The volume is not a mere synthesis of secondary sources, but one that draws on the archives of four countries, manuscript collections, oral histories, and the unpublished reminiscences of some of the military participants in the war. The author makes particularly effective use of the diaries and letters of soldiers (including that of Captain Harry S Truman) to personalize the large movements in which they participated. The result is a lively and readable account of events that are still shaping our lives.

Ferrell movingly describes the battles of the summer of 1918, noting the valor of the new American army as well as the needlessness of many of its sacrifices. But in securing victory for the Allies this same American army prevented the war from ending in a negotiated settlement; a result which Wilson believed was the best long-term solution to the conflict.

The book begins with Wilson's request for a declaration of war and ends with the election of 1920. These were momentous and crowded years. But because Ferrell's book is brief (only 235 pages of text), there is necessarily some unevenness in the coverage, which focuses on military, diplomatic, and political developments.

The author is generally critical of Wilson's handling of the war, but he does not hold the president responsible for flaws in the Treaty of Versailles. Although conceding that Wilson made some tactical errors, he ascribes the failure of the peacemakers to world forces that were simply too large to be analyzed and handled.

Ferrell is most critical of Wilson's efforts to obtain Senate ratification of the treaty. He believes that the Senate would have approved the treaty if Wilson had made even a minimal effort to understand his opponents. The author attributes the president's reluctance to court congressional support to his innate shyness and his tendency to view political issues in terms of black and white. The resulting struggle brought Wilson's "brilliant political career to a pitiful end" (p. 156).

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From the stage of the Grand Ole Opry on April 19, 1986, came the announcement by Bobby Osborne of the internationally famous Osborne Brothers bluegrass group that, "Tonight,
we are privileged to have in the audience Neil Rosenberg, author of a new book called *Bluegrass: A History.* Such recognition, heard by a radio audience all over the eastern part of the United States, likely indicates how the bluegrass music industry in general feels about Rosenberg's newest contribution to the growing field of bluegrass literature.

Originating in the Upper South in the 1930s and 1940s, bluegrass music developed into a distinct genre in the 1950s thanks to the talents of such musicians as Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys (the group that started the bluegrass sound), Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, the Stanley Brothers, and the Osborne Brothers, among a host of others. Bluegrass music in its pristine form relies chiefly on acoustic, nonelectric, string instruments; rapid tempo; and a tight vocal harmony that is pitched higher than country music.

Rosenberg's study focuses on the bluegrass groups that religiously define(d) their music according to these characteristics. It is, as the title of the book indicates, a history of the genre's origins and developments, rather than a technical treatment of the music or a textual analysis of the songs performed by the musicians. This valuable book, however, is more than just a genealogy of bluegrass bands: it places the music in the larger context of American musical currents. For example, the affinity of bluegrass with commercial gospel music and the urban folk revival is spelled out clearly, as is the tension between bluegrass, rock and roll, and country music.

Rosenberg spent fifteen years researching and writing what may very well be his magnum opus. His persistent quest for information led him to trade publications, phonograph recordings, published oral histories, tape-recorded interviews, discographies, and songbooks. The resulting twelve chapters are full of new information and provide rich insights into an art form that Rosenberg himself has been performing since before our days together as graduate students in folklore at Indiana University during the early 1960s.

*Bluegrass: A History* is well written in clear prose, and the text is augmented with illuminating photographs of the performers. But the book is not particularly suited for pleasure reading as it is weighted down with miniscule facts. Even devotees and scholars will have some trouble in this regard, for every item of information is presented as if it were as important as every other one. Within chapters, topics of varying degrees of significance are given equal treatment. As a result, there is no real sense of proportion in the book. With its encyclopedic character, however, this book will serve as a (perhaps as the) standard reference on the subject for many years to come.

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