

BOOK REVIEWS

James M. Merrill. The USA: A Short History of the American Republic. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1975. Pp. vii, 380. \$5.95.

"Brief" or "compact" surveys have come to occupy a major portion of the college history textbook market. Into this rapidly expanding, highly competitive field, Professor James M. Merrill and J.B. Lippincott Company introduce The USA: A Short History of the American Republic. The USA is a clearly written, traditionally structured, descriptive, one-volume survey of American history from 1492 through Watergate, intended primarily for lower division and especially community college students. Merrill's book consists of the text [284 pages], whose basic emphasis is on national events, the standard appendices, and a series of twelve biographical sketches presumably intended as supplemental reading. By "stressing the color and drama" (p. v) of America's past, Merrill hopes to arouse reader enthusiasm and to cultivate an interest in the history of the Republic.

Much of what appears in The USA closely follows traditional interpretations. Thus, the author depicts Hamilton's financial plan as a cornerstone in the nation's economic development, Teddy Roosevelt as an active, energetic, national leader, and FDR as a pragmatic president seeking to lead the nation out of the Depression. In other cases, however, Merrill's portrayals are open to question. In presenting Roger Williams as an apostle of religious freedom, the author overlooks that Williams neither initially advocated liberty of conscience for everyone nor refrained from discriminating against Quakers after he fled to Rhode Island. Some readers doubtlessly will take issue with Merrill's contention that "corruption, scandal, and incompetence characterized the reconstructed state governments controlled by carpetbaggers, scalawags, and blacks in the 1870s" (p. 129).

In this latter instance, as in others, The USA suffers from inconsistencies. Prior to his evaluation of reconstruction governments, the author stresses that many blacks who held office immediately after the Civil War "proved to be hard-working, conscientious public officials" (p. 129). Another, more striking inconsistency occurs in the treatment of the American Indians. Although the author is genuinely sensitive to the plight of the plains Indians during the latter half of the nineteenth century resulting from the repeated influx of white settlers into their domain, he overlooks the similarities in the situation during the colonial era, referring instead in his discussion of Bacon's Rebellion to the actions of "marauding savages" (p. 10).

In compiling a single volume survey like The USA, certain areas, of necessity, receive little or no coverage. For the most part, urban history, economic development, military affairs, social trends, and everyday existence are not dealt with in detail. More critical, however, is the scant attention The USA pays to the role of women, blacks, chicanos, native Americans, and other groups whose contributions to the country's history have only recently begun to be recognized. The text, for example, fails to mention the women's movement in its chapters on antebellum and modern-day America. The biographical profiles at the end of the book might have offset such omissions in that many focus upon minority figures; but they tend to be overly descriptive, inadequately introduced, narrowly focused sketches for which the text provides little background.

Despite such omissions, The USA might have been an effective textbook emphasizing national-political developments had the author succeeded in his major objectives. Merrill's survey, however, fails to bring history alive before its readers. Quoted materials and catchy chapter titles cannot overcome the general dullness of the text. Nor are the omissions of maps and illustrated materials, along with the book's small print, likely to capture

the interest of students fresh out of high school. The flow of the text improves somewhat in the latter half when chapters tend to cover relatively short spans of time, but The USA cannot be termed a lively or compelling text. In the final analysis, some instructors seeking a straight-forward, traditionally written survey may find The USA adequate for their needs. Most instructors, including those desiring a more lively, less traditional text, will not.

University of New Mexico

Paul W. Brewer

Stanley Feldstein and Lawrence Costello, eds., The Ordeal of Assimilation: A Documentary History of the White Working Class 1830's to the 1970's. Garden City: Anchor/Doubleday, 1974. 500 pp., Index. \$4.95. Moses Rischin, ed., Immigration and the American Tradition. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976. 456 pp., Index. \$7.50.

