

Ty Cobb. By Charles C. Alexander. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984. Pp. 272. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$16.95.)

One of the greatest, if not the greatest, players in baseball history was Ty Cobb, major league outfielder from 1905 to 1928. A native of the red-clay country of northern Georgia and son of a locally prominent educator, he moved into the world of sports before he was twenty. During nearly all his career, he wore the uniform of the Detroit Tigers and set innumerable records as a hitter and base stealer. Only recently have some of them been broken or closely approached. Owing to shrewd investments, such as stocks in Coca Cola and General Motors, more than to compensation from the Tigers (very modest by modern standards), he retired as a multimillionaire. This long period to 1961 brought him more trouble than happiness, as his unstable temperament alienated family and friends and detached him from the sport he loved.

Charles Alexander has produced a well-researched, well-written biography, quite superior to the usual book about athletes. A skilled historian, he has gathered evidence wherever available—from relevant manuscripts at the National Baseball Library at Cooperstown and the Detroit Public Library, from interviews and a wide range of publications. But newspapers provide most of his information, which is apparent in full descriptions, season by season, of Cobb's sensational feats on the diamond. Though the author's literary style is very good, this sort of narrative does become a little tedious and cluttered with detail. Nonetheless, Alexander portrays a fascinating personality: ruthless, combative, intelligent, a veritable perfectionist. Given to fights and controversies at the slightest provocation, Cobb had few close associations, but his incredible prowess and never-fading color excited an enormous popular interest. Here Alexander seeks to explain this social dimension by relating Cobb to early twentieth-century America; and to the limited extent he succeeds, his volume will have a fairly broad appeal. One has the feeling that he, or others consulting his work, could do still more.

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Research: A Bibliography on Historical Organization Practices.
Edited by Frederick L. Rath, Jr., and Merrillyn Rogers O'Connell. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984. Pp. xiii, 209. Appendix, index. \$15.95.)

This is the sixth and last volume of the *Bibliography on Historical Organization Practices*, published by the American Asso-

ciation for State and Local History. This concluding volume offers widely interdisciplinary coverage, with sections devoted to history, archaeology, architecture, and technology and crafts.

Like its predecessors, *Research* does not aim for comprehensive coverage but provides "paths to comprehensive research" to lead the searcher systematically into the literature. Each section includes basic reference books, lists of organizations and periodicals, general works, guides to methodology and bibliographies, both under the general heading and under topical subheadings. The entries are briefly annotated where the title is not self-explanatory. Notes for each section provide subscription information and addresses for periodicals and organizations.

Practical arrangement of the material for maximum usefulness to its targeted audience has been the guiding principle. Entries are repeated under several headings where appropriate. A particularly useful feature is the inclusion of many pamphlets, technical bulletins, and government publications. These elusive items are basic to many of the topics covered and are seldom included in general bibliographies.

This is a well-designed working tool that will be extremely useful to museum and preservation workers embarking on any related research.

Indiana University Libraries, Bloomington Nancy C. Cridland

American Literature and Social Change: William Dean Howells to Arthur Miller. By Michael Spindler. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983. Pp. viii, 236. Notes, selected bibliography, index. \$18.50.)

Michael Spindler's book is offered as an interdisciplinary study, an exercise in what he calls "the sociology of American literature" (p. 7). His concern, broadly speaking, is with the interrelationships between American economic, social, and literary life in the period roughly from Reconstruction to the 1950s, and he has selected seven writers for detailed study: William Dean Howells, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, John Dos Passos, and Arthur Miller. His method is to describe American social development (and thus, for him, literary development) in terms of the Marxist formulation of base and superstructure. This procedure conveniently yields two phases of American social and economic history, the first which Spindler calls "The Production-Oriented Phase" and the second which he labels "The Consumption-Oriented Phase." The former includes the works of Howells, Norris, and Dreiser, the latter those of Dreiser (again), Fitzgerald, Lewis, Dos Passos, and Miller.