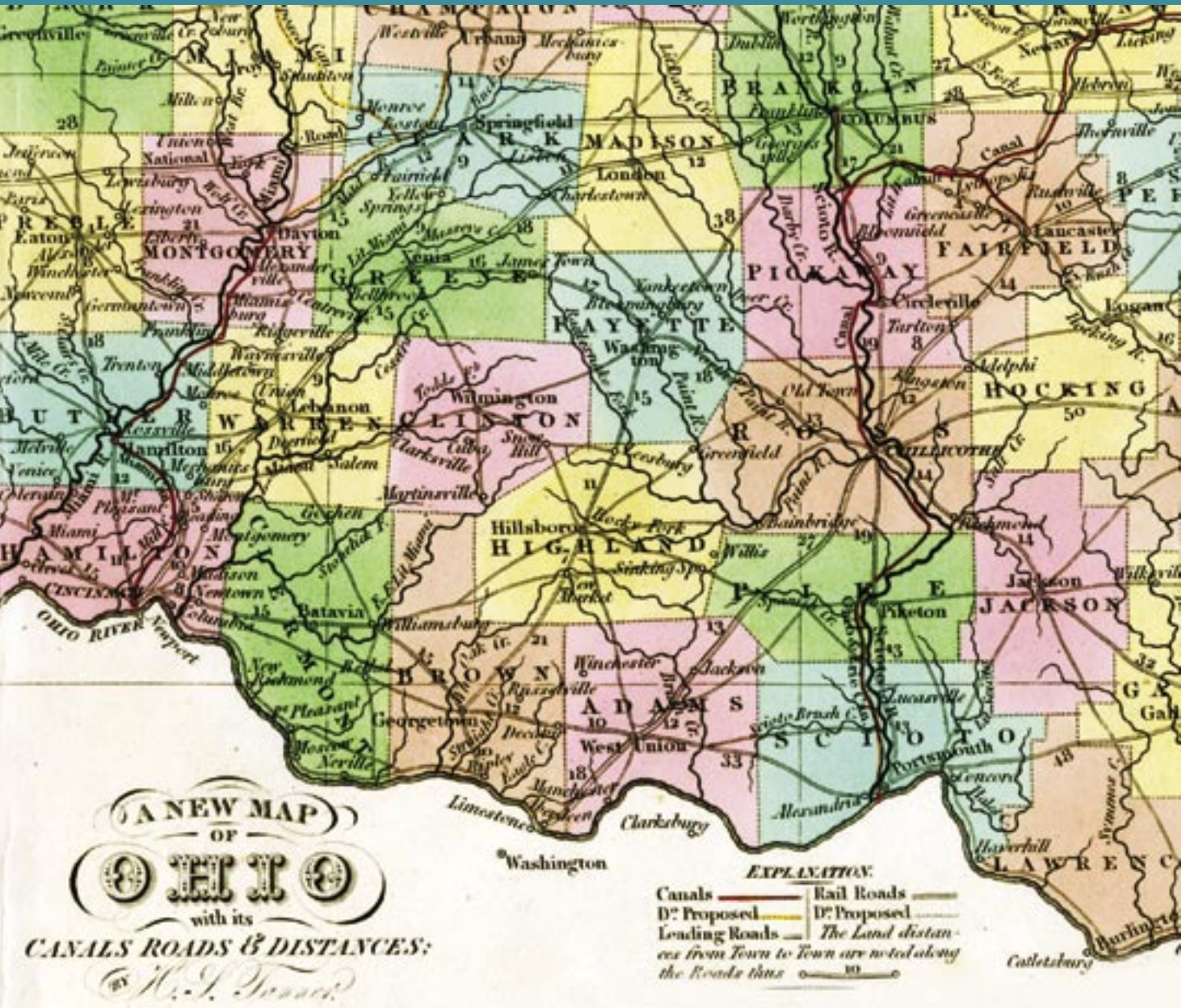


OHIO VALLEY HISTORY

A Collaboration of The Filson Historical Society, Cincinnati Museum Center, and the University of Cincinnati.

VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 4 • WINTER 2005



**OHIO VALLEY
HISTORY STAFF**

Editors

Christopher Phillips
David Stradling
Department of History
University of Cincinnati

Managing Editors

John B. Westerfield II
The Filson Historical Society

Ruby Rogers
Cincinnati Museum Center

Editorial Assistant

Cathy Collopy
Department of History
University of Cincinnati

EDITORIAL BOARD

Compton Allyn
Cincinnati Museum Center
History Advisory Board

Stephen Aron
University of California
at Los Angeles

Joan E. Cashin
Ohio State University

Andrew R. L. Cayton
Miami University

R. David Edmunds
University of Texas at Dallas

Ellen T. Eslinger
DePaul University

Craig T. Friend
North Carolina State
University

Christine L. Heyrman
University of Delaware

J. Blaine Hudson
University of Louisville

R. Douglas Hurt
Purdue University

James C. Klotter
Georgetown College

Bruce Levine
University of California
at Santa Cruz

Zane L. Miller
University of Cincinnati

Elizabeth A. Perkins
Centre College

James A. Ramage
Northern Kentucky University

Joseph P. Reidy
Howard University

Steven J. Ross
University of Southern
California

Harry N. Scheiber
University of California
at Berkeley

Steven M. Stowe
Indiana University

Roger D. Tate
Somerset Community
College

Joe W. Trotter, Jr.
Carnegie Mellon University

Altina Waller
University of Connecticut

**CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Chair

George H. Vincent

Past Chair

H.C. Buck Niehoff

Vice Chairs

Jane Garvey
Dee Gettler
R. Keith Harrison
William C. Portman, III

Treasurer

Mark J. Hauser

Secretary

Martine R. Dunn

President and CEO

Douglass W. McDonald

Vice President of Museums

John E. Fleming

David Bohl

Ronald D. Brown

Otto M. Budig, Jr.

Brian Carley

John F. Cassidy

Dorothy A. Coleman

Richard O. Coleman

Bob Coughlin

David Davis

Diane L. Dewbrey

Edward D. Diller

Charles H. Gerhardt, III

Leslie Hardy

Francine S. Hiltz

David Hughes

Robert F. Kistingner

Laura Long

Steven R. Love

Kenneth W. Love

Craig Maier

Jeffrey B. Matthews, M.D.

Shenan P. Murphy

Robert W. Olson

Scott Robertson

Yvonne Robertson

Elizabeth York Schiff

Steve C. Steinman

Merrie Stewart Stillpass

James L. Turner

**THE FILSON HISTORICAL
SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

President

R. Ted Steinbock

Vice-President

Ronald R. Van Stockum, Jr.

Secretary-Treasurer

Henry D. Ormsby

David L. Armstrong

Emily S. Bingham

Jonathan D. Blum

Sandra A. Frazier

Margaret Barr Kulp

Thomas T. Noland, Jr.

Barbara Rodes Robinson

H. Powell Starks

J. Walker Stites, III

William M. Street

Orme Wilson III

Director

Mark V. Wetherington

Ohio Valley History (ISSN 746-3472) is published in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky, by Cincinnati Museum Center and The Filson Historical Society. Periodical postage paid at Cincinnati, Ohio, with an additional entry at Louisville, Kentucky.

Postmaster send address changes to The Filson Historical Society, 1310 S. Third Street,

Louisville, Kentucky, 40208.

Editorial Offices located at the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45221-0373. Contact the editorial offices at phillicr@email.uc.edu or stradlds@email.uc.edu.

Ohio Valley History is a collaboration of The Filson Historical Society, Cincinnati Museum Center, and the Department of History, University of Cincinnati.

Cincinnati Museum Center and The Filson Historical Society are private non-profit organizations supported almost entirely by gifts, grants, sponsorships, admission and membership fees.

Memberships of Cincinnati History Museum at Cincinnati Museum Center or The Filson Historical Society include a subscription to *Ohio Valley*

History. Back issues are \$8.00.

For more information on Cincinnati Museum Center, including membership, visit www.cincymuseum.org or call 513-287-7000 or 1-800-733-2077.

For more information on The Filson Historical Society, including membership, visit www.filsonhistorical.org or call 502-635-5083.

OHIO VALLEY HISTORY

Volume 5, Number 4, Winter 2005

A Journal of the History and Culture of the Ohio Valley and the Upper South, published in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky, by Cincinnati Museum Center and The Filson Historical Society.

