Book Reviews


This volume, which is included in Indiana University Press's History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier series, traces the history of Indiana from 1750 through 1850. Based primarily upon published primary sources and solid secondary works, the volume focuses upon a broad spectrum of social, political, and economic issues and provides an excellent synthesis of the early history of the state. It is written for a popular audience, and Hoosiers interested in this early period will find the book both informative and enjoyable. Moreover, it seems ideally suited as a textbook for courses in Indiana history.

Andrew R. L. Cayton focuses his chapters upon particular places or individuals, using these subjects as the media through which he discusses various periods in Indiana's history. For example, chapter three is entitled "The Village of Vincennes," and Cayton utilizes his analysis of Vincennes to discuss creole society in Indiana during the late colonial period. Chapter eight, "The World of Tenskwatawa," centers upon the Shawnee Prophet and his movement, which Cayton uses to explore Indian-white relations in the period prior to the War of 1812, while chapter nine, "The World of Jonathan Jennings," enables Cayton to focus upon Jennings, an opponent of William Henry Harrison and early delegate to Congress, to illustrate the issues and machinations of Indiana politics during the territorial period. Cayton's use of these individuals or places as ploys to explore larger issues personalizes his text and illustrates the impact of political or economic forces upon individual human beings.

Cayton's volume provides an excellent discussion of Native Americans during the frontier period, and his analysis of Native American strategies to maintain a balance of power between the tribal communities and the competing colonial, or American, entities indicates that Native American leaders were aware of the pivotal position they played in the region, particularly in the colonial era. Cayton also provides some interesting insights into attempts by William Henry Harrison and other landholders near Vincennes to introduce slavery or extended indenture into the region, and although these efforts were defeated, he illustrates that settlement patterns in Indiana remained predominantly southern in origin. Unlike its neighbors, Indiana attracted fewer emigrants from the northeast or from Europe. Consequently, Indiana remains the most "southern" of the midwestern states, and Cayton argues that the origins of traditional Hoosier localism, attitudes toward race, lack of support for education, religious fundamentalism, and subscription to rural values can be found in the southern upland origins of its pioneer population.
The volume has some shortcomings. Some scholars may fault Cayton for his heavy reliance upon published sources, and historians of women may find his coverage disappointing. Although he includes a chapter on “The World of Anna Tuthill Symmes Harrison, 1795–1810” and provides some discussion of Native American women and Sarah Hill Fletcher, an Indianapolis resident during the 1820s and 1830s, Cayton focuses primarily upon men during most of his narrative. Yet the volume remains a very good synthesis of the history of the frontier period in Indiana. *Frontier Indiana* is well written and should enjoy a wide audience. Moreover, it will be welcomed by any historian who has an interest in Indiana or the Midwest.

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Throughout the twentieth century, Thomas Taggart has been a personage of legendary stature to Hoosiers interested in Indiana politics. Folk accounts and formal histories have uniformly characterized Taggart as the dominant figure in the Democratic party of Indiana during the first quarter of the century. Undoubtedly, Taggart’s legend has endured in the popular mind because it has some of the appeal of romantic fiction owing in part to the fact that Taggart exercised great political power from an unlikely place; i.e., French Lick, then a resort town and gambling center in rural southern Indiana. Actually, in some respects Taggart’s life ran according to the formula of an Horatio Alger novel. He began life in the United States as a poor immigrant youth from northern Ireland. Evidently he was a descendant of Scots-Irish Presbyterian folk. After one year of high school Taggart began his working life as a floor sweeper for a railroad restaurant and hotel in Xenia, Ohio. Later he was employed in the position of railroad depot hotel manager in De Kalb County, Indiana, and then in Indianapolis. Subsequently, Taggart became the proprietor of Indianapolis hotels and then owner of the French Lick Springs Hotel, a spa patronized by many of the nation’s rich and celebrated personalities. Ultimately, Taggart was a multimillionaire whose property included family mansions in Indianapolis, French Lick, and Hyannis Port, Massachusetts.

Taggart’s increasing success as an entrepreneur coincided with his rise to power in Indiana politics and government. He was Marion County auditor (1887–1895) and mayor of Indianapolis (1895–1901). Meanwhile, he served terms as Marion County Democratic party chairman and as the Democrats’ state chairman. He was also chair-