

find historiographical guidance in the essays by Hal Barron, R. Douglas Hurt, Dorothy Schweider, and Donald L. Winters. The last essay is particularly interesting for its explanation of why historians disagree so strenuously about whether midwestern farmers got a proper share of the country's wealth.

Readers interested in the burgeoning rural part of women's history will profit from Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's essay and from Hal Barron's consideration of some women's history topics that Fox-Genovese's economic focus excludes. And anyone who wants to study the present state of southern agricultural history, with its distinctively dense thicket of quantitative economic studies, will want to read this book's southern section, perhaps especially the concluding essay by Joseph P. Reidy. The section clarifies some complex and fiercely contested issues about slavery and its aftermath.

All of these essays have lengthy bibliographies. Taken with the book's statistical appendix, they make the volume a servicable reference tool that should be regularly consulted by everyone who wants to keep informed about agricultural history.

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The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health. By John Duffy. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990. Pp. 330. Notes, bibliography, index. \$32.50.)

In *The Sanitarians* John Duffy has produced a useful overview of the evolution of public health in America. Written in a straightforward narrative style, the volume covers the topic from colonial times to the present. Among the book's themes Duffy focuses on "the constant alternation between apathy and sharp reaction to periodic health crises" (p. 2) and "the clash between individual liberty and the public welfare" (p. 3). He gives greater emphasis to the former, building much of the chronology around key epidemics or significant medical breakthroughs.

Building on his own voluminous body of primary research, a wide range of secondary materials, contemporary periodicals, and some institutional reports, Duffy offers concise descriptions of the rise of important public health agencies, the professionalization of public health officials, and the extent of the problems they faced. Such a broad approach leaves little time for an in-depth analysis of any one topic or theme, but the book is a good first stop on the road to understanding the public health history of the country and a good place to start looking for additional pertinent bibliography.

Duffy claims that "the history of public health in America has not been one of constant and steady upward progress" (p. 315);

however, he exhibits a rather strong progressive view throughout the book in highlighting the accomplishments of the last two hundred years. More could have been made of the indecision and uncertainty that inevitably arose in dealing with many confounding medical crises over the years. Mention is made, for example, of the search for pure water supplies, but little discussion is presented about the intense battles to find an effective way to deliver those supplies to the public.

Duffy also raises some tantalizing issues in the conclusion to *The Sanitarians*—most notably his reference to medical ethics, “which was largely medical etiquette for much of its history and which accepted medical experimentation on the poor with but few questions until well into the twentieth century” (p. 316). Unfortunately, because the years after World War II are treated so briskly, readers get little benefit from Duffy’s experience and perspective on medical ethics, the AIDs epidemic, and the impact of the environmental movement on public health.

These criticisms aside, *The Sanitarians* serves as a good introduction to the history of public health through the mid-twentieth century. Duffy highlights many significant themes and events and offers helpful comments on the available literature in the field. This is a good companion volume to his previous study, *The Healers* (1976).

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America’s Favorite Homes: Mail-Order Catalogues As a Guide to Popular Early 20th-Century Houses. By Robert Schweitzer and Michael W. R. Davis. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990. Pp. 261. Illustrations, figures, charts, table, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. Clothbound, \$49.95; paperbound, \$24.95.)

This book represents an attempt to develop a stylistic taxonomy of American popular housing in the first four decades of the twentieth century by focusing on mail-order catalogue houses. The book is organized into three sections. In the first, nine short chapters contain overviews of such subjects as styles at the turn of the twentieth century and the history of prefabricated housing. The second section, “The National Period, 1900–1920,” outlines ten styles the authors associate with this time period, ranging from “transitional colonial revival” to the “box house or foursquare.” The third, “Academic Period, 1920–1941,” does the same for the pre–World War II era, identifying, for example, “Five Types of