Contents

Marriage, Mayhem, and Presidential Politics: The Robards-Jackson Backcountry Scandal <i>Ann Toplovich</i>	3
Losing the Market Revolution: Lebanon, Ohio, and the Economic Transformation of Warren County, 1820-1850 <i>Daniel P. Glenn</i>	23
Soul Winner: Edward O. Guerrant, the Kentucky Home Missions, and the “Discovery” of Appalachia <i>Mark Andrew Huddle</i>	47
Documents and Collections	65
Review Essay	74
Book Reviews	80
Announcements	88
Index	94

Cover: A New Map of
Ohio with its Canals,
Roads, and Distances,
by H. S. Tanner, 1833.
Cincinnati Museum
Center at Union
Terminal, Cincinnati
Historical Society
Library

Contributors

ANN TOPLOVICH is Executive Director of the Tennessee Historical Society in Nashville, Tennessee. Her biography of Rachel Jackson will be published in late 2006.

DAN P. GLENN is a Ph.D. candidate in History at the University of Cincinnati.

MARK ANDREW HUDDLE is Assistant Professor of History at St. Bonaventure University in Olean, New York. His first book, *The Paradox of Color: Mixed Race Americans and the Burden of History*, will be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 2006.

JUSTIN POPE is a Ph.D. candidate in History at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He is a native of Danville, Kentucky.

Book Reviews

Harry Ellard. *Base Ball in Cincinnati: A History*. McFarland Historical Baseball Library. Gary Mitchem, Marty McGee, and Mark Durr, Series Editors. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2004. 232 pp. ISBN 0786417269 (paper), \$27.00.

In 1907, Harry Ellard wrote *Base Ball in Cincinnati: A History*, which chronicles the early history of the sport in and around “Porkopolis.” Both the Cincinnati Red Stockings and *Base Ball in Cincinnati* were acts of civic boosterism, intended to raise the national visibility of the city, and to secure baseball’s importance in its rise to prominence. In his forward, Ellard states his purpose as rectifying the omission of an important part of Cincinnati’s history, and the body of the work makes frequent mention of how the Red Stocking’s prowess on the diamond succeeded in inserting the city into the national consciousness. A major part of the work deals with the 1869 professional team, which the club management decided to assemble in order to maintain that prominence.

Ellard’s father George played for Cincinnati during its years as an amateur organization, and later served as a club official during the 1869 season when the first professional team defeated all of its sixty-five opponents. Through his family connection, Ellard was well positioned to write such a history. Before his death, he had assembled numerous baseball artifacts

from the era, including scorebooks, uniforms, and early photos. Those sources allowed Ellard to write this history from an insider’s perspective, and they provided the rich detail contained within.

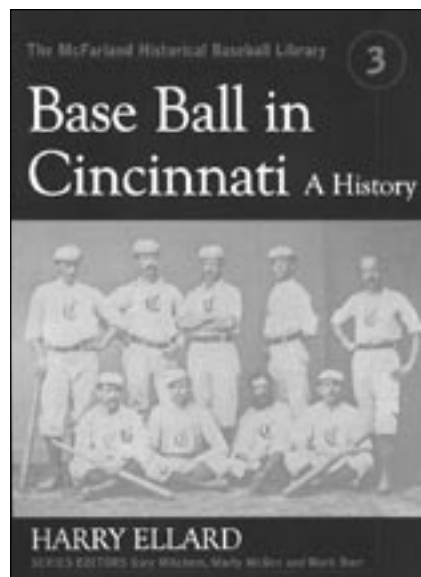
The book’s first chapter details some of the early rules of baseball, and offers copious detail on the social milieu that nurtured baseball in the sport’s early days, from the 1830s and 1860s. Along the way the reader learns why “innings” bear that name, and that the sport was so popular in Cincinnati that teams even played the game on ice when the playing field was flooded to create a skating rink.

Chapters two and three discuss the pre-1869 history of the sport, giving insight into how baseball

became so popular in the region and nationally, eventually becoming the “National Pastime.” One learns of the high social standing and moral character of the men who formed the first teams in the Cincinnati area; they were firmly within the Victorian middle class. However, they were not so upright as to avoid fisticuffs, as Otway J. Cosgrove, later a prominent attorney, proved when a group from the West End disputed the Baltic Base Ball Club’s right to a local ball field. Ellard returned to these dual themes often-- that

these baseball pioneers were gentlemen, but manly as well, reflecting prime concerns of Nineteenth-century middle class men.

Much of the remainder of the book focuses on the transformation of the Reds from an amateur team made up of local players to a professional



group recruited from various parts of the country. Ellard provides a summary of how the team was organized, thumbnail biographies of the roster of the first professionals, and in-depth descriptions of the most celebrated games of the 1869-1870 Reds, including their first loss to the Brooklyn Atlantics in 1870. Throughout, Ellard provides team rosters, game results, and names of the prominent Cincinnatians who directed and organized the teams.

