

Harlan alone, sought to take "life directly and lovingly from the country, and thus to belong to it" (p. 89).

The message is clear. Locality (and the distinctions and peculiarities of locality) counts. Familiar landscapes can never be exhausted as sources of inspiration. Awareness of place can be made a central focus of life.

JOHN JAKLE is a historical geographer at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has published numerous books and articles across a variety of subjects—travel and tourism, the American small town, common houses as a vernacular form, visualization of landscape, and the Ohio Valley as a region.

*Thomas Hart Benton: Artist, Writer, and Intellectual.* Edited by R. Douglas Hurt and Mary K. Dains. ([Columbia]: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1989. Pp. xv, 224. Illustrations, notes, suggested readings, index. Paperbound, \$22.95.)

Published on the centennial of Thomas Hart Benton's birth, this collection of eight essays ranges in style from erudite to chatty and in content from psychohistory to personal reminiscences, all devoted to the substance and interpretations of Benton's major murals, but not to his artistic style. As such, the book provides little basic biographical information, except for the discussion of Benton's "rejection of modernism and the left," a rejection based upon a Freudian interpretation of the artist's relationship with his father (p. xii).

However, the essays are provocative enough to arouse the interest of some readers, making them want to pursue one of the biographical works available on Benton or one of Benton's autobiographies: *An Artist in America*, originally published in 1937 and reissued in 1951 and 1968, each time with a new chapter, and *An American in Art*, in 1969. Elizabeth Schultz's essay is devoted to these works, which she calls Benton's "Song of Himself." Other essays include discussion of the religious themes in his works; his New York years, when he vaunted regionalism as "affirmative of the social explorations of American society" (p. 211), before he returned to the Midwest; his series of murals in the statehouse in Missouri; and the pro-World War II mural series, *Year of Peril*.

Of most interest to Indiana readers is Benton's *A Social History of the State of Indiana*, a mural series done for the 1933 Century of Progress Exhibition in Chicago and now in three different locations on the Bloomington campus of Indiana University. Citing Benton's depictions of fur traders exploiting Indians, Eugene V. Debs speaking to a group of workers, and a Ku Klux Klan rally, Matthew Baigell discusses the murals in his essay, "Benton and the Left," to support his position that Benton's early proleptist political leanings can be found in his art. The former two scenes are reproduced in black-and-white photographs. Other scenes from the

Indiana mural are discussed in the essay devoted to religious themes in Benton's work, and in the *Year of Peril* essay, where the Indiana mural and the Missouri Capitol mural series, *A Social History of the State of Missouri* (1936), are said to attack "the dehumanized organization of American life" (p. 42).

As editors R. Douglas Hurt and Mary K. Dains write in the introduction, the essays "find both favor and fault with Benton and his work" (p. xiv). Even for the reader not familiar with many of Benton's paintings, this volume provides insight into the views of a central figure in "Regionalist" or "American Scene" art in 1930s America.

JOHN C. CARLISLE, professor of English, Purdue University Calumet, has recently released his 1977 documentary film, *Art for Main Street: The Indiana Post Office Murals*, in VHS format and currently is working on *The Caboose in the Cornfield and Other Hoosier Highway Delights*.

*The Sociogenesis of a Race Riot: Springfield, Illinois, in 1908.* By Roberta Senechal. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990. Pp. xiv, 231. Notes, maps, tables, illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

In August, 1908, a two-day riot rocked the city of Springfield, Illinois. It began at the jail where two black men were believed to be awaiting trial, one for raping a white woman, the other for murdering a white man. Angry whites gathered outside the jail, demanding that the prisoners be released to them. When the mob discovered that the men had been secretly removed, it turned on the black community instead. Before the violence ended, white rioters lynched two black men and destroyed many blocks of African-American businesses and homes.

In this book, Roberta Senechal deconstructs the riot, closely analyzing the events as well as the participants and victims. Her approach departs from other studies of race riots, which have generally drawn on social-strain theory and attributed antiblack violence to tension caused by rapid change. Race relations, Senechal notes, were relatively stable in Springfield around 1908. Social strain, moreover, does not explain why some whites rioted while others did not.

Class differences and racial concerns shaped by class, Senechal argues, are central to understanding the violence. As the riot progressed, poor whites dominated, and they carefully targeted victims, generally choosing successful African Americans. The presence of a few successful blacks did not disturb better-off whites, whose class assured their status in relation to the majority of African Americans—the majority, after all, was poor. Because of a segregated labor market, blacks posed no real economic threat to poor whites. Yet poor whites felt threatened by black achievement.