

Book Reviews

Ohio: A Bicentennial History. By Walter Havighurst. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., and Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1976. Pp. ix, 211. Maps, notes, illustrations, suggestions for further reading, index. \$8.95.)

Walter Havighurst was a splendid choice to write the Ohio volume in the American Association for State and Local History's American Revolution Bicentennial series. The association's charge to the authors—to write an "interpretive, sensitive, thoughtful, individual, even personal" account—has been fulfilled. Those familiar with Havighurst's many books relating segments of Ohio's history can anticipate the lyric, poetic quality of this work. A romantic haze hangs over Havighurst's Ohio, softening the harsher edges of its experience yet not seriously distorting reality.

If there is a central theme to this work, it is the boundless optimism and unremitting toil of early settlers and developers who found a rich and favored land that contained everything needed for both an agricultural and an industrial frontier. Success was assured, progress inevitable; the "flag shaped state" was the certain end point of a productive social development.

Havighurst is at his best writing about topics that have long interested him—the romance of the river trade, Great Lakes shipping, the survey and sale of western lands, the clearing of initial settlements in the great forest. Politics pass almost unnoticed except for a graceful and perceptive summary of the presidents born and raised in Ohio. Each major city is sketched briefly; indeed, too briefly to capture the particular flavor of each. Other topics which receive but brief mention, or no mention at all, are religion, colleges, interurbans, recreation, the fine arts, and organized sports. Some important periods—the American Revolution, for example—are not covered; only twelve pages are given to the half century following Warren G. Harding's death.

Although the author was not obligated to cover the total experience of the state and its people, the chronological imbalance leaves the impression that Ohio's great days were largely over by 1920, as perhaps they were insofar as the fixing of its character is concerned. Some other authors in this series of state histories have truncated their accounts in

like fashion. Perhaps this tendency is inherent in studies that search for the central nature or essence of a state that reached maturity more than a half century ago.

As so often is the case with generalized overviews, there are a number of factual errors in this book. They are not of major proportion and do not detract notably from the overall effect of the work. A picture essay of sixteen photographs by Joe Clark, while conveying some sense of "typical" Ohio views, is too limited to contribute much to one's feeling for the state's people and places. These caveats aside, however, the general reading public, for whom this book is designed, will profit from the instruction and the pleasure they will experience as they renew their acquaintance with Ohio through the pen of a skilled and sympathetic interpreter.

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Black Ohio and the Color Line, 1860-1915. By David A. Gerber. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976. Pp. xii, 500. Map, notes, note on sources, index. \$14.95.)

Black Ohio and the Color Line is the product of a superb research effort by David A. Gerber. And yet, somewhat paradoxically, this thorough and extensive research is both the book's strength and its weakness. On the one hand Gerber brings together a body of black newspapers, black manuscript collections, black memoirs, statistics, and unpublished scholarly studies in such a way as to tell more about the "bricks and mortar" of the lives of blacks in late nineteenth century Ohio than is known for any other northern state. On the other hand, however, the tremendous amount of detail at the author's disposal poses problems of style and focus which are not entirely overcome. Repetitive examples, complex sentence structure, and very extensive footnoting frequently pack the chapters with more detail than is necessary and consequently diminish the impact of analysis. The book's literary shortcomings do not reduce its high scholarly value, but they probably will restrict its use by others than historians.

The period 1860 to 1915 was a time of peaks and valleys for black Ohioans, as it was for black Americans everywhere. Gerber documents a shifting black outlook which moved from