According to Ellard's preface to the final chapter, written by then Cincinnati sportswriter Ren Mulford, Jr., it continues the history of Cincinnati baseball from 1876 to 1907. This chapter does not succeed as well as the rest of the book due to Mulford's style and his focus on action off the field. While the work contains some contradictory information, and the text is broken by team lists and results, *Base Ball in Cincinnati* is a quick and fun read. For the baseball historian, it is a valuable resource, with fascinating insight into early baseball culture, including the tension, largely unexamined by the author, between the early amateur ethic and the later shift to professionalism that one can read between the lines.

Base Ball in Cincinnati would also be a good addition to the collection of those fans who merely wish to explore the early days of the game. It was a different time indeed, when one of the most controversial decisions made by Harry Wright, captain of the '69 Reds, was to withdraw his team from a scheduled Sunday game because his athletes did not wish to play on the Sabbath.

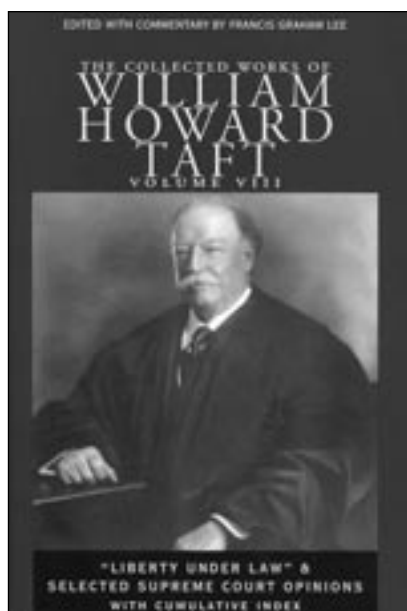
Russ Crawford
Ohio Northern University



Francis Graham Lee, editor. *The Collected Works of William Howard Taft, Volume VIII: "Liberty Under Law" & Selected Supreme Court Opinions*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004. 475 pp. ISBN 082141566 (cloth), \$59.95.

The eighth and final volume of *The Collected Works of William Howard Taft* offers students of constitutional and legal history, of the Supreme Court, and of Chief Justice Taft himself not only a redacted selection of half of Taft's written opinions (128 out of 266), but also his short essay, *Liberty Under Law*, and editor Francis Graham Lee's useful "Commentary" on Taft's career on the High Court. Though he breaks no new ground in his presentation of Taft as an effective administrator but mediocre jurist, Lee's Commentary provides helpful insights into Taft's belief in consensus yet willingness to dissent when he felt it necessary.

As is well known, Taft long nursed an open ambition, not simply to sit on the Supreme



Court, but to serve as Chief Justice of the United States. Though Lee does not touch on the issue, Taft twice refused appointments as Associate Justice, and as President, likely chose to nominate Democrat Edward White over Republican Charles Evans Hughes for Chief Justice because the former, at age sixty-five, was far more likely to require a successor in Taft's lifetime than would be the forty-eight year old Hughes. Taft's calculus proved correct and advantageous, for White's death in 1921, during Republican Warren Harding's presidency, created the vacancy Taft filled, while Hughes outlived Taft by over eighteen years.

Justice Holmes was probably only half-right, in commenting on Taft's appointment as Chief Justice, that he "never saw anything that struck [him] as more than first-rate second rate." As a legal thinker, Taft was unimaginative, pedestrian, and class-biased. None of his constitutional law opinions retains any vigor today, and his writing was dull and pedantic. Though Melvyn Dubofsky has suggested that his service on the War Labor Board may have opened Taft's eyes to the realities of class power, his judicial philosophy remained rooted in abstract nostrums about the sanctity of the individual's rights to property. His postwar essay *Liberty Under Law* makes that ideology the centerpiece of the American Constitution, and sets forth several gratuitous attacks on those who advocated the interests of the lower or working classes, though he exempts those who advocate the interests of elites. His brutish statements regarding the massacre of workers during the 1894 Pullman strike (quoted elsewhere by Dubofsky) and later comments equating jurists more liberal than he with "Bolsheviki" underscore Taft's class bias (xxvi).

