

In his compilation of these published sources Dr. White has rendered the historian a valuable and important service. It is hoped that the appearance of this volume will not only stimulate study of territorial Nebraska and territorial government in its broader perspective but will also encourage scholars in other states to produce similar bibliographies dealing with their territorial periods.

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*The North American Midwest: A Regional Geography.* Edited by John H. Garland. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1955. Pp. viii, 252. Maps, tables, selected bibliography, and index. \$8.00.)

This volume, apparently the first regional geography of the Midwest, emphasizes the economic development of the region during recent years. Though the area covered is not precisely delimited, it is roughly that vast expanse of territory from western Pennsylvania westward to approximately the ninety-eighth parallel, stretching from near the Tennessee-Arkansas boundary on the south northward across the Great Lakes to include a small portion of Canada immediately bordering the lakes.

The first chapter sets forth the thesis that "The Midwest, the heart of the North American continent, is a geographical phenomenon. The interior of no other continent possesses a combination of natural resources so favorable to human utilization" (p. 3). But the opening statement of the Preface that "only within the present century has the significance of the Midwest become apparent" (p. vii) underestimates the recognition given to this region during the nineteenth century. For instance, James Hall in his *Notes on the Western States*. . . (Philadelphia, 1838) wrote: "There is probably not on the globe, an equal expanse of surface, of such uniform fertility; and when in addition to that advantage, we take into view, its temperate climate, its salubrity, the abundance of its mineral resources, the variety of its productions, the multiplicity and extent of its navigable communications, and its central position in relation to our continent, it will be conceded that there is none which better deserves to be described and studied" (pp. 13-14).

This lack of basic information about the historical development of the region is one of the weaknesses of this volume which is a co-operative work of fifteen authors most of whom are professors of geography in institutions of the Midwest. The initial chapter gives a preview of the region and its setting in "The Heart of a Continent." Successive chapters discuss the region with regard to "Weather and Climate," "Settlement Forms and Patterns," "Significance of Agriculture," "Structure of Industry," and "Trade and Transportation." Then follow separate chapters for each of ten sub-regions, including four of the inner portions and six on the peripheral portions of the Midwest. Chicago is described as the hub of the region. These chapters concerning the sub-regions vary greatly in emphasis, value, and workmanship. Moreover, they repeat much that is also found in the first six chapters, but considerable repetition was perhaps unavoidable.

The selected bibliography lists items of value which historians often overlook, but there is a noticeable dearth of works appearing after 1950 despite the fact that the volume was not published until 1955. Footnotes frequently add brief information or data which should either have been included in the text or else omitted, while supporting citations for much of the text and most of the tables are either lacking or, if given, are not included in a manner which can be easily identified or traced. A summary listing of the numerous tables and maps would have been helpful as an addendum to the table of contents.

Here and there are statements which may draw fire from scholars. For instance, neither the view that "today, in the core of the continent at the very center of the nation, is a distinctive Midwestern culture" (p. 14) nor the inclusion of the region as a part of the Bible Belt (p. 12) is likely to find general acceptance. Moreover, while midwesterners have become accustomed to the isolationist label (p. 12) they have somehow done remarkably well in supporting the nation in both civil and national wars, and this label needs re-examination and further study rather than the loose bandying about which it too often receives.

This book suggests anew the mutual kinship between geography and history and the impossibility of writing either effectively without giving careful attention to the

other. Moreover, the Midwest certainly merits such studies which can be used to advantage, particularly by students of geography, history, economics, business, government, sociology, and other subjects. The authors had the difficult task of covering immense topics within short compass and their work was doubtless made more difficult by the lack of previous similar studies of the Midwest.

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*The American Life Convention, 1906-1952, a Study in the History of Life Insurance.* By R. Carlyle Buley. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953. Two volumes. Pp. 1397. Illustrations, bibliographical note, appendices, and index. \$15.00.)

At first blush the reader of this monumental work is likely to be staggered by its sheer volume. Yet as one reads he begins to wonder how so much of American business history could have been compressed into so few pages. Commissioned by the American Life Convention to write its history with the assistance of a committee composed of past presidents of the Convention, Professor Buley has surpassed what might have been expected even of one having his skill and experience. For this book, consisting of some fourteen hundred pages, is monumental not only in bulk but also in the interpretive insight demonstrated by the author. As one reads, he finds it hard to imagine that the writer has not spent a lifetime in the higher echelons of life insurance management. Yet the perspective is clearly that of the historian rather than that of the business man.

While the book does not purport to be a history of life insurance in the United States, it comes very close to being just that. Spanning as it has the last fifty years, the American Life Convention has seen life insurance in this country grow from adolescence into vigorous maturity. Even more important, the Convention has played an ever-growing role in shaping its development. The American Life Convention has been part and parcel of the institution as it has come into its own as a vital force in individual and business financial planning, on the one hand, and a significant channel for the mobilization and investment of savings on the other. Starting at a time when the Armstrong investigation in New