Ethnic studies has been blessed in recent years with an abundance of riches. Grandchildren of immigrants are writing and reading about their origins in unprecedented numbers. College professors from coast to coast are offering fields of study in ethnic topics. Even Congress has cooperated by founding an immigration history museum at the base of the Statue of Liberty and by re-opening Ellis Island. Two recent anthologies have added unequally to the ethnic abundance; Stanley Feldstein and Lawrence Costello, The Ordeal of Assimilation and Moses Rischin, Immigration and the American Tradition. The first, I can attest through personal use in the classroom, adds brilliantly to a course in ethnic history. The second is less useful.

The Ordeal of Assimilation has won the unanimous praise of my students, and little wonder! It is an exciting and poignant collection of primary documents in immigration history. One eyewitness to the Irish potato famine describes unforgettably the case of James Carthy, who died before the horrified eyes of his bedridden wife when he passed out from hunger and fell face down into the fire in his fireplace. The husband cooked to death in the presence of his nearly starved and helpless wife. Another account tells of the 10,000 Irish immigrants who died of typhus in a single summer (1847) after being quarantined on the notorious but aptly named Grosse Isle. An immigration inspector at Ellis Island explains that signs of "maniacal psychosis" include:

striking peculiarities in dress, talkativeness, witticism, facetiousness, detailing, apparent shrewdness, keenness, excitement, impatience in word or manner, impudence, unruliness, flightiness, nervousness, restlessness, egotism, smiling, facial expression of mirth, laughing eroticism, boisterous conduct, meddling with the affairs of others and uncommon activity.

The Ordeal includes excellent selections of nativist invectives as well as touching descriptions of life in the urban ethnic ghetto. Many immigrants speak for themselves in describing labor strife, the padrone system, contact with the public schools and night schools, and efforts to preserve cultural traditions. Finally the book samples well the recent emergence of the cultural pluralist impulses--the new ethnicity. The Ordeal of Assimilation is the best available single collection of primary documents concerning ethnic history. It is also well-edited and the selections are superbly introduced.

Moses Rischin has collected an altogether different kind of source material for his Immigration and the American Tradition. Of his fifty-five selections, only a few reflect the views of the common immigrant. Rischin's first seven selections are from the pens of William Bradford, Cotton Mather, Crèvecoeur, Thomas Paine, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and John Quincy Adams. These men may have constructed much of the American tradition, but

they provide precious little insight into the world of the common immigrant. In the chapter on "The Labor Question," Rischin curiously includes Franklin B. Gowen, President of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad during the Molly Maguire episode, and three socialist leaders. No common laborers! His chapter on "World War as Civil War" includes some interesting commentary from German-Americans during World War I revealing the extent of their inner strife and a touching testimony by Japanese-Americans during their World War II ordeal pleading for just treatment.

While much of Immigration and the American Tradition is both interesting and thought-provoking, it is simply too remote from the cares and problems of the immigrants in America. Rischin filters the immigrant experience through an "American Tradition" but he has unaccountably omitted the immigrants contribution to that tradition. It is fair to say that the immigrant has become somewhat lost in the translation.

Ithaca College

Paul W. McBride

David M. Chalmers. Neither Socialism nor Monopoly: Theodore Roosevelt and the Decision to Regulate the Railroads. (The America's Alternatives Series.) Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1976. Pp. x, 121. \$3.25.

According to Harold Hyman, editor of "The America's Alternatives Series," in each volume the author "seeks to learn why decision makers in crucial public policy or, more rarely, private choice situations adopted a course and rejected others" (ix). The emphasis of each study is upon contemporary conditions which produced a given policy, rather than interjecting current attitudes or values. David Chalmers' Neither Socialism nor Monopoly captures the spirit of the series quite well by trying to place the pivotal Hepburn Act within the context of early 20th century attitudes toward governmental regulation of big business.

The book is neither a "problems" book which focuses on a historiographical debate nor a book of documents devoid of historical analysis or perspective. Instead, the study combines a brief narrative of the background of railroad regulation, the impact of the Hepburn Act, and the legacy of the independent regulatory commission with accompanying documents which are keyed to the narrative for reference purposes.