Thus, while Taft famously dissented in *Adkins v. Children's Hospital*, 261 U.S. 522 (1923), stating his view that *Lochner v. New York*, 198 U.S. 45 (1905), had been overruled *sub silentio* by the Court's ruling in *Bunting v. Oregon*, 243 U.S. 426 (1917), as Lee deftly points out, his dissent may have been based as much on his belief in federal

power as it was on a Legal Realist view of class relations. Indeed, Taft's other seemingly "pro-labor" decisions – *American Steel Foundries v. Tri-City Central Trades Council*, 257 U.S. 184 (1921) and *Pennsylvania Railroad Company v. United States Railroad Labor Board*, 261 U.S. 72 (1923), likewise arose from his broad interpretation of the federal commerce clause rather than any belief that such law should have as its purpose the betterment of labor's interests. Hence, when state or local power, or a federal power other than that rooted in the commerce clause, were used to regulate labor, Taft was willing to overturn such efforts.

On the other hand, Lee's essay properly emphasizes Taft's undeniable greatness at the administrative aspects of his Chief Justiceship. Lee is persuasive in showing that Taft was an effective consensus builder following the rather divisive period of the late White Court. Further, Taft was instrumental in persuading Congress to enact three important judicial reforms: the 1922 Judicial Conference Act, the Judiciary Act of 1925, which greatly expanded the Court's control of its docket and reduced the large backlog of cases, and the 1929 legislation ensuring that the Court would finally have a building of its own.

The chief value of this book lies in Lee's admirable introductory essay, the reproduction of the hard to find Taft essay *Liberty Under Law*, and the provision of Taft's Congressional testimony of 1922 and 1924 regarding judicial reform. Were Taft a more important jurist, the redacted opinions would be of greater value, but in any event they are publicly available documents. For the biographer of Taft, however, their presence here will certainly be a convenience, though resort to the full opinions is, of course, obligatory.

Matthew S. R. Bewig
University of Florida

Geoffrey L. Buckley. *Extracting Appalachia: Images of the Consolidation Coal Company, 1910-1945*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004. 238 pp. ISBN 0821415565 (paper), \$22.95.

Geoffrey Buckley was inspired to write *Extracting Appalachia: Images of the Consolidation Coal Company, 1910-1945*, by the chance discovery, several years ago, of a photograph collection of nearly four thousand images in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. Never able to forget the incredible images and driven by a desire to understand the collection's historical context, and why, and for whom the photographs had been taken, Buckley determined to study the Consolidation Coal Company through this collection. Buckley answers these fundamental questions in *Extracting Appalachia*, while offering an engaging and innovative monograph on the use of photographs as historical resources.

Extracting Appalachia flows well as a narrative. The introduction and first chapter discuss the scholarly analysis of photographs. Chapter 2 provides a brief history of the Consolidated Coal Company and its significance in Appalachian and coal history. Chapters 3-5 are "thematic" chapters drawn from groupings of the photographs: "Images of the Company Town;" "Images of Work and Equipment;" and "Images of Environmental Transformation." The final chapter concludes by noting that these photographs are not "neutral transcribers of fact but . . . (are) texts containing the values, beliefs, and priorities of the company" (171).

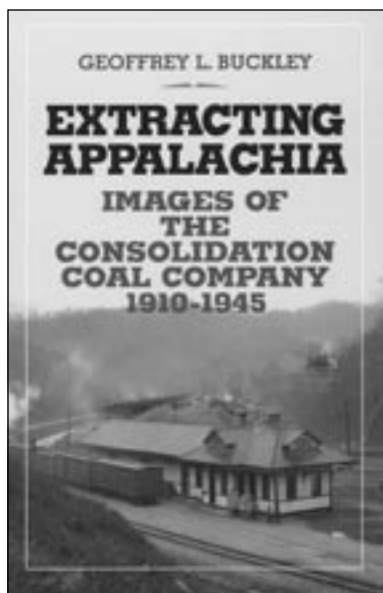
Challenging traditionally trained historians to view photographs as historic resources or "landscapes" that have been or can be constructed, or

exhibit bias, is perhaps the greatest contribution that *Extracting Appalachia* makes. Students in several disciplines in the fine arts, humanities, social sciences, public history, and American studies, are routinely taught to ask critical questions of a photograph—why was it made?; what information is being communicated?; what is the intended use of the image? Ironically, traditionally trained students of history rarely receive such instruction. At most exposed to stories of Civil War and Soviet photographers' manipulation of images, historians are more likely to discount and therefore simply not use photographs as evidentiary resources at all. However, Buckley's description of a company town as a Fordist landscape, or physical manifestation of a dominant early twentieth century industrial philosophy, when paired with a Consolidated town photograph, exposes the absolute relevance of the visual as a means of capturing and literally illustrating complex concepts.

