

Book Review: *Newcomers To a New Land, A 10-booklet series*, eds. H. Morgan, D. Hale, R. Strickland (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980).

In this series, 10 authors analyze the role played by major ethnic groups in the settlement and subsequent development of the State of Oklahoma. Each booklet is devoted to an ethnic group: The Poles; Czechs; British and Irish; Italians; Blacks; Germans from Russia; Germans; Mexicans; Indians; and Jews in Oklahoma.

Each booklet is virtually packed with historical facts, names, dates and personal stories. Census and demographic data given in maps and tables illustrate settlement areas, occupational structures and mobility patterns of each group. This factual information is presented in an easy to read style, integrating vivid personal accounts of day to day life, including detailed descriptions of ethnic and cultural activities, celebrations, familial life, kinship roles, religious affiliations and practices. Authors discuss these factors in relation to common and specific hardships, economic and social conditions, interaction styles with other settlers and contributions to the development of the state by each group. Old photographs depicting customs, marriage ceremonies, prominent persons, historical building sites and scenes typical of the era bring personal experiences to life.

Although each author presents what is essentially unique to a specific group, the editors have drawn together a well-coordinated style of presentation with each work following a consistent format. The booklets begin with a brief description of homeland conditions leading to immigration, followed by chapters depicting major changes in the lives of the immigrant groups in conjunction with growth of the state. Local, state and world conditions are often cited as the impetus for these changes.

Social, economic and political factors are discussed as are challenges and opportunities common to settlers' lives. Historical development is traced through social and political reforms which either helped or hindered the quality of day to day life. Authors pay special attention to familial structure, social, fraternal and religious affiliations as these factors become sources for examining the values and beliefs guiding each ethnic tradition. Contributions made by each group, often cited in stories about prominent members, symbolize not only individual but collective achievements. Continued maintenance of native language, customs and traditions found in fraternal and community life are used by the authors to analyze the presence or absence of ethnic identity and solidarity within the group. Processes of assimilation, defined as marriage outside one's ethnic group, loss of native language, affiliation outside one's own religious or social tradition, are given to account for declines in inner-group strength.

Of particular interest to historical and genealogical researchers are the Bibliographical Essays which appear at the end of each booklet. They cite valuable resources for readers interested in further study.

This series, prepared with the general reading audience in mind, contains information and data sources which are of value for historians, sociological researchers, ethnic and historical societies and genealogical researchers as well. Because of the vast amount of specific ethnic information and the historical framework within which this cultural mosaic is fitted, the entire series is recommended as a particularly valuable addition to library collections.

With this general overview of the series, we now turn to a brief description of the individual texts.

R. Bernard, *The Poles in Oklahoma*. "Work, faith, and family are the keys to the Polish heritage in Oklahoma" (p. 77). These themes are consistently present throughout the text in vivid detailed accounts describing the day to day life of the Poles in Oklahoma. The author's approach is unique to the series in that it relies almost completely on oral accounts by the remaining few who remember the early years of immigration and family records. Rich images of ethnic culture and heritage gain depth and feeling from this close up viewpoint.

Maps showing geographical settlement areas of the Poles indicate their primary roles as coal miners in McAlester, farmers in Harrah and as "smelterboys" working the lead and zinc mines of Bartlesville counties. A small unit of , ethnic culture, never numbering more than 4,000, Polish values on family life, church, cohesiveness and the importance of land ownership provide structure for day to day life.

The author closes the booklet with a particularly moving chapter on "The Refugee Priests," describing the horrors suffered by people like Father Robert Dąbrowski and Brother Stanley Kolowski whose photo (p. 71) reveals the number of Dachau identification by the Third Reich which remains branded on his arm. As immigrants to Oklahoma after years in concentration camps, they give special pride to Polish Oklahomans.

K. Bicha, *The Czechs in Oklahoma*. "In many respects Czech life in both Europe and America was more social than familial in its orientation, because the roots of most Czechs lay in villages that rarely contained more than 200 people" (p. 61). The social and fraternal ties of the Czechs remain the theme of this text. The author begins by introducing the Czechs to the reader with extensive historical information on their roots in the old country.

Remaining chapters are dedicated to detailed information on the family and religious life and the tendency of the Czechs to settle on the outskirts of the major settlement population in enclaves of their own group. These chapters are filled with personal stories, descriptions of native dress, food, wedding rites and other customs typical of the group. The author provided strong data on the importance of fraternal ties, inns and social centers like the “hospoda” and the “sokol.” Strong ethnic identity brought about through isolation from other settlers, maintenance of native language through newspapers and publications demonstrating their high level of literacy is recounted by the author. Lack of prior works in English on this group make this text of special importance to others wanting to know more about this ethnic group.

P. Blessing, *The British and Irish in Oklahoma*. “The influence on Oklahoma of citizens born in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales and their children far transcends their numbers in the state” (p. 53). In this text the British, identified to mean English, Scots and the Welsh, are considered with the Irish as important to the industrial-development of the state. British and Irish mine union officials are reported by the author to be responsible for industrialization of the Oklahoma territory, particularly in the development of trade unions. Emphasis in this text remains more upon contributions by prominent persons from the group rather than upon the day to day life and culture. Of particular research interest are the nine tables given at the close of the work which identify the numbers and percentages of these groups in relation to others, occupational structures, marriage patterns and comparative data on naturalized immigrants. Opting for a more specialized description of social and political reforms by prominent members of each group, the author’s text provides a complementary perspective to the series.

