

his best efforts at saving the national church, the Methodists split in 1844.

This book is well written and well researched. Bray is generally successful in his attempt to place Cartwright in context, although some historians will be disappointed to find expected titles missing from the endnotes. Still, many of the standard texts are referenced and most readers will appreciate the author's engaging style. While

some questions remain, Bray goes behind the legend to show us something of the man who lived the life and helped create the myth.

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*The Black Laws*  
*Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*  
 By Stephen Middleton

(Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006. Pp. xi, 363. Notes, selected bibliography, index. \$26.95.)

Stephen Middleton's *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* impressively surveys all legal matters affecting African Americans in Ohio from the territorial stage through the 1880s, although most of the emphasis is on the period before the Civil War. Middleton goes well beyond the title's "Black Laws"—those laws that circumscribed African Americans' legal rights—to place clear focus as well on the issue of slavery in Ohio and most notably the legal process governing fugitive slaves in the state.

Middleton argues that "race-specific laws could not long endure in a country that made freedom and equality the birthright of its people" (p. 4). In the territorial and early statehood periods, the question of whether slavery would be permitted

proved the most pressing legal issue. Although some powerful figures supported opening the territory and new state to slavery, the political mass, including many ordinary folks who had immigrated from the South, opposed slavery. But as Middleton makes clear, opposition to slavery was not the same thing as support for African American civil rights, and the Ohio constitution, while prohibiting slavery, placed several restrictions upon African American residents, including denial of the right to vote. Moreover, by not securing certain rights, the new constitution permitted the Ohio legislature to pass a number of "Black Laws" over the next few decades—laws that, for example, limited black testimony against whites and attempted to restrict African American immigration to the

state by forcing such residents to register and post bond.

However onerous, these laws also led to unintended benefits for African Americans in Ohio. Middleton relates how judges' devotion to justice led them to interpret narrowly the black testimony laws. The registration laws served as a basis for Ohio's claim that their courts had a legal say in fugitive slave cases, thus extending some state protection from man-stealing, by far the gravest threat to African Americans. The state's anti-slavery cause increasingly took on an African American civil rights tone as well, and although their numbers were small, Free-Soilers traded their support of Democratic control of the legislature in exchange for the repeal of a number of the black laws, including those involving immigration, testimony, and education. The restriction on suffrage would be lifted by the fifteenth amendment, and the remaining black laws by an 1887 repeal effort led by African American legislators.

While Middleton's book seems a solid recounting of the legal process in Ohio, this reader's confidence was disturbed by a number of anachronisms in the text: among them, referring to National Road communities as a political base for the black laws of 1807, when the National Road was not built until the mid-1820s; noting the influence of Charles G. Finney on Ohio abolitionism, without noting his presence at Oberlin subsequent to 1837; labeling David Walker's *Appeal* a newspaper and not a pamphlet; and

using W. E. B. DuBois's 1903 phrase "talented tenth" to characterize Ohio African American leaders' hopes for public education.

For Hoosier readers looking for hints about race relations in Indiana, the volume may be of limited use. Indiana may well have seen a hardening of racial restrictions on African Americans over the course of the antebellum period, culminating in the exclusion clause of the 1851 Constitution. Indiana's experience, therefore, calls into question Middleton's larger thesis that race-specific laws could not stand in a land of liberty and equality. Middleton's work invites scholars of Indiana to replicate his in-depth research into the enforcement of the increasingly stricter formal laws in the state.

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