

These small caveats aside, the book is rich, comprehensive, and judicious. Other studies pale in all comparisons. Nature blessed Norris with a long and successful life; Lowitt now blesses him with a similar biography.

*Indiana University East,
Richmond*

George T. Blakey

Families and Communities: A New View of American History.
By David J. Russo. (Nashville: The American Association
for State and Local History, 1974. Pp. x, 322. Notes, bibli-
ography, indexes. Paperbound, \$7.00.)

Your Family History: A Handbook for Research and Writing.
By David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty. (Arlington
Heights, Ill.: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1978. Pp. 71.
Illustrations, further reading, forms. Paperbound, \$2.95.)

Generations: Your Family in Modern American History. Second
edition. By Jim Watts and Allen F. Davis. (New York:
Alfred A. Knopf, 1978. Pp. xiv, 288. Illustrations, figures,
appendix, genealogical charts. Paperbound, \$6.95.)

All three of these books reflect the increasing interest historians are devoting to community and family history in their research and in college classrooms. David J. Russo's *Families and Communities* is a combination of a bibliographic essay and a call for a new approach to writing American history. He spends several chapters surveying the manner in which historians have treated various levels of communities, such as towns, cities, states, and regions. His conclusion is "that Americans have always lived simultaneously in various levels of communities and that the level of most consequence has shifted from the little community—the town—to the big community—the nation" (pp. 155-56).

Russo maintains that most textbook writers have concentrated on a national frame of reference with a heavy emphasis on political events. Such an emphasis, he feels, has actually distorted American history. He argues that the national community did not become dominant until somewhere between 1870 and 1930. To emphasize the nation-state from the colonial period to the present is, therefore, inaccurate. Russo calls for a new scheme that focuses on the individual, the family, and the levels of community in which they have lived, with the em-

phasis gradually shifting from the town to the city to states to regions and finally to the nation. He promises that this approach will reveal more about the history of the United States than do our present texts.

Russo acknowledges several potential problem areas for those working to develop this new scheme. One of the main problems will be the creation of a proper balance between dramatic events and the normal functioning of individuals, groups, and institutions. In this area he warns against giving preponderance to political affairs. Russo calls on historians to be sensitive to the complex interplay among political, economic, social, cultural, and intellectual forces; to ascertain the direction of various influences; and to distinguish between the causes of change and the reflections of change. Establishing a proper balance between elitist history and mass history is a third problem to which writers of the new history should respond. A main deficiency of current texts, according to Russo, is their periodization. He suggests dividing American history into four periods: colonial, the Revolution to the Civil War, Civil War to World War II, and World War II to the present. These longer periods would allow historians to gain a better perspective as to the ways in which major changes were related to each other.

David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty have put together a fine little book in *Your Family History: A Handbook for Research and Writing*. This slim volume is a good handbook either for a supplemental project on family history in a survey course or as part of the reading for a community or oral history course. The authors blend basic, nuts-and-bolts information on family research with brief introductions to historical methodology and bibliographic information on major works in family and community history. The student is systematically brought through a family history research project from selecting a topic to using various sources of information and techniques of research. Examples of different resources such as photographs and oral interviews illustrate the authors' approach. This book is a nice example of its type, easily read and reasonably priced. It is strongly recommended to anyone who is contemplating involving students in a family history research project.

Jim Watts and Allen F. Davis have developed a larger and more comprehensive reader in *Generations*. This book is designed for use as a main source book or text in a family history course. The authors teach at urban universities, Watts at City College of New York and Davis at Temple, and the reader

senses an urban orientation in the construction of this volume, which deals with the problems of immigration, work and unemployment, and war, as they influence the family. However, rural poverty and the rural to urban migration are also illustrated. The material is organized in a circular fashion that is designed to encourage the student to think about himself and his family and thus to motivate him to examine the family's history. Two of the great events of the twentieth century—the Great Depression and World War II—are used as examples to illustrate the way in which world events affect families. After bringing the student through World War II, the authors then swing back to reflecting on modern American life. Here they develop themes of generational tension in manners and morals and the problems involved in adapting to a rapidly changing, highly technological society. Along the margins of the various readings are questions designed to prompt class discussion or student thinking. "Are trial marriages a good idea? Why or why not?" (p. 232). An appendix contains materials and advice to aid students in researching their own family history. The work is well-illustrated and reflects considerable research in a variety of photographic archives.

Generations is a combination of a mini-history of the Depression, World War II, and postwar America as seen from the perspective of the individual and the family. The problems of the acculturation, racism, poverty, migration, and work are developed not as political issues but as factors with which people have to deal as they "grow up" in modern America and with which their parents struggled during the Depression and World War II. It is an excellent and unique approach to introducing the beginning student to the concepts of family history and recent American history. With a little luck the student will get interested enough in history to take another course.

*Southwest State University,
Marshall, Minn.*

David L. Nass

Registration Methods for the Small Museum: A Guide for Historical Collections. By Daniel B Reibel. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1978. Pp. 160. Notes, illustrations, appendixes, bibliographical note, index. Paperbound, \$6.75.)

As Reibel states in his preface, he has tried to "present the means to develop a registration system that will be as good as any and up to the current state of the art" (p. 7). He has