

nervous relation to his contemporary surroundings. And his more inventive chairs, with their redundant elements, formed exceptionally embracing constructs which similarly might protect him from an intrusively modern world. The bizarre chairs "hugged" those using them, he remarked.

This is a fascinating story. But whether Cornett can tell us as much about tradition and its relation to creativity as Jones would like is doubtful. As a man of such pronounced qualities, Cornett would seem to have infused his creations with far more psychological burden than was true in the case of his local contemporaries. Furthermore, all of these men were operating in an economy so heavily dominated by mass-produced, machine-made objects that the traditional framework that might have obtained in Kentucky a hundred years before simply did not exist for them. They represent a vestigial practice rather than a healthy normative one, and to draw conclusions about the world we have lost from the fragments of it that survive is a notably tricky procedure. Cornett's very redundancy as a craftsman might be taken to suggest the weakening of the traditional grammar he so obviously stretched to the breaking point. Had Kentucky in his lifetime provided a better market for handmade objects, rather than mass-produced ones, perhaps Chester Cornett's creativity would have found a more balanced outlet.

A Taste of the Country: A Collection of Calvin Beale's Writings, edited by Peter A. Morrison. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990. viii, 249 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, graphs, bibliography, index. \$28.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JAMES R. SHORTRIDGE, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

Calvin Beale is senior demographer at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. To judge by his job title, one might expect that his writings would be tedious and jargon-filled reports that, while informative in their way, would reveal little of the human spirit. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mr. Beale has been an authoritative yet avuncular interpreter of rural America since 1950. During this period of unprecedented change, he has written sympathetic interpretations of traditional cultures, of the diversity within rural society, and of the growing importance of the manufacturing, recreation, and retirement industries to the rural economy.

Beale's insights often have appeared as conference addresses and government bulletins. Editor Peter Morrison has done a great service by gathering seven of the best of these somewhat fugitive works for

this book. He adds to them eight pieces previously published in traditional outlets and four sets of field notes compiled from visits to specific communities. Altogether, eight of the nineteen articles are published here for the first time. Morrison has elected to focus this book on the evolution of rural America instead of on the total range of Beale's professional interests. The collection is quite coherent as a result, but it contains only four essays written before 1970. It has three sections: four essays on particular, traditional communities; seven on the economic and demographic transformation of rural society; and seven more on the contemporary scene.

A typical Beale essay is concise and documented with appropriate tables, yet is also filled with reflection. One of his fascinations is with the mixed-race communities of the South. Five articles explore this topic, including field visits to the Melungeons of Hancock County, Tennessee; the Creoles of Mobile; the Creeks of Escambia County, Alabama; and the Haliwas of Warren County, North Carolina. These studies mark the humanistic extreme of Beale's writings, in a way, the demographer on vacation.

Geography is a second repetitive theme in this book. Beale has devised a widely used regionalization for rural America, and two articles provide thumbnail but perceptive sketches of eighteen of those regions. His portraits of poverty conditions in southern Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, and the Texas High Plains are especially well done.

Throughout his writings Beale shows us that modern rural America is in continuous flux. Agriculture lost its dominance as an employer in about 1950. By 1980 only nineteen counties still had a majority of their employment in farming, but the general public has yet to accept this reality fully. As a result, the important role that mining, wood products, and manufacturing industries traditionally played in the rural economy has been underappreciated, as has the magnitude of the recreation and retirement business in recent years.

In his famous 1975 essay, "The Revival of Growth in Nonmetropolitan America," Beale showed that employment within the nonagricultural industry of rural counties had finally grown enough to end the decades of population exodus. This expansion is likely to continue. Metropolitan fringe areas and college towns join recreation and retirement regions as growth poles, he says. Left behind are counties without alternatives to the still declining agricultural base, principally a large region in the northern Great Plains and a smaller one in the Mississippi Delta. Iowa falls into a transition zone on the maps included in this book. The state contains none of the hundred counties most dependent on agriculture and thus has escaped the extreme

poverty associated with this trait. Many counties in northern and western Iowa still have a relatively high percentage of their employment in agriculture, though, and most of them continue to lose population.

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