

Book Reviews

and Republicans during the last century, examines efforts at urban reform in the Progressive Era, analyzes the impact of New Deal and Great Society programs, and recounts the struggle in the 1950s and 1960s to consolidate the governments of Nashville and Davidson County into a single unit that could provide the range and quality of services and the kind of planned growth that Nashville required as it emerged as a metropolitan center.

Doyle portrays Nashville as a city proud of its past but not entrapped by it. It has certain distinctly southern characteristics upon which it capitalizes. Yet Nashville, in Doyle's view, is a modern urban metropolis firmly rooted in tradition, but with economic, social, and political ties that transcend local or regional bounds.

Neither of these works offers any strikingly new interpretation of the urban South. Although Doyle's study of Nashville is an exemplary exercise in local history, it will appeal primarily to readers with some special interest in the Tennessee city. Larsen's book provides a wealth of information, much of it statistical, that illuminates the establishment and progress of cities in Dixie. The author's contention that the southern urban network should be judged on its own merits and his exposition of the relationship between economic expansion and urban growth in the region is of value to students of the South in particular and the city in general.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

ROBERT F. MARTIN

The Strip: An American Place, by Richard P. Horwitz; photographs by Karin E. Becker. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985. xii, 188 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$25.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

The Strip is the second book about the culture of work by Richard P. Horwitz, professor of American studies at the University of Iowa. Horwitz has taken Coralville, Iowa, as his local example of America's ubiquitous collection of roadside businesses to engage the reader in a seemingly objective analysis of a controversial environment. He concludes with a humane sermon but without suggesting equally strong remedies. The documentary photographs by Karin E. Becker lend a characteristically realistic touch throughout the text to help Horwitz portray his sympathy for workers.

The first two chapters contain an innovative investigation of the contending national views about the strip. Some denounce the strip as American commercialism gone mad in aesthetic blight, dietary deficiency, and disorderly development. Alternatively, others have defended the strip as a convenience to the consumer in a hectic world and

a vernacular corrective to the sterile modernism of high-style architecture. Horwitz contends convincingly that the furor of the debate disguises the underlying symbolic warfare between those who envision two different American futures, that is, those who value the chance for a commercially successful few resulting from freedom and those who value society as a whole and would regulate individuals. His prose sustains an intellectual odyssey of the highest order in these first two chapters which otherwise could have been a dreary bibliographical essay. Horwitz promises new light on the debate from his following extensive interviews of workers on the strip.

The succeeding three chapters, however, repeat a common litany of leftist complaints about the Industrial Revolution. Horwitz shows that workers are progressively alienated from the consumers on whom they depend for a living, and he insists that the dehumanizing effect of corporate capitalism's drive for ever-increasing efficiency is not just the workers' problem but deserves society's redress. Horwitz concludes in anarchistic fashion by dismissing the effectiveness of institutional reforms and asking instead for changed attitudes between individuals. He believes in the possibility of improvement if each consumer treats workers with common decency.

Horwitz's sympathies perhaps denied him the possibility of placing equal emphasis on the freedoms of the workplace that he concluded from his interviews are peculiar to the strip. One wonders if there may also be a distinct strip working-class culture such as oral history has uncovered recently among earlier twentieth-century industrial workers. Horwitz may not have taken the opportunity to draw on new trends in labor history, but his probing of major social questions is a significant departure in the emerging literature of the roadside which has concentrated almost exclusively on its visual aspects. And all of his weighty questions of conscience are raised in a very bright and very readable fashion.

ILLINOIS HISTORIC PRESERVATION AGENCY

KEITH A. SCULLE

To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North, by Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman. Henry A. Wallace Series on Agricultural History and Rural Studies. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987. xi, 322 pp. Diagrams, maps, tables, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

To Their Own Soil is the long-awaited report by Jeremy Atack, professor of economics at the University of Illinois, and Fred Bateman, professor of business economics at Indiana University, on their study of a large

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.