

magazines from which he acquired much information about the activities of state and local grangers. Nordin's book supplements other studies and presents the "full program" of the Grange from 1867 to 1900.

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*A Most Unique Machine: The Michigan Origins of the American Automobile Industry.* By George S. May. ([Grand Rapids]: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975. Pp. 408. Illustrations, bibliographical essay, notes, index. \$9.95.)

This volume is a most welcome addition to the growing literature about the earliest years of the American automobile industry. Professor May is an authority on Michigan as well as on automotive history, and he offers here the first monographic results of his thorough research into the murky, often muddled waters of Michigan's pre-Model T, pre-General Motors automobile history. Writing with an assurance born of intimate association with the primary and secondary sources, both the well known and the obscure, May challenges many of the conventional interpretations about the industry and its leading figures. He offers instead a demythologized account of the complex origins of automobile manufacturing in Michigan from the mid-1890s to approximately 1910.

Despite the fact that biographies for many of the automotive pioneers in and around the Motor City have been published, the story of the industry's true origins has remained unclear and incomplete. May has performed a valuable service in reexamining the record and synthesizing previously untapped original sources with the standard secondary works, thereby presenting a fresh, broad ranging narrative. He carefully picks his way along a path strewn with the wreckage of many unsuccessful manufacturing ventures, adding to the information available on such diverse topics as America's first automobile race (in Chicago, 1895), the Selden patent and lawsuit, and the formation of the Association of Licensed Automobile Manufacturers, while developing the main themes of his story concerning Ransom E. Olds, Henry Ford, and William C. Durant (founder of General Motors). May has a talent for biographical vignettes and supplies cor-

rective details and valuable insights into the characters of even the best known of the Michigan pioneers. The result is a fine collective biography of these men and other lesser known figures such as Charles B. King, Claude Sintz, David D. Buick, Henry Leland, the Dodge brothers, Jonathan D. Maxwell (an Indiana transplant), and dozens more, as well as a perceptive analysis of the factors which led to individual success or failure. Indeed, May gives an unusual amount of attention to those in the latter category—e.g., the Baushkes, William Worth, John Dolson—his information ferreted out from long neglected incorporation and bankruptcy records.

The book concludes with an attempt to explain why the automobile industry flourished in Michigan, with May again challenging the conventional wisdom and avoiding easy answers. Rather than Great Lakes transportation, a thriving carriage industry, or available capital—these things existed elsewhere, too—May finds the explanation in the economic transition underway in Michigan at the turn of the century, the search for new investment opportunities, the supportive role of the state's banking community, and such factors as the existence of a strong gas engine (rather than carriage) industry, which led quite early to Detroit's choice of the eventually dominant power source. Once the basis was laid, moreover, other manufacturers and parts suppliers were drawn to the state, where an open shop reputation and lower labor costs were also attractive. It should be emphasized, too, that Michigan's domination of the industry was not nearly as firmly established in 1909 as it became later. A report of that date lists Michigan as having forty-five and Indiana forty-four automobile manufacturing plants; of course, the value of the Michigan product greatly exceeded that of its neighbor. This last point nevertheless underscores the need for a similar study of the industry in Indiana; as May has demonstrated, both through example and impressively full documentation, the sources, scattered though they be, do exist for such a work.

It is disappointing that a book potentially so good and significant as this one was not subjected to more rigorous editorial supervision. The author frequently is in danger of losing his point if not his readers through long digressions, aside comments, and an often confusing organization. Still

the book, engagingly written for the most part, is a veritable mine of information and doubtlessly will become the standard source on the automobile's birth and adolescence in the state that is now its primary home.

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*Black Migration: Movement North, 1900-1920.* By Florette Henri. (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975. Pp. xi, 419. Notes, bibliography, index. \$9.95.)

The first two decades of the twentieth century were years of ever increasing movement of black people out of the South into northern urban areas. Indeed, during the years 1916-1918 this northward migration reached almost flood proportions as black populations in cities of the East and Midwest increased manifold. This huge exodus from the South, representing "simply the movement of one group of citizens trying to improve their conditions in their own country," as Robert Abbott of the *Chicago Defender* put it, greatly affected political, social, and economic developments in cities ranging in size from small ones like East St. Louis, Illinois, to metropolitan areas like New York City and Chicago. The migration even affected national policy as Congress and federal departments studied its effect upon both the North and the South.

This is the well known story which Florette Henri retells in *Black Migration*. Based almost entirely on published secondary sources, *Black Migration* adds little to an understanding of why blacks left the South or the kinds of conditions they faced in their new homes. Moreover, large sections of the book seem to have little to do with the author's avowed purpose of depicting black people as actors on their own behalf. For example, Henri devotes much space to discussion of the development of racist thought among intellectuals and academics during the period of the Great Migration, but she presents little evidence that this thought came about as a result of the northern movement of blacks. Likewise, her discussion of the period of United States involvement in World War I speaks largely of the racist attitudes of the American military toward Afro-Americans—an important point, but one that hardly developed because blacks had left the South.