

Haite calculates the lifespans of steamboats between 1810 and 1860 using the "Lytle List." Haite found that the averages for *all* western steamboats ranged between 4.9 and 5.0 for the years 1830-1849. On the other hand steamboats which operated between Louisville and New Orleans had lifespans of 5.3 to 6.5 years for the same decades. Haite concluded that it was safer to operate a steamboat on the lower Mississippi River than on the shallower tributary rivers. From Appendix A of Fishbaugh's book it appears that most of the boats built by the Howard Ship Yards operated on the lower Mississippi and hence could be expected to have longer life expectancies. Therefore, while the Howard Ship Yards might well have produced better steamboats than its competitors, Fishbaugh's evidence for such an assertion is somewhat insufficient.

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The Ohio Canals. By Frank Wilcox. Selected and edited by William A. McGill. ([Kent, Ohio]: The Kent State University Press, 1969. Pp. x, 106. End maps, illustrations, bibliography. \$15.00.)

Fort Wayne during the Canal Era, 1828-1855: A Study of a Western Community in the Middle Period of American History. By Charles R. Poinsatte. *Indiana Historical Collections*, Volume XLVI. ([Indianapolis]: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1969. Pp. xi, 284. Illustrations, notes, maps, appendix, index. \$5.00.)

Two books more dissimilar in purpose, format, scope, and value than the two listed above are difficult to imagine. Their common feature is the Wabash and Erie Canal, although it is not central to either and no new information about the canal itself is offered by either. The Wilcox volume is quite clearly a vehicle for eighty-odd sketches, drawings, and water color paintings made by the late artist-author several years ago. The paintings are remarkably handsome and vibrant, and all depict Ohio canal scenes; some are recreations of the days of bustling activity at a canal lock or port; others are more contemporary evocations of neglected locks and sites. Historians are indeed fortunate to have the Wilcox paintings, some of which are now in private collections, reproduced and made generally available. A leading member of the "Cleveland School," Wilcox taught at that city's Art Institute for many years. This and a previous publication reveal not only his fondness for rural America but also his extraordinary talent as a watercolorist.

Readers who come to this book, however, expecting something resembling a history of the Ohio canals, which served primarily as early and vital links between Lake Erie and the Ohio River, will be

disappointed. Wilcox' writing abilities were considerable, and he left a manuscript distinguished by charmingly graceful and haunting descriptions of how the canals must have looked, what the color harmonics must have been to the contemporary observer (the clear blue canal, the brassy green lock water, the Indian red lock gates, the green shuttered houses nearby), and how the canals and canal barges were built and operated. Yet the text in general is an unworthy companion of the illustrations. Wilcox understood, as few do today, such complexities as the geographical determinants of canal location, the technical difficulties of the engineers and contractors, and the day to day problems of operation; but his account of individual canals in the Ohio system—five of the nine chapters—is dated, incomplete, unreliable, and often no more than sheer antiquarianism. Furthermore, many of the illustrations and sketches, some obviously not intended by Wilcox for publication, are uncaptioned, there are no footnotes to the text, and the most recent book listed in the bibliography was published in 1943, the most recent article in 1947. One can understand Professor McGill's reluctance to tamper with the Wilcox manuscript, but many revisions and updatings, particularly in the light of recent, significant scholarship on the topic, were required. For a sound history of the Ohio canals readers may now look to Harry N. Scheiber's excellent *Ohio Canal Era* (1969); the Wilcox volume serves primarily to recall pictorially a day and a way of life now gone.

Travelers on the Ohio canals could, after 1843, also journey into Indiana by way of the Wabash and Erie Canal, a waterway which eventually stretched all the way from Toledo to Evansville. The first major city they would encounter along that route in Indiana was Fort Wayne, and it is a thesis of Professor Poinsett's, amply demonstrated in his book, that the canal was the key to Fort Wayne's development during the "middle period." But his study is of the city, not the canal; and his chief undertaking is to examine some of the generalizations about the West, particularly urban development in the West, in the light of one community's experiences. He does this quite successfully, capably bridging the gap between the general and the particular. This is a good example of the type of study needed to support new syntheses in urban and regional history. Poinsett's command of the primary sources is excellent, and he has uncovered some choice new material for urban history in scattered, little used collections.

The study dates from the closing of Fort Wayne's "frontier phase" to the beginning of its railroad era. After a fine, brief summary of the city's origins as both a military and trading center on the ancient Maumee-Wabash portage, Poinsett describes the new impetus to growth, after loss of the Indian agency, provided by the prospects of the canal. He then analyzes population growth, immi-

gration, and the contributions of newcomers to the city. The most valuable sections of the book follow. The author discusses clearly and comprehensively economic and political development as well as social and cultural patterns. He establishes a close relationship between institutional religion and the various reform movements sweeping the country, especially temperance and abolitionism. On the latter point the Fort Wayne experience confirms the existence of an apparent contradiction (although, as the author notes, a similar contradiction exists today): northerners could be strongly antislavery and racist, or anti-Negro, at the same time. The slow progress in establishing a public school system and adequate governmental institutions is also detailed here, and there are interesting sections on such diverse topics as home architecture and plank roads, the establishment of the various denominational churches, and the raw returns of the 1850 census on Allen County industry. Particularly noteworthy are Poinsett's careful descriptions of the actual pattern—as opposed to the legislative pattern—of land disposal and of the systematic mistreatment of the Indians regarding their land, their annuities, and their ultimate removal in 1847.

This is, in short, a good and useful book. If it does not add to an understanding of the Wabash and Erie Canal (the data here are taken from Benton's 1903 classic and a 1925 master's thesis at Indiana University), it does contribute to an understanding of urban community growth in the West. The writing, although uninspiring, is careful and factual. Despite too many long quotations (four chapters, including the last, end this way) and no bibliography, this work is a worthy addition to its series.

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The Frontier in the Formative Years, 1783-1815. By Reginald Horsman. *Histories of the American Frontier*. Edited by Ray Allen Billington. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970. Pp. xii, 237. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliographical notes, index. Paperbound, \$3.50.)

In this new volume in the *Histories of the American Frontier* series Reginald Horsman has effectively synthesized extensive primary material and current historical scholarship. To the task of elaborating American frontier history in the decisive years between the Revolution and the War of 1812, Horsman brings considerable expertise. The author of four earlier studies on this period (on American Indian policy, on British Indian agent Matthew Elliott, and two on the War of 1812), he has an experienced feel for patterns of frontier development and the sources which substantiate them.