

ironworking tradition. Though one could wish he had explored these questions further, Vlach's attempt to attain some sort of balance in his presentation of Simmons and his craft is excellent and is perhaps the book's major strength. The integration of the craft, the craftsman, and his product parallels developments in folksong scholarship which assume the importance of viewing the song and its singer as parts of an almost inseparable whole, and recognizes the value of interpreting one part in terms of another. **Charleston Blacksmith** is an important addition to the literature of blacksmithing, and also to the broader subject of folk arts and crafts. It is to be hoped that this innovative work will serve as a model for future studies of other craftsmen and other crafts.

**From Memory to History, Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research.** By Barbara Allen and Lynwood Montell. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981. Pp. 176. \$12.50.

Reviewed by Annette B. Fromm.

Folklore and oral history employ two very similar methodologies. Data is collected in a process which has been glossed as "the interview." Even the information collected orally by both of these disciplines and approaches is somewhat similar and indeed on some occasions overlapping. When you ask about a particular individual or place in a town while conducting an oral history interview, the response might be a fully believable explanatory story which in fact is legendary in quality and content, so that while collecting historically oriented data, you at the same time may be collecting folk narratives. But the problem lies in the "glossing" of these two disciplines and the confusing of their methodologies which is tacitly encouraged by state and federal funding agencies which support local history, oral history, social history, folklore and folk arts projects. While the oral historian may unknowingly, or purposefully, collect folklore and the folklorist is deeply interested in historical data - in

written form or elicited orally - as contextual material supporting the folklore, we must not let these two subjects be carelessly equated and used interchangeably.

This is the danger of the current Lynwood Montell and Barbara Allen book **From Memory to History, Using Oral Sources in Local History Research**, published by the American Association for State and Local History. Note the title and how it hedges on the problem; it is subtitled "Using **Oral Sources** in Local History Research" (my italics added). As we collect both oral history and folklore from oral sources what is it that Allen and Montell are addressing? This book has grown out of previous manuals that describe the whys and wherefores of oral history. So, seemingly, oral history is the main subject. I am not convinced of this.

My questions of the content of this volume lie with methodology. The authors warn us that "obtaining historical information...is not all the same as...ordinary conversations" (p. 40). They outline three social settings where the past is talked about: 1) informal conversations, informal settings; 2) informal conversations, formal occasions; 3) formal conversations, formal occasions. This discussion of settings, implicitly introducing the reader to the participant-observer process is important for too often the oral historian, or the folklorist, enters a situation convinced that he knows what to ask for, and what he will find. The first two settings allow for research for the individual with good listening skills; there the interviewer can hear narratives which will be later elicited in the interview. The knowledge of a community on a particular subject can be gauged and the more skilled, more knowledgeable narrators identified. There is nothing more frustrating than to conduct an interview and receive only monosyllabic answers.

The third setting discussed by Allen and Montell is the interview, "organized, patterned conversation, in the form of questions and answers, on historical topics" (p. 43). Montell and Allen favor the first two settings for collecting because of their informal nature which encourages a natural flow of information, in a sequence which is important to the narrator or the group. Indeed, oral

historians need to develop their participant-observer skills in order to gain access to a wider range of data on their subjects. But, these sessions and the knowledge gained at them must be used in conjunction with the interview in order to insure collecting quality.

Now, more and more folklorists are relying upon structured interviews as the main means of collecting their data. This is a failing, for the same reasons which Allen and Montell point out in collecting oral history. What is overlooked in this book, though, is that the nature of oral historical material and folkloric material - even that of a historical nature - is quite distinct. Narratives may be the focus of both, but the very nature of the interview is to cut into narratives, breaking them into statements of "fact." The folklorist is collecting the **narrative** - both its form and its content - not only the facts contained in it. This difference is glossed over by the authors' reference to **oral sources** without clarifying what they are referring to.

This book raises many provocative questions for the trained oral historian and the trained folklorist. It introduces the oral historian to the more subjective material which they should be collecting with their facts; it is this material which gives a meaning to the whole process of oral history, imbuing the historical fact with the very important individual human dimension. For the oral historian who in the past scoffed at or did not recognize the folklore contained on the tapes collected, the authors deal with identifying folklore and then testing these narratives for validity. They also point out that validity is not necessarily a crucial element to the data. These are important points not found in other oral history manuals.

For the amateur oral historian, this book will be confusing. The weakness of the oral history interview, as carried out by an amateur, is that the third setting identified by the authors - a formal conversation in a formal occasion - is often treated as a conversation, not an interview. Perhaps this is a moot point, but an interview is not a conversation and to call it so is a mistake, leading to tapes in which the interviewer participates too much. Of course, give and take and sharing are impli-

cit and necessary in order to encourage the subject to speak freely, but all too often, poorly trained interviewers monopolize the "conversation" instead of skillfully eliciting information from the subject.

Chapter Six is the best contribution to the book. In this chapter, the authors get into technicalities of permission and release forms, transcription, organizing of the oral materials. In a very readable manner they deal with producing a manuscript from the scores of texts collected, and how to do such mechanical things as footnote and organize taped sources into bibliographic form. This information is not available in such a clear form in any other manual. Their best piece of advice in arranging the manuscript is to integrate the oral texts into the written narratives. "By no means should the oral material be lumped together into a separate chapter and labeled 'folklore'" (p. 105). Finally, from this statement we realize that the subject of this book is indeed folklore, albeit disguised as oral sources (history?). I criticize this masking and find it the weakness that pervades the entire book.

**The Alabama Folk Lyric: A Study in Origins and Media of Dissemination.** By Ray B. Browne. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1979. Pp. iv + 480, index. \$25.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Joseph P. Goodwin.

Ray Broadus Browne, a former Alabamian and sometime folklorist, is the father of the study of popular culture; he teaches classes in this field at Bowling Green University and is director of the Popular Press. His **Alabama Folk Lyric**, based on his 1956 doctoral dissertation at UCLA (which is almost impossible to obtain), appears to be a welcome addition to the body of material available on Alabama folklore. Along with Browne's other works-- **Popular Beliefs and Practices from Alabama** (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958) and **"A Night with the Hants" and Other Alabama Folk Experiences** (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1978 [?])--**The Alabama Folk Lyric** could have provided a solid