Midsummer is revealed through Attebury’s careful examination of Swedish-American diaries and family papers. In this chapter, the place nature has in Midsummer celebrations is also highlighted and contextualized through discussion of created outdoor areas such as private garden arbours and public groves or parks in which groups met to celebrate together.

The last two chapters delve into aspects of identity as revealed through the Midsummer. Chapter 7 examines how Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish immigrants and ethnics contributed to a shared Scandinavian identity in the Rocky Mountain west, which often displayed itself through shared festival culture and social organization. Again, institutions including the Mormon church, social clubs, businesses, and the ethnic press contributed to this development, while tensions between these groups—as well as American concerns over loyalty during the World War I era complicated it. The final chapter, then, brings Swedish-American and Scandinavian festival culture in the region to the present day. Modern developments, including air travel, the development of Scandinavian cinema, the decline of ethnic fraternal orders and the near-disappearance of Swedish language in America help to contribute to shifts in the ways in which Swedish Americans in the region relate to their heritage as well as to the ways in which it is exhibited and shared.

Overall, Attebury does a remarkable job in using historical sources to bring this world of folk culture to life for the reader. Her emphasis on Swedish Americans in the Rocky Mountains, with their strong relation in many communities to the LDS church, provides us with a part of the ethnic story beyond often

well-documented Midwestern and Lutheran experiences. At the same time, however, she does situate this unique history in a broader picture, connecting with related festival practices and historical developments among Swedish Americans across the United States. This book will be of interest to folklorists, Scandinavianists, and historians of the American West. It is, in short, an important contribution to what we know about this ethnic group and its history.

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