

farmers, called for an end to the individualistic frontier era, and demanded restoration of the grasslands and resettlement of the displaced population elsewhere. Malin set out to deflate their "propaganda." He tried to show that, contrary to prevailing ecological theory, there was no enduring balance or order in nature which the pioneers had destroyed. He insisted that the region was evolving on its own toward stabilized communities and needed no federal planners. He was, first and last, a fierce believer in the economic culture of the western entrepreneur. No wonder, then, he seems never to have read the foreign historians; possibly he regarded them as he did the New Dealers, as dangerous outsiders. This man of genius was something of a nativist and a provincial, content with the faith of his fathers and with Gopher Prairie.

There were in James Malin and his history, then, some unresolved contradictions. He was an innovator and an experimenter, but not in the economic and political institutions of his region. He talked much about the adaptation of culture to its environment but also about the need to triumph over nature and bring it to market. He explored new methods of doing history, and asked more profound questions than most of his generation, but he gave old answers to them. This book, so ably edited and so revealing of those contradictions, is one that we have sorely needed. It gives this complex man his due presentation at last: he was a brilliant and original figure who never traveled far from home.

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

DONALD WORSTER

History of Agriculture in Ohio to 1880, by Robert Leslie Jones. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1983. x, 416 pp. Notes, maps, bibliography, index. \$15.00 cloth.

History of Agriculture in Ohio to 1880 is the product of years of careful scholarship by Robert Leslie Jones, professor emeritus of history at Marietta College and distinguished contributor to the field of agricultural history. It provides a good example of both the strengths and weaknesses of agricultural history, and is an important contribution to that specialization. Jones's work is traditional agricultural history, in which rural people perform as economic actors, and only rarely as social beings. Jones is primarily interested in the development of commercial agriculture in Ohio, which he traces from the early days of settlement in the late-eighteenth century to 1880. Despite his contention that 1880 marked an end to the early phase of Ohio agriculture, his terminal date seems arbitrary, especially since so

many of the developments he details seemed to climax during the Civil War.

Jones treats agricultural development mainly on a commodity-by-commodity basis, though there are chapters on technology and agricultural groups. This method of organization allows him to make sense of very complex phenomena and to illustrate to best advantage his impressive knowledge of farming methods, marketing patterns, and animal and crop varieties. Unfortunately, it also lends a certain tedium to the treatment, for Jones feels compelled to touch on every market crop produced in early Ohio. Only respect for Jones's erudition and his pleasant prose style urge us on through sections on strawberries, clover seed, and broomcorn.

Respect and affection for early Ohio producers does not lead Jones into the philopietism so often seen in this type of study. He recognizes that they were too willing to apply methods of mediocre quality from the older states; that they were susceptible to agricultural crazes of dubious value; that they were not always good stewards of natural resources; and that they denigrated education and adopted sound scientific improvements only reluctantly. In short, he recognizes that Ohio farmers differed little from their counterparts elsewhere in the nineteenth-century Union. They developed profitable crops and improved methods and yields, but the process was slow and uneven.

Despite the generally high quality of Jones's book, and the impressive and useful understanding of crops, animals, methods, and marketing contained therein, weaknesses appear here and there. For one, there is no clear thesis, or central argument, around which the book revolves. Moreover, when he diverges from crops and animals Jones makes some dubious assertions. His argument that unremitting toil characterized pioneer agriculture, for example, is overdrawn, and his reliance on crop prices to illustrate the depression in Ohio agriculture during the 1870s is misleading, given the price decline in the economy as a whole during that period. Maps to illustrate the distribution of crop and animal production in the state would have improved the book, and the publisher should have provided illustrations of the agricultural implements which Jones mentions. Finally, Jones's treatment of Indian agriculture is tinged with an ethnocentrism unworthy of a quality piece of scholarship.

The major weakness of the book lies not in what it does, but in what it fails to do. As an exploration of commercial agriculture, it generally ignores activities which were unrelated to production for the market. While virtually all nineteenth-century farmers did produce something to sell, most of them spent the bulk of their time

providing products for home consumption. Jones largely ignores these activities. Likewise, he slights that portion of rural life which was unrelated to economic activity. Rural family life, institutions, recreation, ethnicity, and interpersonal relations are among the topics mentioned only in passing, if at all. When Jones does touch on social history, such as when he writes about farm women, his treatment is limp and impressionistic, and he seems to be fulfilling an obligation rather than advancing deeper understanding.

One is reluctant to criticize an author for failing to do what he did not intend to do, and Jones does an excellent job in his areas of expertise. Readers should know, however, that this is mainly an economic history of commercial agriculture in early Ohio, and it does not go far beyond that. As such, *History of Agriculture in Ohio to 1880* will be of value to agricultural historians and of interest to farming buffs, but will have little appeal to a broader audience.

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

DAVID B. DANBOM

Images of Rural Life: Photographs of Verne Morton, by the DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984. 225 pp. Photographs. \$32.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

By finding, soliciting, and securing the life's work of photographer Verne Morton, the DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, New York, greatly enriched its own collection. By finding the funds to publish this nicely presented catalog of the Morton collection, it has shared the wealth. Verne Morton was a semiprofessional photographer who lived in Groton, New York, and created a collection of 12,000 images between 1896 and 1945. After teaching school for some time, he apparently left that vocation to pursue photography full-time, even though he could not support himself through photography alone. As a bachelor living with a bachelor brother, he had little motivation to turn his camera toward scenes of domestic life. Instead he turned outward, in spite of his reportedly shy nature, and photographed rural scenes in Tompkins County. His most interesting images depict farming the land, and processes like maple sugaring and beekeeping. Occasionally he captured distant rolling hills and other beauties of his environment.

Photographic books which feature single photographers, unless they are fine art photographers, are rare. *The Smith and Telfer Photographic Collection* (1978) by the New York State Historical Association is the most similar to the Morton book, even though Smith and Telfer were commercial photographers and Morton seems to have

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