



The WPA Guide to Minnesota (Borealis Book)

Federal Writers' Project, Frederick Manfred

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In the 1930s, at the height of the Great Depression, the federal government put thousands of unemployed writers to work in the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Out of their efforts came the American Guide series, the first comprehensive guidebooks to the people, resources, and traditions of each state in the union. The WPA Guide to Minnesota is a lively and detailed introduction to the state and its people. Much has changed since the book's first publication in 1938 when, as the authors noted, some Minnesotans could "clearly recall . . . the sight of browsing buffalo herds, and the creaking of thong-tied Red River carts." But the book vividly recaptures the era when annual fishing licenses cost fifty cents, farmers ran barn dances for motoring townfolk, Duluth was the headquarters of the Hay Fever Club of America, and the nearly new Foshay Tower loomed on the Minneapolis skyline. The guide has much more than nostalgia to offer today's readers. Twenty auto tours and six special city tours tell the stories of the state's people and places and offer a fascinating alternative to freeway travel. Essays on major themes such as native peoples, history, arts, transportation, and sports provide an authentic self-portrait of 1930s Minnesota in humorous, loving, and literary prose. This time-travelers' guide to Minnesota is an evocative reminder of the state's past and a challenge to contemporary readers who seek to find how that past lives on today. Special features include 20 road trips, 6 city tours, 15 boundary waters canoe trips, 12 maps, 22 drawings, an introduction by the renowned Midwestern writer Frederick Manfred, a chronology, and a revised bibliography.

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