

about the need to recognize the basic historical direction of change in the past century and a half. His reminder of the superstition, apathy, and insensitivity of the "frontier generation" also is a healthy corrective for what can occur in local history interpretations. Thomas J. Schlereth presents techniques and Hoosier examples of "above-ground archaeology" as a new means for museum curators and history teachers to encourage a search for historical meaning outside museum exhibits and history texts. Schlereth advocates interpretation of the records of landscape, place names, architecture, and other material culture artifacts, and he deftly demonstrates how this art is practiced. Schlereth's excursion into history without tears unintentionally demonstrates the need for documentary corroboration and the utility of traditional historical knowledge for gaining insight from a community's visual record.

Indiana University-Purdue University, Clifford H. Scott
Fort Wayne

Local Government Records: An Introduction to Their Management, Preservation, and Use. By H. G. Jones. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1980. Pp. xii, 208. Notes, illustrations, figures, appendixes, index. Paperbound, \$6.95.)

Among the 81,000 units of local government in the United States, including counties, towns, villages, cities, parishes, and boroughs, there is a bewildering variety of local public records. Their form and content are as varied as the governmental activities they reflect—collecting taxes, administering justice, maintaining roads, conducting elections, providing public education, and recording vital statistics and legal documents. To provide some information about the management, preservation, and use of this exponentially increasing body of records, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and the American Association for State and Local History commissioned H. G. Jones to write this volume. Jones, past president of the Society of American Archivists, former director of the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, and presently curator of the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina, was an obvious choice for the assignment.

The original objective of providing a manual outlining a model for the management and use of local public records had to be abandoned because there appeared to be little consensus

on what constituted a model among archivists, records managers, and local public officials. What Jones has produced instead is an introduction to local records designed "to stimulate public officials to examine their current method of coping with their records problems and to evaluate the benefits that may be derived from a well-planned program incorporating a variety of controls such as inventories, retention/disposition schedules, microfilming, and intermediate storage areas" (p. 21). The first half of the book is directed primarily at records custodians, emphasizing the need for proper preservation, practical steps for establishing a local records program, and examples of successful programs of different sizes and ages. Perhaps of more interest to general readers is the second half, which examines the range of records found in local repositories, their contents, and their possible research uses.

Jones' suggested procedures for establishing a records management system for each county may underestimate the reluctance of local public officials to spend time and money on such projects. However, even if it is impossible to establish national standards and model schedules, it may be possible to establish uniform guidelines within states. State-based programs, such as NHPRC-funded projects for a microfilming program in Ohio, for a municipal records manual in Wisconsin, and for a court records survey in Massachusetts, may prove to be the only practical route to eventual control over local public records. Seasoned genealogists and local historians may not find much that is startlingly new concerning the research use of local records, but this section of the book serves as an excellent introduction to the range and possible use of such records. The author's intensive research in eight states and correspondence with state and local officials in the remaining forty-two is solid, and his recommendations are sound. Whether they will bring their intended results remains to be seen.

University of Wisconsin, Parkside

Nicholas C. Burckel

Small Town Chicago: The Comic Perspective of Finley Peter Dunne, George Ade, Ring Lardner. By James DeMuth. (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1980. Pp. 122. Notes, bibliographic essay, select bibliography, index. \$11.00.)

This is a first-rate literary and sociological study of Chicago in the 1890s as seen through the fictive lenses of three humorists. To the perennial question "Can fiction faithfully