Although there are only a few very minor factual errors in *Extracting Appalachia* (the Johnson Newlon Camden to whom he refers was Camden Sr. and therefore U.S. Senator from West Virginia, not Kentucky), its primary weakness may exist only in the eye of one beholder. Having been taught to use long quotations from primary or secondary sources sparingly and only when such emphasis was necessary,

this reader eventually found the repetitive use of long passages from other works a distracting and detracting presence from the primary narrative. There were over twenty indented quotations from scholars such as David Corbin, John Hennen, Ronald Lewis, Paul Salstrom, Crandall Shifflett, and Jerry Bruce Thomas.

Still, it is not because *Extracting Appalachia* breaks new ground in historical analysis that stu-



dents of history will enjoy reading it, but because it will challenge most of them to look at familiar territory with fresh eyes. *Extracting Appalachia* ignites the imagination to emulate what Buckley has done for Consol and apply it to the company or community with which one is more personally familiar. We should all be thankful that the urge to work with a photograph collection discovered by chance stayed with Buckley, because *Extracting Appalachia* will serve as an important reminder of what the visual can add to historical analysis, interpretation, and contextualization.

Rebecca Bailey
State University of West Georgia

Herbert Woodward Martin and Ronald Primeau, eds. *In His Own Voice: The Dramatic and Other Uncollected Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar*. Forward by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002. 315 pp. ISBN 082141422-4 (paper), \$22.95.

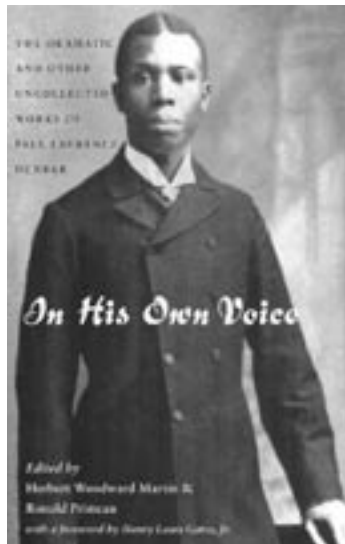
During the past twenty-five years numerous volumes have been published on the writings and legacy of Paul Laurence Dunbar, the first African American poet to achieve both national and worldwide acclaim. In 1971, for example, Addison Gayle's *Oak and Ivy* and Dudley Randall's *The Black Poet* cast Dunbar as a forerunner to the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and the Black Arts movement of the 1960s. A decade later both Tony Gentry, in *Paul Laurence Dunbar*, and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in *The Signifying Monkey*, echoed similar characteristics about Dunbar. Even many of today's contemporary

African American poets and writers, such as Maya Angelou, Nikki Giovanni, Etheridge Knight, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker, have noted that they were greatly influenced by the works of Dunbar, and the volume under review here is a testimony to that influence.

With *In His Own Voice: The Dramatic and Other Uncollected Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, editors Herbert Woodward Martin and Ronald Primeau enable us to experience the more complex, subtle, and witty side of Dunbar as a "dramatist" through their inclusion of numerous previously inaccessible literary works (xxiv). More specifically, the editors proclaim that this volume rests on the notion that Dunbar, if nothing else, was a great "short-story writer and essayist" (xxiv).

This volume is divided both chronologically and thematically into four distinctive sections. In Part One the editors place Dunbar's writings in the context of his life. Here we see how Dunbar's abilities to produce plays and songs such as "Herrick," "The Gambler's Wife," "Dream Lovers," and "In Dahomey" underscored his exceptional command of the literary concepts of "irony and nuance" (3).

In Part Two the editors showcase fifteen previously unknown essays of Dunbar like "Dickens and Thackeray," "England as Seen by a Black Man," "The Tuskegee Meeting," and "The Leader of His Race," which criticize the "double-standards" of the United States' criminal justice system, the emerging class divisions within the African American community with the rise of Booker T. Washington, and numerous other issues that shaped the lives of Black Americans during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Here Martin and Primeau conclude that these works "provide even more



evidence of Dunbar's life-long commitment to the politics, religion, art, and customs of the African

American community over a hundred years ago” (165).