The study's format, plus Chalmers' dispassionate analysis of the problem of regulation, makes Neither Socialism nor Monopoly a useful teaching tool--within certain limits. In Chapter II, the author outlines the options available to turn-of-the-century policy makers for regulating the railroads, ranging from no regulation to government ownership. By placing the practical alternatives within the contemporary context, he provides a necessary focus for students to examine the problem. The book's narrative, however, is too sketchy and general--despite the addition of some lively documents--to provide sufficient data to evaluate the policy options. The instructor who uses the book may wish to direct his or her students to more detailed studies, such as those in the concise but representative bibliography. Also, Chalmers necessarily assumes a basic knowledge of railroad and Gilded Age/Progressive Era history by his audience, which may require the "unannointed" to do some background reading.

Because of its limitations, Neither Socialism nor Monopoly seems more suitable for an upper-division or graduate course than a freshman college survey or high school course. Furthermore, the book might be used most effectively as a departure point for evoking classroom discussion on such topics as government-business relations, the need for economic reform, the importance of

policy development, etc. If the book is used with these guidelines in mind, it will certainly prove to be a welcome addition to the classroom.

Texas A&M University

Martin V. Melosi

David E. Kyvig, ed. FDR's America. St. Charles, Missouri: Forum Press, 1976. 183 pp., bibliography. \$5.95. H. Rogert Grant and L. Edward Purcell, eds. Years of Struggle: The Farm Diary of Elmer G. Powers, 1931-1936. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1976. 139 pp. \$6.95.

These two books provide some striking documents to enrich undergraduate study of the New Deal era. FDR's America is a series of readings dealing with the period from 1932 through World War II. It differs from many readers in its choice of materials. This volume does not contain traditional essays evaluating some aspect of the New Deal, but rather speeches, oral history interviews, and congressional testimony. The book is divided into twelve chapters, each dealing with a topic such as Milo Reno attacking the New Deal's farm policies or the testimony of Walter F. White, Executive Secretary of the NAACP, lobbying for a federal anti-lynching law. Each chapter has an introduction and a series of questions to aid students in analyzing the material.

One aspect of the volume that appeals to this reviewer is the choice of material. Most of the selections consist of hitherto unpublished items. Six of the accounts are contemporary diaries, speeches, radio broadcasts, or Congressional testimony. The focus of the volume is on topics such as labor organizing, the role of women in wartime, and the Black's struggle for social justice, that reflect areas where the New Deal did not remedy the plight of millions of Americans. This book would be fine supplemental reading in American history survey courses. The material presented by editor Kyvig should aid students in developing an assessment of the New Deal's effect on the American social structure.

The farm diary of Elmer Powers is a remarkable document. Elmer Powers farmed in Amaqua Township, Boone County, Iowa, as his father and grandfather had done before him. Powers kept a diary from 1931 until his death in 1942. H. Roger Grant, Associate Professor of History at Akron University, and L. Edward Purcell, editor for the State Historical Society of Iowa, have reduced the original diary's nearly 2,500 typed pages to a compact but informative account covering the years 1931-1936.

In many respects the Powers' diary is the answer to the oft asked question "How did the average person respond to the depression?" In reading Years of Struggle we get intimate views of a man attempting to keep his farm despite drought, severe winters, low prices, mortgages, and delinquent taxes. For the specialist, Powers has detailed accounts of his crop planting strategy, the prices, and the yield. But the appeal of the Diary for this reviewer is in observing the reactions of a conservative, hard-working farmer trying to make his way through the financial, political, and emotional struggles that complicated the normal challenge of wresting a living from the soil.

Powers is an unabashed rural chauvanist, but with a modest voice. Life is definitely better on the farm, and rural folk, are able to bear almost any burden. But still Powers feels compelled to note in his April 19, 1936, entry "The conclusion that I arrived at was that our nation is a careless, thotless [sic] nation in so far as our farm folks are concerned." As the depression stretched on, Powers became more convinced that farmers were working harder and for less money than their city brethren. He would never change places with his city neighbor, but the feeling that farmers were being exploited becomes more evident by 1936.