K. Brown, *The Italians in Oklahoma*. “Probably one of the most important changes that took place in the Italians’ lives was the inevitable transformation and Americanization of the family unit” (p. 43). Described as a group which experienced almost total assimilation, focus for the author’s work remains upon the early years of 1890 to 1920, a time during which Italians and their greatest impact upon the settlement of Oklahoma. Settling primarily in coal mining areas rather than in the cities as the bulk of Italian immigrants had done, ethnic heritage remained vital until their eventual decline in numbers forced assimilation.

Beginning the booklet with detailed chapters on social, economic and political conditions faced in the homeland, the author then concentrated on cultural attributes, the importance of social clubs in day to day life and their contributions in the development of labor unions like the Noble Knights of Labor founded in 1879. In later years, the Italians were instrumental to development of the United Mine Workers of America, a union important to all who have shared their mining labors.

J. Franklin, *The Blacks in Oklahoma*. Using an institutional approach, the author examines major themes such as racial prejudice, inequality and segregationist policies which pervade the history of this group. Community solidarity and a growing ethnic identity are analyzed in light of institutional entities which have been formulated to actualize social reforms to alleviate ethnic discrimination.

Contributions made by prominent persons, the importance of religion, stories of everyday life and educational achievements by both men and women are intermingled with historical data. Social and political reforms, leaders like John Hope Franklin, the historian and member of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, describe and symbolize achievements in their ongoing struggle for basic human freedoms.

This booklet is one of the most comprehensive of the series, chronicling a people's history punctuated by violence, discrimination and fear. The author's work provides deep insights into problems which were common to all immigrants to this new land and which are, to a large degree, still with us today.

D. Hale, *The Germans from Russia in Oklahoma*. "The three Fs': farming, faith, and family" (p. 9). These three salient characteristics provide the keynotes to the lives of these immigrants. The author first distinguishes members of this group from those who came from the German Empire. As colonists who had settled in Russia prior to America, they followed their primary form of livelihood founded there by remaining a people who lived on the land. Guided by their religious heritage of the Mennonite tradition, the church provided the focal point for their social and community life. Their contributions are described as turning the once open lands into the "breadbasket" (p. 62) of the world.

In the last chapter of this work, the author turns our attention to problems faced by this population in Russia, recounting their fate as the scapegoats for Russian abuse following the outbreak of World War I and II.

R. Rohrs, *The Germans in Oklahoma*. This booklet is comprised of very detailed demographic data on immigration settlement and mobility patterns of the group rather than description of day to day life.

Major emphasis of this more statistical approach is focused on the period during World War I and the years thereafter. The special hardships endured, restrictions and prejudices encountered during this period are factors which forced assimilation of the group evidenced by restrictions imposed which prevented them from speaking their native language. It is a text which would be of special interest to the research-oriented reader.

M. Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*. The author introduces the Mexicans as Oklahoma's "Invisible minority" (p. v). Noting that virtually no other research exists on the Mexicans in Oklahoma, this text is intended to serve as an introductory work. The first two chapters are devoted to extensive historical information dating back to the 1500s, incorporating the role of the Spanish in not only the first exploration of the land but upon the development of the Mexican culture and heritage. For example, the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of the nation and focal point of Mexican Catholicism, is described as the result of a combination in religious tradition. In the pre-Christian era of the Aztecs, the goddess Tonantzin, "Our Mother" preceded the Mother of Catholicism. Much of what comprises the first few chapters provides the context within which to understand the role of these people in development of the high plains area.

Later chapters are dedicated to examination of contributions made to the economic development of the growing state. The Mexicans became the largest labor force in Oklahoma after 1890, working in the coal mining industry, helping to construct railways and providing farm labor. Cultural characteristics, values, the importance of family and religious holidays, the extended kinship roles and their rich cultural heritage are discussed in chapter 5. Pride in this heritage is voiced in the modern day term of "la raza" (p. 67), indicating the unity of all who share Mexican ethnicity.

R. Strickland, *The Indians in Oklahoma*. This text presents the backdrop against which all "American" history has developed. As acknowledged in the Foreword to the series, "Indians have played a crucial part in Oklahoma's history, even to giving the state her name" (inside cover). Oklahoma stems from the Choctaw combination of *okla*, meaning people and *homma*, meaning red. The Choctaws are one of the Five Civilized Tribes of southeastern Indians of the United States who were ordered by President Andrew Jackson to be removed from their homelands to the area destined to become the State of Oklahoma. In 1830, along with the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole tribes, the Choctaws began their migration to this new land.

This booklet contains fascinating historical data on some of the earliest inhabitants of the unsettled plains. The Indians have a rich and in many ways, still unexplored heritage. This well-written text is recommended as "first reading" in the series because of the fundamental role the Indians played in the history of the land and their influence upon day to day life with other immigrant groups.

H. Tobias, *The Jews in Oklahoma*. In this text, the author's focus is upon differences which separate the Jewish immigrant population and other European groups. These differences are attributed their differences in faith and tradition. Because of these differences, stress is placed upon the

importance in development of social and community life stemming from religious affiliation. These fundamental differences are also described as bringing special hardships to the members of the group through religious and racial prejudice. Thus, social organizations, clubs and ethnic group activity provided the major source for cultural unity, fraternal ties and a sense of common identity.

The author depicts their contributions to the growth of the state by examination of occupational structure, noting particular activity in specific trades, manufacturing, commerce matters and with a concentration in the area of finances. This text, dedicated to exploration of contrasts in tradition, is informative and well-documented.

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