



REPRODUCTION OF THE LINCOLN FAMILY CABIN IN
SPENCER COUNTY, INDIANA

Courtesy Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial,
Lincoln City, Indiana.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Jordan's work is the method used to reach his conclusions. While the book contains extensive notes and a complete bibliography, Jordan's primary approach in preparing the book appears to have been investigation through field research. He spent five seasons in the field in Europe and thirteen domestic excursions over a ten-year period examining log structures and origin theories. The result of Jordan's inquiry is a valuable work for understanding both the major characteristics and the heritage of that basic American symbol, the log building.

Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, William E. Bartelt
Lincoln City, Ind.

Cleveland: A Tradition of Reform. Edited by David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986. Pp. viii, 218. Illustrations, notes, index. \$27.50.)

David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski argue in the preface that "cities have personalities" (p. vii) and that this book is a

“search for the historical personality of Cleveland” (p. vii). What is special about Cleveland and what has emerged from its history with “remarkable consistency,” according to the editors, is the “primacy of reform in all periods of the city’s past” (p. vii). The editors define reform as an effort to correct social and political faults, and they contend that “some reforms may be perceived as good, some may not, and others are simply incomprehensible”(p. 3). To that end eight reform movements extending from the nineteenth century into the twentieth century are covered, including temperance, abolitionism, civil rights, the women’s movement, educational reform, Protestant benevolences, social and settlement reform, and political reform. The foremost factor that controlled the selection of the topics was their “chronological position in the city’s history” (p. 3).

As the essays show, the distinctive character of Cleveland’s reform was shaped by its business needs and its New England communal heritage, which were central to its “communal psyche” (p. 3). Reformers often steered a conservative, middle course, as James Richardson’s essay on “Political Reform” and Mayor Tom L. Johnson demonstrates. In general, the essays support the editors’ assertion of a middling, moderate reform course. When the middle ground was forsaken for militant and radical politics, reform ceased to work in Cleveland.

In an “Epilogue” the editors bring the story down through the last two decades and puzzle why reform has atrophied or otherwise changed into less recognizable forms. The 1960s delivered to Cleveland more than its share of hard knocks. Public housing, which had been the reformers’ pride in the 1930s, had degenerated into crime-ridden, minighetoes. Along with this degeneration came riots, police shootouts with black militants, and a rising tide of violence and disorder that even black Mayor Carl Stokes could not stay. In addition, the Cuyahoga River caught fire, the city defaulted on its debt payment, and an urban populist mayor, Dennis Kucinich, parodying Tom L. Johnson, brought administrative chaos and nonstop turmoil. Cleveland by the late 1970s was no longer thought of as the “best governed city” in the nation, as it had been in the early 1900s but instead was referred to by its detractors as the “mistake on the lake” (p. 11). Yet, through all of the travail of the 1960s and 1970s, the editors perceive a remnant of Cleveland’s reform tradition still functioning at the board level of community organizations.

This is an interesting book and contains many essays that students of urban politics and history will find worth reading.

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