This diary is a fine source for the specialist in agricultural history or the depression era as well as the general student. The book is an excellent supplement for classes in recent American history where the objective is to expose students to a farmer's reaction to the radical Farm Holiday movement as well as the bureaucratic tangles of corn-hog loans. The book is strongly recommended for classes where the instructor wants to acquaint students with depression reality in rural America.

Southwest Minnesota State University

David L. Nass

Stephen E. Ambrose. Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy, 1938-1976. Revised Edition. New York: Penguin Books, 1976. Pp. 390. \$3.95.

This is almost the same book as the one which has appeared in various printings since 1971. The first 336 and a half pages of the text are identical with the first popular edition, and the suggested readings remain the same for the first twelve chapters. What we do have that is new in this revised edition is a sizeable price increase, an improved index, a weak concluding chapter on "Nixon and the Debacle in Vietnam," and an additional short reading list for "The Nixon Years"--all of which barely add to our understanding of Henry Kissinger, Gerald Ford, or the years in general since 1970.

With all this said, however, the book remains one of the most lively and provocative interpretative studies of the major events in recent American diplomatic history. Since the author has eschewed footnotes and a formal bibliography, the book has very limited appeal as a reference or upper-division source. As a classroom text, however, there is much here to commend. It is unusually well-written, full of challenging assertions and arguments, and intellectually entertaining. Whether one agrees with the rigorously liberal thrust of this work or not, one's students--whether at the senior high or the freshman-sophomore levels--are likely to find the book stimulating. Professor Ambrose is never timid or flabby in his thinking, and he requires his readers to either accept his positions, and know why, or to ferret out persuasive evidence and interpretations of their own. This makes, it would seem to me, for exciting teaching and learning.

The strongest sections of the book, which are all included in the first edition, deal with the WW II period, the diplomacy of Dwight Eisenhower, and the Vietnam war during the 1960s. Ambrose is, of course, a widely recognized expert in the first two of these areas. The book's most serious weakness is its failure to discuss American policies and attitudes toward Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, the nations and dependencies of the Pacific basin and rimlands, and the United Nations.

Metropolitan State College

F.P. King

Alton Hornsby, Jr. The Black Almanac: From Involuntary Servitude (1619-1860) to the Age of Disillusionment (1964-1974). Woodbury, NY: Barron, 1975. 241 pp. \$2.95.

Dr. Hornsby spent a great deal of time researching and determining the foremost historical events of the Black Experience, 1619-1973. His emphasis centers around the period 1970-1973 where, it appears, he feels the most significant events took place. Approximately one-half of his book is devoted to this period. In almost diary form, Dr. Hornsby chronicles the beginning of this decade. Although his recent history is informative, concise and well written, his presentation of the earlier period is laborious reading. It seems that before 1970 significant events were limited, with little long-term

impact on either Black or U.S. experience. His writing style changes from reporting the death of a person and his or her significance to reporting a person's birth and his or her significance.

Although it would be impossible to chronicle all those aspects believed significant to the Black Experience in the U.S., Dr. Hornsby has provided the reader with a basis for understanding particular events and people who influenced U.S. history as it relates to Black people. This volume should prove useful for junior and senior high students.

University of Minnesota

George D. King

Richard O. Davies. The Age of Asphalt: The Automobile, the Freeway, and the Condition of Metropolitan America. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1975. Pp. xii, 139. \$3.25.

Davies' book should be especially useful to the teachers of history at both the college introductory level and the upper tracks of secondary social studies. The subject matter is "relevant" and slightly off-beat, yet the treatment is effective and comprehensive. Opening with an interpretive essay on the "age of asphalt," Davies describes the development of policies related to the automobile, trucking, and construction industries which doomed mass transportation to benign neglect. The intense lobbying of these special interest groups, coupled with receptive political allies in national and state legislatures, resulted in the modern problems of defunct mass transportation, urban squalor, and pollution by the car. In the second part of the work Davies gathers the central documents relevant to the question of private vs. mass transport. The book concludes with a fine bibliographic essay. The style throughout is effective and sprightly, just what one would expect from an author who dedicates the work to his 1953 Chevy.

