

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

Kleppner's treatment of the 1983 elections is sound but bloodless. He failed to do what journalistic accounts of elections do best; he never brought the campaign to life. Washington himself remains a shadowy figure, more a symbol of black aspirations than a flesh-and-blood human being. Kleppner did not interview any of the participants; his narrative account of the election is based mostly on newspaper sources. Interviews probably would not have changed his overall analysis of the election, but they surely would have illuminated the nature of the decision-making process and the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates themselves.

Chicago Divided is a valuable and important study of a major event in the history of American urban politics. But its author did not fully resolve the dilemma of writing instant history. Written quickly, his book lacks the historical depth that a historian of Kleppner's ability would ordinarily provide. At the same time, there is little here of the excitement of politics that one finds in the best journalistic studies.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, TWIN CITIES

ALLAN H. SPEAR

Race and Kinship in a Midwestern Town: The Black Experience in Monroe, Michigan, 1900-1915, by James E. DeVries. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984. xiii, 189 pp. Notes, illustrations, appendix, index. \$17.50 cloth.

In *Race and Kinship in a Midwestern Town*, James DeVries, professor of history at Monroe County Community College, Monroe, Michigan, examined the social and economic experiences of a small number of black families in Monroe, Michigan, from the mid-1800s to 1915. DeVries's book is part of August Meier's series, Blacks in the New World, which includes such topics as blacks and Reconstruction, blacks in politics, blacks in business, blacks in northeastern ghettos, and blacks as national leaders. By focusing on the black experience in a small, midwestern city, DeVries added another dimension to Meier's series.

DeVries's study is divided into four main chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion. The chapters include a brief history of Monroe and the background of black families there; an elaboration of two southern racist traditions—the child-Negro stereotype and the beast-Negro stereotype—and their application to Monroe's citizenry; and the last chapter, "Home-Grown: The Personal and Ego Identities of Monroe Negroes, 1900-1915." Chapters two and three dealing with the racial stereotypes are fully explored and add an important element

to the study. Further, their inclusion allowed DeVries to fuse some sociological theory with an otherwise historical approach.

DeVries's work presents an interesting contrast to the many community and ethnic histories based on aggregate historical data such as John Bodnar's, Roger Simon's, and Michael Weber's *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900–1960* (1982). While these and many other scholars chose to examine ethnics and their communities through the lives of a large number of people (mostly through the use of census data), DeVries selected a small community and opted to examine intensively the lives of only a few individuals. DeVries's approach has many strong points. His close look at Monroe's main black families over time gives a good sense of how these families fashioned their social and economic lives, developed networks with both blacks and whites, and reacted to racial discrimination. DeVries relied on a limited number of oral histories to determine the long-time image of black families among Monroe's present white population. DeVries wrote compassionately, yet in a scholarly way, about the blacks' experience in Monroe. He conveyed the deep sadness and anger that some blacks must have felt at their discriminatory treatment. Alcayde Bromley was one such black, who after winning much praise for his musical and athletic abilities, was unable to walk in the graduation procession (as the only black) because no other senior would walk with him. Instead, Bromley played the piano for the procession. DeVries concluded that while black families did experience racial discrimination in Monroe, some families were fully integrated into the economic life of the community. One particularly interesting observation is that while blacks were arrested frequently in Monroe, once the court process got underway, "equity and legality prevailed" (102).

At the same time, however, DeVries's approach raises an important question about community studies: what constitutes a legitimate sample size? DeVries concentrated on seven families in Monroe and also briefly treated approximately twelve other individuals. The scope of his study was ultimately determined by the fact that the black population in Monroe was always small: in 1874, the city contained twenty-nine blacks; in 1884, thirty-eight blacks, and by 1910, sixteen blacks. While those limited numbers enabled DeVries to treat the most prominent families in considerable depth, the selection of a city with a larger black population would have provided an opportunity for a greater diversity and perhaps a more solid basis for the study.

The major failing, however, is not the limited sample, but rather the book's structure. DeVries's work seemed to fall into two main sections: first, the biographical history of the most visible and long-term black families, and second, the full elaboration of the two most signifi-

cant (as DeVries sees it) Southern racist traditions, the child-Negro stereotype and the beast-Negro stereotype, and their effect on Monroe's population. While both parts of this work are well researched and fully developed, the two thrusts do not come together as one naturally anticipates. The theoretical portion of the study does not touch directly on the seven families which DeVries focused upon. One searches in vain for the application of the two racist theories to the Bromleys or the Duncansons or the Fosters, all among Monroe's most visible black families. While DeVries discussed members of these families from many different perspectives—such as their ability "to pass" from the black race to the white—nowhere did he explicitly make the nexus between his families and the racial stereotypes which he so fully presented. In spite of this failure to integrate the different portions of the study, both portions have individual merit. DeVries particularly presented a highly worthwhile portrait and analysis of the lives of a small number of black families. Without a doubt, he breathed life into his subjects and thus provided a most interesting biographical approach.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

DOROTHY SCHWIEDER

The Jewish Community of Indianapolis: 1849 to the Present, by Judith E. Endelman. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. ix + 303 pp. Pictures, appendix, index. \$17.50 cloth.

Judith E. Endelman's *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis: 1849 to the Present* is an excellent example of local history set in the broader context of American Jewish history. The book contains seven chapters which chronicle the development of the community, from its first pioneer settlers, through the arrival of German and Eastern European immigrations, to the effects of the Six-Day War on Indianapolis Jewry. Endelman, assistant librarian at Indiana University's Lilly Library, successfully argues that "if one is to understand fully the American Jewish experience one must look beyond New York to the dozens of medium-size cities, the regional centers of the West, the South, and the Midwest, which have a history of Jewish settlement dating back to the mid-nineteenth century" (2). She helped to rectify this problem by studying the Jewish community of Indianapolis and its relationship to American and Hoosier culture. *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis* is an example of ethnic community history that has matured past the "who's who" stage which was predominant in the early days of the discipline. It is a welcome addition to the field of community history in general and Jewish community history specifically.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.