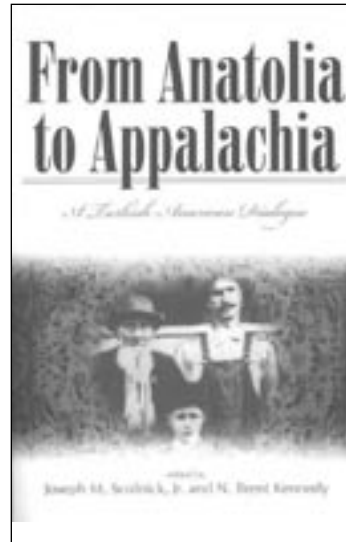
Parts Three and Four contain numerous previously uncollected, but published essays, articles, short stories, and poems. According to Martin and Primeau, these works powerfully illustrate Dunbar’s “own distinctive artistic vision” (215).

Martin and Primeau’s *In His Own Voice* is an exceptional collection that succinctly captures the passion, potency, and impact of the works of Paul Laurence Dunbar. The editors use both previously known and newly discovered literary pieces to highlight various dimensions of Dunbar that most people have failed to recognize. Without question, Martin and Primeau should be commended for such a meticulously researched and carefully crafted volume. Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings. One weakness is that the different sections of the volume are unevenly organized in length. In addition, the movement from a chronological to thematic approach is confusing at points. Despite these minor shortcomings, however, this volume deepens our understanding of Dunbar as the greatest African American poet prior to the Harlem Renaissance Era.

Eric Jackson
Northern Kentucky University

Joseph M. Skolnick, Jr. and N. Brent Kennedy, eds. *From Anatolia to Appalachia: A Turkish-American Dialogue*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003. 136 pp. ISBN 0865547769 (paper), \$18.95.

Although officially a joint effort, this book is really a continuation of the work N. Brent Kennedy has done on the ethnic origins of the Melungeon people, located primarily in southwestern Virginia and eastern Tennessee. In his book *The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People the*



True Story of Ethnic Cleansing in America (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1994), Kennedy challenged the standard anthropological definition of the group as “tri-racial isolates,” and instead, focused on what he sees as the Mediterranean origins of these

people. In the work under review, Kennedy focuses on the results of investigations into his claim that he and other Melungeons are of Turkish origin. In particular, he highlights the links established between the Melungeon Research Committee, which he founded, and the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), as well as contacts with people in Turkey itself. From these connections he hopes that this “exchange” will, “if properly understood and nurtured, bear beneficial fruit for *all* [his emphasis] Turks and Americans, whatever their ethnic or political or religious inclinations” (18).

An introductory chapter provides background of this quest to “resurrect” the true Melungeon heritage. The book concludes—although Kennedy and Skolnick prefer to call it, “The Last Chapter in the Book”—with an interview of Skolnick, a non-Melungeon professor of Political Science at the University of Virginia at Wise. In between, the book is taken up with interviews of Americans claiming Melungeon origin, other Turkish-Americans, and officials in Turkey. Respondents were asked a series of questions on their knowledge of the Turkic-Melungeon connection and how they would like to see it develop. All were positive toward the growing relationships, which include the twinning of Wise, Virginia, with Cesme, Turkey, and exchange programs between the University of Virginia at Wise

and Istanbul and Dumlupinar Universities.

Kennedy's ultimate aim is to build cultural understanding between the United States and Turkey through the Melungeons. In the process he hopes that this connection will be non-chauvinistic and embrace the broad definition of Melungeons, which he describes as "a model for a new ethnicity based not on skin color or national origins, but instead on shared experience" (14). This new definition can be best described, Kennedy believes, by the Melungeon "credo . . . 'One People, All Colors'" (14). Unfortunately, in this book Kennedy and Scholnick display the contradiction critics noted about Kennedy's earlier work (see, for example, Melissa Schrift, "Melungeons and the Politics of Heritage," in Celeste Ray, ed. *Southern Heritage on Display: Public Ritual and Ethnic Diversity within Southern Regionalism*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003, especially 107-120). While advocating multiculturalism, Kennedy's obsession with the Turkish connection promotes a certain racial exclusiveness based on DNA, and physical characteristics such as "shovel teeth" and the "Turkish cranial bump" (92).

The evidence of a cultural link—based on linguistic analysis—and genetic connections between Turks and Melungeons presented in this book is not conclusive, which even Kennedy acknowledges in his calmer moments. Still, the whole enterprise remains a promotion of a rather exclusive racial identity. On occasion, Kennedy and Skolnick try to cover themselves with statements that this book is merely an "exploration" and not an "explanation" of Melungeon Turkish "relationships" but, ultimately, they seem to have made up their minds (23).

