

## Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History

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relative freedom and had not fought a major war on its own soil since 1865, Soviet-bloc nations had escaped from semifeudalism only recently and had absorbed staggering losses during World War II. Their continued heavy expenditures for armaments, caused by an understandable fear of another war rather than a desire to expand, further slowed economic growth. Moreover, their soil and climate were not as good as those in the United States. With time and an end to the Cold War, Garst was confident that Soviet-bloc production could approximate America's.

Although Garst sometimes seemed a little naive (for example, he ignored the harmful side-effects of chemicals and underestimated the strength of anticommunist elements within the United States), his correspondence makes for interesting reading by the general public. The editors provide a helpful introduction and wisely include a copy of Garst's 1964 letter to the Soviet Union (which was published in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*) discussing the agricultural opportunities of the USSR. This letter deserves to be widely read in this country.

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*Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History*, edited by Robert M. Taylor, Jr., and Ralph J. Crandall. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986. xv, 322 pp. Notes, index. \$34.95 cloth.

All of the essays in *Generations and Change* bear upon a common theme, yet they are startling in their variety and differences of method and focus. They move from a recapitulation of the mutual distrust of historians and genealogists for each others' work to specific case studies that offer extreme revisions of both historical and genealogical norms. Any researcher should be delighted at the presentations of new sources of information.

Attention to the matter of genealogy as a research field allied to but separate from "history" predates most of the essays collected here. Mention of some of these efforts can place the assertions and conclusions made within the book in some historiographical context. In 1977 Gerald George commented that views of the past gleaned from local histories really do matter, but that many of these publications give a frighteningly false picture. He cited nostalgia and boosterism as the main villains in this process. Peter R. Jacobsen was more blunt. The problem, as he stated it in 1981, is that, "often, virtual battle lines have been drawn between genealogists and archivists, as each group has seen the other as the major obstacle to accomplishing mutually exclusive goals." He blamed historians more than genealogists for defining

topics too narrowly and too obtusely to be of value to anyone. As far back as 1971, I suggested that "genealogy, as a subject, should not be condemned because some of its practitioners are biased, any more than history should be condemned as a discipline because some of its devotees are biased."

Polemics sometimes swing the pendulum too far in the opposite direction, but the issues raised are then ripe for further investigation and discussion. *Generations and Change* takes full advantage of such an opportunity. There are connections that narrow—even close—the gap between genealogists and historians, particularly the so-called new social historians. Those who say that they are studying history "from the bottom up" use much of the same body of reference materials as do those who say that they are studying family history or genealogy. In both cases, and in most historical study, researchers deal with people and human activities. That such researchers draw information of value from one another seems only logical, and the essays in this volume reinforce this conclusion. Ranging from a survey of genealogical study in the United States to an anthropological reconstruction of the New England marriage market, each hammers home the dictum that sound and imaginative research is to be valued and used, whatever the motivations of the researcher.

The introductory essay by Robert Taylor and Ralph Crandall is a superb summary of the growth of both collections of reference material and the production of written genealogies. The phases and cycles through which such production has gone help to explain the unevenness of many repositories of source material. Associations devoted to one aspect or another of genealogy have played their own role, and we need such an overview as this essay provides. We must know from whence we came so that we can know better where we might be going. The essay by Taylor and Crandall concludes with the assertion that two aspects of genealogy are valuable to the historian: particulars of lives over time, and particulars of lives within the context of kinship. Taylor and Crandall cite examples of historical studies that depend on genealogical information and methods. Even if this essay stood by itself, which it could do, it would be a fine addition to the literature on the subject.

Robert Charles Anderson makes some interesting and innovative comparisons in his essay, "The Place of Genealogy in the Curriculum of the Social Sciences." In expanding the connections between genealogy and history to include connections with all of the social sciences, he gives the reader some pointed directions towards themes and information that ought not to be ignored by any researcher. Calling attention to the relative newness of genealogical awareness of blacks and Jews in the

United States reaffirms the demographic broadness of present family history studies. Noting that numismatics, cartography, and paleography are accepted as auxiliary sciences, while genealogy is not, he proceeds to recite the list of values related to both methods and products that the social scientist can gain from the genealogist. Filiopietistic antiquarianism, not a phrase that rolls easily off of everyone's tongue, is now an attitude more characteristic of nongenealogists than genealogists.

Elizabeth Shown Mills presents really magnificent information in her essay, "Ethnicity and the Southern Genealogist: Myths and Misconceptions, Resources and Opportunities." She also opens the door to new sources. Many people assume that genealogical research in the southern states may focus on white ancestors, black ancestors, or Indian ancestors, but not on ancestors who might carry all three strains. Ignorance of the legal structure, the social structure, and the economic structure that allowed and even promoted racial mixing must have skewed a vast number of studies of this region. The specific information given in Mills's essay, the list of sources and the known errors made in using these sources, as well as the directions in which research can turn all make this essay one that should be required reading for any student of history or genealogy. Of particular interest is the family legend of an ancestor who was a dentist and who was shot to death by a patient while drilling on a tooth. The reality of the events, the ways in which the realities were uncovered, and the ease with which mistaken definition of words made the story change make for really fascinating reading. But more than that, there are legends in every family and every community that need exactly this sort of examination.

Other essays in the collection are as good, but many are on a much narrower focus. None of the essays is bad, although the contribution by Andrejs Plakans requires greater effort than most of the others to be useful in a general sense. The specificity of Roman Catholic, Mormon, and German examples, while quite acceptable as independent efforts, fit less easily into the cohesive whole of the book than do the others. The organization, the structure, and the sequencing of the book are suitable to the content. The collection fits well into the growing body of literature on the value of genealogical methods and products for other aspects of historical enquiry. Not only is the book timely, it is useful and interesting. These qualities make it a book that I recommend for all people interested in learning more about our individual and collective past, and who need to know more about how to acquire that knowledge.

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LOREN N. HORTON

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