

emerged as the major obstacle. Only after the election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 could the Muskingum Valley business leaders find the money to carry out their plans. During the early New Deal years the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) became a reality.

With federal support came some hard lessons for the gentlemen from the Muskingum Valley. While the government promised and ultimately delivered sufficient money for establishment of MWCD, federal funds brought the government into planning and supervision of MWCD projects. Plans were altered, and autonomy was compromised as the flood control program was turned over to the Army Corps of Engineers. Conceived and planned as a local effort, MWCD thus became largely a federal undertaking.

Acting more as editor than as author, Hal Jenkins has drastically condensed the late Dr. Roscoe Eckelberry's annotated 1,500 page manuscript into "a manageable narrative for a wider audience" (p. ix). With this larger readership in mind, Jenkins has deleted "most of such academic trappings as footnotes and citations that are of little interest to the general reader" (p. ix). The result is a straightforward narrative of the development of MWCD, marred by numerous lengthy quotations from plans and reports and the lack of an analysis of the importance of MWCD in the development of water resource legislation and programs. The general reader's interest remains to be determined. For the historian the inclusion of the notes or a bibliographic essay, coupled with some assessment of the significance of the MWCD enterprise, would have increased the value of this volume. Readers interested in a more analytical approach should consult Lyle E. Craine, "The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District: A Study of Local Control," *Law & Contemporary Problems*, XXII (Summer, 1957).

*Historical Division, Office  
of the Chief of Engineers,  
Baltimore*

Frank N. Schubert

*Tomatoes Were Cheaper: Tales from the Thirties.* By Charles A. Jellison. (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1977. Pp. ix, 240. Note on sources. \$10.95.)

*Tomatoes Were Cheaper*, a treatment of America in the 1930s, is not a scholarly monograph but rather an attempt "simply to recapture something of the flavor of American life as it was during those years" (p. vii). The usual scholarly appa-

tus is lacking. There is no documentation aside from a suggestive but imprecise "Note on Sources." The choice of subjects is unusual. Only five of the eleven chapters contain material one might expect in a standard survey of the decade: the impact of the depression, the Bonus March, rejection of American membership in the World Court, Franklin D. Roosevelt's reelection in 1936, and the Dies Committee's investigation of the Federal Theatre Project. The other topics are unexpected: the disappearance of New York Judge Joseph Crater, a lynching in California, Dizzy Dean and the gashouse gang, the notorious Brady gang, and the rescue of a boy lost on a mountain in Maine.

It would be easy to dismiss this book simply because it is not a standard historical survey. Occasionally there are problems. It is not always easy to distinguish the author's views from contemporary opinion. Does Jellison believe that communist subversion resulted from American recognition of the Soviet Union (p. 161)? The absence of footnotes is keenly felt. The author seems to accord Herbert Hoover greater prescience about the Depression than is justifiable (p. 6). At times the emphasis seems misplaced. Jellison focuses on negative opinion of Roosevelt (pp. 153-68), and while this is ably done, it was Roosevelt's enormous popularity which was more characteristic of the era. The subtitle is ambiguous; "tales" connotes fiction. The value of even so informal a book could have been enhanced by an index.

But these criticisms are minor. Jellison has indeed succeeded in recapturing "something of the flavor" of American life during the 1930s. The result vindicates the method. The author describes the astonishing diversity of the decade and the travail of ordinary Americans who, in addition to pinching pennies and looking for work, also went to baseball games, read about gangsters, cheered the recovery of a lost boy—and sometimes lynched kidnappers. Jellison is an excellent writer who skillfully selected episodes capable of illuminating various aspects of the 1930s. *Tomatoes Were Cheaper* is a memorable book resulting from literary artistry successfully working on historical material. The book should make excellent supplementary reading in American history courses and will be read with pleasure and profit by students and general readers alike.

*The Filson Club, Louisville*

Nelson L. Dawson