

PEGGY SEIGEL's article on Charles Beecher, a New School Presbyterian minister in Fort Wayne, appeared in the December 2010 issue of the IMH.

Her research interests also include Indiana Civil War nurses, the Underground Railroad, and the suffrage movement in Fort Wayne.



### *Gary, The Most American of All Cities*

By S. Paul O'Hara

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011. Pp. x, 195. Notes, bibliography, index. Paperbound, \$19.95.)

The history of Gary, Indiana, is punctuated by extremes. In the early twentieth century, the city was home to the world's largest integrated steel mill complex, the Gary Works. During the 1960s, it became one of the nation's premier showcases for African American political empowerment. By century's end, few places in the United States displayed more severe symptoms of urban distress. Because of these exceptional circumstances, the city was frequently invoked in debates and discussions about the course of America's progress. Paul O'Hara takes full advantage of this prolific commentary in a book that explores America's shifting views about industrial capitalism through the lens of Gary. While other scholars have chronicled the unfolding of industrial development, social reform, racial politics, and environmental activism within this fascinating city, O'Hara is the first to examine Gary as an idea or, perhaps more accurately, as a palimpsest upon which the rest of the nation projected its hopes, fears, convictions, and assumptions. To this end, O'Hara reveals Gary from the

outside in, through the eyes of journalists, novelists, filmmakers, and other observers who either visited the steel town or passed through. As O'Hara deftly demonstrates, it was these image makers who vaulted Gary to national prominence and allowed its history to narrate American culture in the twentieth century.

The book's organization corresponds to three sequential phases of public discussion, each guided by a distinctive set of themes and tropes. Early commentary responded to the United States Steel Corporation's novel use of geography to resolve the tension between industrial capitalism and social harmony. Among admirers, Gary's location on Chicago's distant metropolitan periphery and the internal demarcation of residential and work spaces inspired utopian visions of industrial efficiency and effective social planning. Critics, however, viewed the steel company's laissez-faire stance toward civic affairs as an abnegation of corporate responsibility. This physical separation of mill and town continued to influence public perceptions in subsequent decades.

While the Gary Works trumpeted the triumphs of mass production technology, the town's messy social scene evoked frontier imagery. Alternatively, the town was a beacon of individual opportunity and an unruly den of iniquity. After World War II, political corruption, crime, racial discord, and de-industrialization produced a tale of declension.

Actors external to Gary dominate O'Hara's analysis, but the author is careful to contrast national perspectives with internally generated responses that flattered the city with an emphasis on ethnic solidarity, a noble work ethic, and gritty masculinity. Taken together, these conflicting narratives flesh out a self-portrait of America as it struggled to reconcile a powerful manufacturing economy with a complicated array of social repercussions. Although O'Hara insists that these narratives trace the "ways Americans understood and felt about industrialism and industrial spaces," (p. 4) the real sto-

ryline here is that concerns about racial conflict in the late twentieth century displaced and disfigured a national conversation about industrial capitalism.

O'Hara has produced a highly readable and engaging account appropriate for adoption in courses about twentieth-century American culture and urban history. Readers of this journal may be amused to learn that as far back as 1912, Gary was set off from the rest of the state in the public imagination. As a creation of monopoly capitalism, Chicago's eastern appendage was considered antithetical to the spirit of truly free enterprise for which not only the "real" America but the "real" Indiana stood.

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### *A New Nation of Goods* *The Material Culture of Early America*

By David Jaffee

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. Pp. [xvii], 400. Illustrations, notes, index. \$45.00.)

*A New Nation of Goods* is a detailed yet wide-ranging study of the manufacture and consumption of material goods in the provincial northeastern United States between 1775 and 1850—a period after provincial elites'

embrace of genteel goods, but before the materialization of Victorian bourgeois culture. David Jaffee investigates the vital role played by New England's provincial craftsmen in facilitating the emerging middle