

but its roots surely lay more in the juggernaut of commercial recreation and entertainment than in the desire to forget the war. After all, veterans on both sides annually rehearsed the war's meaning on their Memorial Days.

Criblez does contribute much to our understanding of Americans' competing uses of the Fourth to define national identity and citizenship in this period and region so crucial to the nation's agricultural and industrial development. He also sheds light, albeit imperfectly, on the process of constructing regional versions of

nationalism. This book will interest readers curious about the development of the Fourth in the nineteenth century, and will also appeal to those who want to learn more about the history of this region.

EELLEN LITWICKI is Professor of History at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia. She specializes in American cultural history and has published on holidays and gift giving. Her current research project is a cultural history of gift giving in the U.S.



### *Family Trees: A History of Genealogy in America*

By François Weil

(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013. Pp. 304. \$27.95.)

Because academic historians regard the subject of genealogy as the province of antiquarians, scholars have paid little attention to its substantial presence in American cultural life—until now. Gracefully and clearly written, François Weil's *Family Trees* provides a comprehensive and authoritative summary of the changing place of American genealogy from revolutionary times to the era of television's *Roots* and the online presence of Ancestry.com. This book is likely to become a key reference point for future studies of any number of specialized genealogical groups and practices.

Weil makes the wise decision to go beyond genealogical practice as such to the wider dynamics of family

history. Commencing with a survey of colonial-era status-seeking genealogy, Weil proceeds with his study of the “Americanization of genealogy” (p. 41). Tracing the ties of the American family as a “moral, social and political unit” in the fledgling republic, Weil shows how genealogy allowed early to mid-nineteenth-century Americans to “deal with tensions” within the changing economy and to compensate for the “physical and affective distance and distress caused by geographic mobility” (p. 43). Although centered on revolutionary traditions and family connections, status seeking remained a definite part of this early republican genealogy. After the Civil War, the fixation with republican families

gave way to concern for reinforcing Anglo-Saxon status in a time of industrialization and renewed immigration. Immigrants, especially Irish and, later, Jewish Americans, served through their own genealogical work to counter the emphasis on Anglo-Saxon dominance, but racially based identities persisted. Indeed, in Weil's account, the rise of the eugenic movement in the Progressive Era powered the racialization of genealogical practice with a new pseudo-scientific form.

What was democratic about American genealogy was not its eugenic veneer, however, but its growing susceptibility to the commercializing forces of the market. The pattern of genealogical research and publication favored amateurs composing family trees and businesses hawking sometimes-bogus heraldic paraphernalia. "Scientific" genealogists—those who tried to base lineages on objectively ascertained facts—remained marginalized in this developing practice, and links with professional historiography were weak, yet the market did not conquer all genealogical pursuits. Genealogical research was aided in the interwar years by Mormon record keeping, which maintained its distance from the "growing marketplace orientation" prevailing in U.S. genealogy by that time (p. 177). While Weil documents a fresh interest in genealogy in the mid-twentieth century, fueled by the nation's growing cultural diversity and pluralism, it is striking how relatively small the membership of key organizations remained.

If on one level change and growth distinguished American genealogy and its familial discourse, continuity is perhaps the field's most persistent feature. The recent "geneticization of genealogy" (p. 215) through DNA analysis involves a covert resurgence of racialized thinking. The impact of modern genetics on memory reinforces an important underlying theme of American genealogy: the centrality—despite continued signs of cultural pluralism—of debates over racial origin and racial categorization, and of practices that reflect American anxieties over class, ethnicity, and racial identity.

In so far as the trajectory of genealogical research and publication matched the changes in the larger culture, as it appears in this account to do, the pattern raises the question of exactly how important genealogy might be to cultural changes, and to what extent was genealogy an epiphenomenal manifestation of those changes. This question is complicated by a proliferation of societies, many with similar names, but whose precise size, and social, economic, and organizational distinctiveness is not always clear from the record. The numbers of people involved, with even the undeniably important Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) at 30,000 in 1900, might indicate that genealogical research was but one of several indicators of wider cultural shifts rather than a hegemonic cultural practice. For instance, the DAR developed many

interests, some of them not overtly connected to family ties, such as nature conservation. Moreover, some fraternal orders were far bigger than these genealogical groups appear to have been. To know more about the individual organizations' practices, size, and composition would help to assess the importance of genealogy as a mass phenomenon, something that is not clear from the sheer diversity of "alphabetic" societies.

Nevertheless, Weil shows that the genealogists of the early twentieth century—with their racialist and Anglo-Saxon agenda—were sufficiently influential on a cultural level to induce other groups, including African American, to take steps to cherish and research their own family

heritage long before the civil rights era. This process actually started after the Civil War not as genealogical status seeking, but as a search for lost kin in the wake of slavery's demise. Weil believes that the quest for family roots made Reconstruction "a profoundly genealogical moment" (p. 170)—an idea worthy of reflection and study, as is this entire book.

IAN TYRRELL is Emeritus Professor of History, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, and the author of *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History* (2005), and the forthcoming *Crisis of the Wasteful Nation: Conservation and Empire in Theodore Roosevelt's America*.



### *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City*

By James R. Barrett

(New York: Penguin Press, 2012. Pp. xvi, 384. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95.)

To a remarkable degree, early twentieth-century American city life was an Irish American creation. That much becomes clear upon reading James R. Barrett's *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City*. But this engaging book does more than simply narrate the experiences of one ethnic group. It also advances an important argument about Americanization between 1880 and 1930. For the immigrants who followed the Irish into urban America, Barrett contends, adapting to the new country was more

often a process of emulating, battling, and collaborating with the Irish than it was dealing with snobbish and hostile Americans who traced their lineage back to the Mayflower.

Eschewing narrative, Barrett presents Irish American experience "from the bottom up" by dividing it into six "spaces," a term he uses in both its geographic and metaphorical senses. "The Street" encompasses everything from gangs to language, while "The Stage" includes not only vaudeville but the writings of Finley Peter