State University of New York, College at Cortland

Frank Burdick

Charles R. Poinsett and Bernard Norling. Understanding History Through the American Experience. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976. Pp. X, 214. \$3.95.

An historian once commented that writing history was much like nailing jello to a wall. The same could be said for teaching the academic discipline to students. Somehow whenever a scholar or a teacher or a student strikes the definitive nail that sets the framework of the past, the force of the blow uncovers other events which cause other explanations to appear. Like jello under pressure, the shape of history, if not its substance, is redone by the force of each new generation of scholars.

Post-World War II Americans, at least, seem more fond of concrete disciplines than those constructed of elusive historical data. Consequently over the last decade or so students and teachers have been inundated with books telling them why one must and how to nail down their heritage. Much like the Readers Digest "do-it-yourself" publications urging homeowners to become repairmen, the "how-to" history books exhort undergraduate students to dirty their hands in primary sources and become historians by meeting Clio face-to-face. The approach is a sound one: nothing introduces one to the vicissitudes of a profession, be they good or bad, as quickly as doing it yourself.

My favorite of the "how-to" books was Towards a Better Understanding of History (1960) by Bernard Norling. Designed for college freshmen, but used by advanced high school and not-too advanced graduate classes, the book introduced

students to historical scholarship: how to study history, how to ask historically relevant questions, and how to do beginning historical research. Charles Poinssatte, one of Norling's colleagues, has joined him in producing Understanding History through the American Experience, my now favorite book of its genre. I like this book better for precisely the reasons the authors said I would: the examples come from American history rather than from European history, and the book focuses upon the American experience. It is clearly designed for the U.S. survey classes.

The book is divided into eleven sections. The first four concern themselves with the mechanics of history--why study it, how to study it, how to judge its continuity, how to critically evaluate secondary works. The second five sections, and the reason the book serves as an excellent teaching tool, explore the theoretical aspects of history. Who and what influences history, the authors ask in these sections--great men, ideas, institutions, geography, economic factors? They answer, all. In the "Conclusion," Chapter X, they urge the student to be eclectic in explaining historical causation. The last chapter is rather pedestrian, setting forth the rules for the preparation and the form of a term paper. The format of the book, thus, explains its purpose--interest the student in history, have him question secondary works, make him experience the rigors of the academic discipline by writing, and, finally, tell him how to package his end product. A teacher could scarcely ask for more.

"How-to" books demand illustrations if they are to succeed. Home-repair volumes contain pictures that show how to grip hammers, to hold saws, or to use whatever tool the amateur seizes. Teachers serve as illustrations for academic "how-to" books. We check the note cards and answer for our students the questions raised by primary research. Unfortunately the trend in modern education towards large survey sections and canned lectures probably will make "how-to" books obsolete, because historians will not have enough time to oversee their use. Until that day comes, teachers could serve themselves and their students well by assigning Understanding History through the American Experience.

Texas A&M University

Robert A. Calvert

Ronald J. Grele, ed. Envelopes of Sound: Six Practitioners Discuss the Method, Theory and Practice of Oral History and Oral Testimony. Chicago: Precendent Publishing, Inc., 1975. 154 pp. + two 1-hour cassette tapes. Book, \$7.50; cassettes \$13.95.

One of the greatest problems facing teachers of oral history is the relative scarcity of instructional materials. Apart from Jan Vansina's classic work, Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology and the collected papers from the National Colloquia on Oral History, one has to rely on often short articles in journals such as the American Archivist.

Envelopes of Sound is not a technical guide into the methodology of oral history, but rather a profound inquiry into its theoretical problems, and ultimately, into the political aspects of oral history. We do not learn, for example, what kinds of questions to ask or how to select interview subjects (information which is readily available elsewhere). Instead, we again face the question, "What is history?" from the perspective of a new methodology. (I find myself using "we"--perhaps because I am caught up in the book, it makes me a participant, and after all, this is a goal of oral history.) We read an enjoyable interview with Studs Terkel, author of Hard Times and Working, who feels that we do not have a sense of our history, and that this makes us an easy prey to the mythologizing of our past that ultimately buttresses the political status quo. It is only by talking to people about their pasts, their part in history, Terkel suggests, that we can again become active in the

historical process. This theme is developed in an essay by Ronald Grele in which he suggests that oral history is an invaluable tool for discovering the role ideology has played in our historical consciousness.

