

While the serious scholar will still find it necessary to turn to the letters themselves, the abstracts and index will serve as a valuable tool and will save many hours of research time. In some ways it may seem an unnecessary digression to refer to an abstract only in turn to be directed to the original source. However, when one considers the great volume of correspondence involved—hundreds of letters were written between 1824 and 1893—it can be seen clearly that in this instance “the long way home is the shortest in the end.”

Christian Theological Seminary,
Indianapolis

Lester G. McAllister

The Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions, 1775-1850. By Malcolm J. Rohrbough. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. Pp. xiv, 444. Maps, notes, tables, bibliography, index. \$17.50.)

Like C. Wright Mills or William H. Whyte describing the lives of the “white-collar people” who pioneered suburbia, Malcolm J. Rohrbough suggests that the social history of the trans-Appalachian frontier was a history without events. The individual lives of early settlers were filled with anecdote, to be sure, but even these may be subsumed under general patterns dictated by the cycle of the seasons in a society and an economy based on agriculture. “Life for most of the settlers on the first frontier [of the 1780s and 1790s] was basic and close to nature; its unifying characteristic was physical labor” (p. 62), but so it was also for the pioneers of the Old Northwest, the Old Southwest, the Trans-Mississippi West, and of those “enduring frontiers” in Michigan, Florida, and Arkansas. The endless cycle of work, turn the soil, plant, harvest, and survive—or starve—thus provided the settlers with an experience more potent, Rohrbough suggests, than the alienation consequent to emigration that Oscar Handlin saw as the origin of American individualism and cooperation. Although alienation and emigration were also part of the life of these native-born, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant westering migrants, theirs was an experience which was no experience, in that it taught them to do only what they already knew how to do so that life on a new farm and life on an old farm were often indistinguishable.

The result in personal behavior—which is what scholars test conceptions of national character against—was the creation of a distinct society of non-yeoman farmers in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, lumpen landowners, self-sufficient depen-

dents. Shy and uncomfortable in the presence of easterners and city-dwellers, and especially women; contemptuous of the mannerly if they were ministers or schoolmasters but deferential to the point of obsequiousness toward the grantees who were their "betters"; with a tendency toward violence bred not of individualism but of inadequate social experience and manifested in duelling by the "planters," brawling by the rest, and intemperance by all—these were the nineteenth-century's silent majority, mute victims of life itself. "In a manner strongly reminiscent of Marc Bloch's description of the age of feudalism, the early settlers across the mountains were surrounded by powerful forces—human and natural—that they could not control" (p. 18), Rohrbough remarks. And he suggests the manner in which dependence upon a market economy, the vagaries of American foreign and domestic policy after 1820, and the incomprehensibility of an institutional network controlled from county courthouse, state capital, or Congress provided specificity but no focus to their anxiety in the years after the "Indian danger" was past.

This work is thus an anti-frontiersman-as-hero book. It is as far as one can come from Theodore Roosevelt's *Winning of the West* or Frederick Jackson Turner's revision of that vision into the needed late nineteenth-century synthesis of a coherent and comprehensible, useful past, in which pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of thought and behavior were identified as variations on a single theme. It is as far also from such Whiggish-liberal transformations of the Rooseveltian or Turnerian visions as have been offered in recent years by those who would save appearances by creating new heroes in the West—most notably the work of Richard Wade, whose *Urban Frontier*, read first as a corrective to Turner and bearing the imprimatur of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., himself, appears to Rohrbough as historically inaccurate and ideologically inappropriate. It was towns, not cities, which provided the "urban" experience of westerners, according to Rohrbough, and it was people not institutions which lay at the heart of the westward movement. Indeed, Rohrbough continually argues that the institutional network, designed by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century progenitors of the meddlesome planners of our own time, was always more complex than necessary and more fully drawn than the realities of a simple society permitted, and he is sometimes amazed and always distressed at the regular interference of government in every aspect of pioneer life.

Rohrbough's argument will not discredit the attempts of others to examine how institutions worked on the frontier, how

relationships formed between cities and towns and hinterlands, or how life in the new lands differed from life—albeit rural life—in the predominantly rural seaboard states. But all such inquiry in the future will have to begin by asking whether there is in fact a history of the frontier as such, distinct from the well recognized and event-filled history of westward expansion. By his own careful refusal to concern himself with these issues directly, Rohrbough's discussion of frontier society forces the reader to confront the larger question, not simply of the place of the frontier in American history but of how to organize the past and hence how to define the present and future. He has written a book which all historians, and perhaps all Americans, must find both compelling and dangerous, hence welcome.

University of Cincinnati,
Cincinnati

Henry D. Shapiro

The Delawares: A Critical Bibliography. By C. A. Weslager. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, for the Newberry Library, 1978. Pp. viii, 84. Index. Paperbound, \$4.95.)

The Cherokees: A Critical Bibliography. By Raymond D. Fogelson. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, for the Newberry Library, 1978. Pp. x, 98. Index. Paperbound, \$4.95.)

Indian Missions: A Critical Bibliography. By James P. Ronda and James Axtell. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, for the Newberry Library, 1978. Pp. xi, 85. Index. Paperbound, \$4.95.)

The Indians of the Northeast: A Critical Bibliography. By Elisabeth Tooker. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, for the Newberry Library, 1978. Pp. xi, 77. Index. Paperbound, \$4.95.)

These four volumes are recent additions to the Newberry Library's continuing series of Native American bibliographies. Although all four should prove useful to anthropologists, historians, and librarians, some will be more valuable than others.

Of particular interest is *The Cherokees*, by Raymond D. Fogelson, and *Indian Missions*, coauthored by James P. Ronda and James Axtell. Fogelson's essay, well-balanced between history and anthropology, carefully examines the profusion of scholarly writing upon the Cherokees. Fogelson surveys the major facets of Cherokee history and culture, critically evaluat-