

number of questions of interpretation and analysis. The text introduces the reader to various materials, their origins and preservation, but it does not provide the direction most needed by the developing historian—guidance in using the materials profitably. The novice is not shown how to apply deductive skills or to evaluate inferential clues to reach historical insights, nor is the person who has moved beyond the elementary given sufficient guidance for acquiring deeper understanding. Fewer examples, elaborated in more detail, of just how historians evaluate different kinds of evidence would have given the reader a better appreciation of the possibilities and limitations of nearby history.

Readers of this volume should also consult other complementary publications of the American Association for State and Local History, such as Thomas E. Felt's *Researching, Writing, and Publishing Local History* (1981), H.G. Jones's *Local Government Records* (1980), Fay D. Metcalf and Matthew T. Downey's *Using Local History in the Classroom* (1982), David J. Russo's *Families and Communities* (1974), and Thomas J. Schlereth's *Material Culture Studies in America* (1982). Together they serve as a practitioner's guide to the study of local history.

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*Ordinary Americans: From Kohl to Cole, 1790-1980; with Pertinent Information on Related Families.* By Charles E. Cole. (Nashville: Coleoptera Press, 1981. Pp. 77. Maps, notes, illustrations, appendixes, index. Paperbound, \$20.00.)

*Ordinary Americans* is Charles Cole's own family history. The first ancestor he can locate is his great-grandfather, Jacob Kohl of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania (1795-1871), but the person who did more to shape later generations was Kohl's son, Jacob Cole (1835-1908), who moved from Pennsylvania to northern Illinois in 1856 and to Denton County, Texas, in 1882. The author himself was born and raised in Texas. The book is filled with detailed information about collateral descendants of Jacob Kohl as well as the author's own line. One sometimes loses one's way in the tangle of *Kinnomen*; but photographs, genealogical charts, and attempts to capture something of the individuality of many family members make this family history more readable than most. Cole uses letters and diaries from the nineteenth century as well as oral-history interviewing. When

short on information about his ancestors, he employs secondary sources to suggest what life might have been like for them.

Two things struck this reviewer. First, how brief is American history! Charles Cole's *grandfather* was the pioneer who began in Pennsylvania and crossed the plains to Texas. The great events of our past are encompassed in about three or four lifetimes! Second, how fragile are family bonds. Migration could easily break parent-child ties for good. Cole reprints a letter from Jacob Cole's mother to Jacob after he had moved to Illinois. She lists for him his various nieces and nephews; apparently he is unaware of their existence back in Pennsylvania. Jacob "burned his bridges," as author Cole points out; frontier individualism and rejection of the past often implied rejection of the family.

Charles Cole's own attitude is not particularly reverential toward his family history; he has the scholar's detachment. That attitude seems thoroughly in keeping with contemporary culture and with the history of the Coles.

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