This present collection consists of articles by and interviews with leading practitioners of oral history who are using the technique in a wide variety of areas, in both non-technological and industrial societies, and in interviewing both the "movers and shakers" of history as well as the "common" men and women. The product is perhaps one of the most stimulating discussions of history in some time.

Envelopes of Sound should be a major addition to the libraries and classrooms of historians who are practicing and teaching any aspect of social or cultural history or historical methodology. It is important to those historians who concentrate on the personal--and political--aspect of history, and as such, is an invaluable teaching guide. I suspect that students listening to the tapes will, like myself, get personally involved in the whole historical process and see their own relevance to it. As Saul Benison says here of oral history, "It has not only humanized history for me, I think it has made me more of a human being."

Hampshire College

Sally Allen

Boris Nicolaievsky and Otto Maenchen-Helfen. Karl Marx: Man and Fighter. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976. Pp. xii, 492. \$4.95.

A Russian Menshevik exile with the collaboration of a German socialist completed this chronologically organized and sympathetic biography of the father of 'scientific socialism' on the eve of fascism's victory in Germany. Penguin Books has now published a handy paperback version of this useful summary of Karl Marx's career, including an appropriate scholarly apparatus of appendices, notes, bibliography, and index. The theme of this analysis is simply stated in its subtitle. Rather than providing the usual analysis of Marx's economic and political philosophy, the authors emphasize "the strategist of the class struggle," an approach they admit was "dictated to us by the time in which we live" (p. x).

Nicolaievsky and Maenchen-Helfen attempt to provide the general reader with a complete picture of Marx, emphasizing the decades between 1842-1872. The most interesting and valuable aspects of this narrative, however, are the discussion of Marx's early life and the details provided on the personal side of his struggles. Throughout the authors rely on first-hand sources such as Marx's own writings, those of his contemporaries, and the reports of the Prussian political police who dogged German radicals everywhere. What emerges is a portrait of a young man of bourgeois German upbringing who gradually turned against his own social class intellectually as he worked his way through the philosophical currents of the 1830's and 1840's. From a converted, and apparently very happy, Jewish family in Trier, Marx fell in love with, and later married, the beautiful girl next door, Jenny von Westphalen. He even won his dueling scar while at the University of Bonn, and a doctorate in 1841 from Jena, "celebrated at the time for the readiness with which it granted doctor's degrees" (p. 45).

What turned this young German intellectual into a philosophical communist is a question never satisfactorily answered by the authors. Though they trace adequately Marx's incessant battles against the nineteenth century establishment, as well as against all other shades of radicalism and socialism, their more immediate purpose seems to be the painting of a portrait worthy of emulation in their own times. This points up the main weakness of this study:

their uncritical approach makes of Marx a prophet with an "unshakeable belief in his own mission" (p. 257). Yet the biographical data includes hints at the paradoxes of a man who quarrelled interminably with fellow political radicals but who still tried to live a bourgeois life in spite of the hardships of exile.

This volume seems well-suited for college level courses focusing on the history of ideas or the development of socialism and communism. The biographical approach and the readable translation provide a more believable portrait of Marx the man than a strictly philosophical analysis of Marxism. Unfortunately, the stiff American price of this paperback edition, more than double the English one at the current exchange rates, will no doubt prove an obstacle to wider use in history classes.

University of Toledo

Larry D. Wilcox

ANNOUNCEMENT

Teaching History: A Journal of Methods would like to increase its list of persons willing to review books for the journal. Any person who would like to have his or her name added to the reviewer list should write to Professor Ronald E. Butchart, Department of Education, SUNY College at Cortland, Cortland, New York 13056. Please include a brief vita and a list of subject competencies.