

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

Drugs in America: A Social History, 1800-1980, by H. Wayne Morgan. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981. pp. xi, 233. Notes, bibliography, index, illustrations. \$20.00.

People, even historians, have short memories. In consequence, when a relatively obscure element in their lives suddenly assumes prominence, they fail to realize that it has all happened before. And they lack knowledge of earlier attempts to cope with similar situations; thus, they repeat the responses of their ancestors. Historians react by reviving research interest in topics long forgotten. In the 1950s and especially in the 1960s, drugs suddenly emerged as a major concern of many Americans. While public and private attention focused on the eradication of the evil, a small group of historians began to produce scholarly studies of various aspects of the phenomenon. A few began to trace its origins. Among the surveys of American involvement with drugs is *Drugs in America* by H. Wayne Morgan of the University of Oklahoma.

Drugs in America is an ambitious undertaking, to say the least. Despite the difficulty of squeezing 180 years into 167 pages of narrative, the work does succeed in outlining the evolution of American drug use and American perceptions of use during the period in question. In chronological order, *Drugs in America* sketches a pattern: the introduction of a new miracle drug, the exaggerated acclaim accorded it, the rapid disillusionment once its negative properties become apparent, and the abandonment of the drug by all but a wasted segment of the population. The pattern holds true for the entire two centuries.

Morgan attempts to do more than merely develop the American pharmacopia. He constructs a logical and plausible explanation for the American pattern of response to drugs, a pattern different from those of many other cultures. According to Morgan the major reason for the American approach is the work ethic. Industry, sobriety, and efficiency characterize the American mainstream, at least in myth. Anything which offers to enhance those characteristics is welcomed by an ambitious people. Consistently the promise for the new wonder drug comes from authorities, and as consistently the promise fails. Despite repeated failure, American faith remains strong and each new panacea receives the same enthusiastic welcome.

The formula holds true, that is, unless other American traits intervene. According to Morgan, a key factor which causes some drugs to be more quickly rejected, and their users to be perceived as vile rather than helpless, is American racism. When a substance and an undesired population—Orientals and opium, Latins and marijuana,

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for instance—come to be defined as inseparable, the American response is condemnation. Laudanum dependency, in contrast, was socially acceptable for a much longer time because of its tendency to be a problem whose victims were of the proper sort.

Drugs in America is an excellent but not perfect work. Its most significant weakness is that Morgan fails to match his usual quality of writing. Although literate and polished and acceptable from lesser persons, the prose lacks the sparkle normally provided by its author. However, such a quibble should not deter any potential reader, lay or academic. Overall the work is of high quality, and it should be a welcome addition to the growing body of work on a fascinating aspect of American social history.

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Iowa Municipal Records Manual, by Nancy Mossman. (Des Moines: Iowa State Historical Department, 1982. pp. 119, sources for additional information, index, \$5.00 paper.)

The disposal of out-dated municipal records has long been a problem. In 1977, the staff of the League of Iowa Municipalities determined that a manual on the care and disposition of records would be helpful to city governments. Through the efforts of individuals such as Edwin Allen, Peter Harstad, and Edward McConnell, funding for such a project was obtained from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in 1979 and this manual is the final result. This manual consists of retention-disposal schedules for various types of records and also deals with inactive storage, historical appraisal, and municipal records management ordinances. Sources for further reading provide additional information. All municipal officials will want a copy of this handy reference work.

Videotaping Local History, by Brad Jolly. (Nashville: American Association for State & Local History, 1982. pp. 160, appendixes, glossary of terms, illustrations, bibliography, index, \$11.95 paper.)

The author, a reporter, has worked as project field director for the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling. He has produced this handy volume that places video

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