Kennedy's efforts have been welcomed by Turkish-American lobby groups and Turkish politicians looking to counter, as a number of them put it in their interviews, "the widespread propaganda disseminated by the enemies of the Turks" which not only include the makers of the movie *Midnight Express*, but also the Greek, Armenian, and Kurdish

lobbies in the United States (60, 65). The mayor of Wise is also very keen on the benefits that might accrue from the Turkish-American dialogue.

In sum, this work is not very valuable for historians. The editors admit "that there is hardly anything neat and cleanly structured about this book" and that "some portions of it [are] based less on established fact than others" (5,6). The work contains no index or citations and only a selective bibliography. Its interviews were not randomly selected. Nonetheless, one can observe here the construction of an ethnic heritage by Melungeon activists. All the elements are evident: politics, economic boosterism, and, of course, the personal quest for an essential and deep-rooted identity. For this reason alone, this book will be of interest to those who study ethnicity and its invention and to those specifically interested in its invention among the Melungeons and "maybe Melungeons" (see Schrift, 112-13).

David T. Gleeson
College of Charleston

Steve Mellon. *After the Smoke Clears: Struggling to Get By in Rustbelt America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002. 192 pp. ISBN 0822941902 (cloth), \$29.00.

When the *Pittsburgh Press* closed its doors in 1992, photojournalist Steve Mellon experienced the same loss being felt by factory workers across the industrial heartland of the United States, stretching from Maine to Missouri. Losing more than just a job, Mellon found that his identity began to fade, like old photographs. Mellon relocated his sense of purpose, his own personal history, in the human embers of the industrial fires that once lit mills, manufactories, and mines in Homestead and Braddock, Pennsylvania; Lewistown, Maine;

Matewan, West Virginia; and Flint, Michigan.

It's not just physical structures that were abandoned by economic tides, but human identities as well. Mellon explores this with images (thirty-six black-and-white images of "places" and "people") in the initial section of the book. The narratives that follow are less acts of scholarly history or ethnography than they are journalism—but a storytelling that privileges the voices of ordinary people. Thankfully, there is no attempt at the analytic framing of social history or the heavy theorizing of cultural studies. Nor, curiously, is there an activist's perspective, such as that of Michael Moore's *Roger & Me* or even Tony Buba's short films, *Lightning over Braddock* or his wrenching documentary, *Struggles in Steel*. Like Buba, Mellon has great empathy for those people and places he explores, but there is nonetheless a certain detachment.

Also using interviews and narrative evocations of people and place, *After the Smoke* is not really about "getting by" as the title suggests. Rather it seems to be broader than that—about staying behind or being left behind by the economy. It does not really matter why these people have stayed behind. What matters to Mellon are their struggles both to maintain "place" and craft their own identities. In repeated conversations, Mellon seems to be asking interviewees: How are you making sense of your life? And, with striking directness, Mellon captures the voices of these towns. We meet Wilfred Moreau and his son Derek in Lewiston, Maine, struggling to find work in a dying town and Joseph Szwarc in his barbershop along the nearly vacant streets of Braddock, Pennsylvania. If their answers are unsurprising, the tenor, tone, and quality of their voices are at once insightful and resonant. Mellon has crafted an easily-read narrative that appears to privilege the storytellers, capturing their inflections and cadences in long, sweeping quotations—so much so that one wishes we could actually hear the voices.

For me, sitting on the shores of Lake Erie, in Cleveland, such descriptions of rustbelt life call forth images of the small towns that I have seen

across Northern Ohio, as well as those decrepit places that I once passed through on a 1000-mile car vacation in which I studiously avoided Interstate highways. And, indeed, such evocations might also recollect the pathos of the small towns and large villages across the world that emptied in the nineteenth century, when ordinary people across the globe felt the first waves of industrial revolution. Certainly the same issues remain—how to construct community in the face of continued economic upheaval, the so-called "creative destruction" of capitalism.

Given the topic, then, it is perhaps not surprising that Mellon sometimes dips into cliché. Nor does Mellon's down-to-earth style succeed in evoking time and place as successfully as other similar works, such as John Baskin's, *New Burlington: The Life and Death of an American Village*—in which Baskin documents life in the last year (early 1970s) of a community erased by "progress," in the form of a dam and lake meant to spur economic growth. Neither does Mellon capture what has been lost as effectively as George Sturt in his elegiac celebration of his dying craft, *A Wheelwright's Shop*.

If not a classic, *After the Smoke* is nonetheless compelling. Mellon renders quite clearly the unsteady equilibrium that has emerged across the landscape between decay and survival—a condition no longer confined to inner cities and industrial districts.

Mark Tebeau
Cleveland State University