The German-American Experience in Missouri: Essays in Commemoration of German Immigration to America, 1683-1983/ Settlement Patterns in Missouri: a Study of Population Origins, With a Wall Map

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Book Reviews


Interest in ethnic settlement in given regions or places has been a long tradition in American cultural geography, history, sociology, and anthropology. In that tradition, The German-American Experience in Missouri is a collection of essays originally delivered as lectures for a course with the same title. The essays were produced by a diverse academic group ranging from an undergraduate student in journalism to professors. All of the contributors are from the University of Missouri–Columbia, except one, who is located at the St. Louis campus. To appreciate this work and to understand more fully the reason for the book’s publication the reader must read the editors’ introduction.

As a cultural geographer, I found Walter Schroeder’s “Rural Settlement Patterns of the German-Missourian Cultural Landscape” a particularly good essay for helping the nongeographer to understand the contribution geographers can make to ethnic studies. The graphics are appropriate and clear to the reader. The editors would have achieved greater continuity if they had followed Schroeder’s essay with “Settlement Patterns,” “Missouri Germans and Local Dialects,” “The Pelster House,” “German Vernacular Building Tradition in Early Missouri,” and “German Churches in the Pelster Housebarn Neighborhood.” All of these essays relate to the cultural landscape and settlement pattern. Joel Hartmann’s, “Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonites in Missouri” cries for the inclusion of maps of origin, migration streams, and historic and present-day Amish settlement. The use of graphics would elevate this essay from adequate to very good. The final essay by Laura Barnitz, “The German-American Family Farm in Missouri: A Personal View,” is properly placed to give a personal touch to the academic essays. This lecture gives the reader a feel for the author’s family, its history and traditions, and a brief glimpse into the possible future. I question the statement, “We have pride in our land, perhaps a little more desire to keep it whole than families with non-German backgrounds” (190). My research has caused me to conclude that people of all backgrounds endeavor to keep the land whole if the land has been in the family for more than two generations. The final
work by James Goodrich lists some of the sources and services of the State Historical Society of Missouri and a short bibliography. The German-American Experience in Missouri deserves to be in the library of all who are interested in ethnic settlement in North America.

Russel L. Gerlach, a geographer at Southwest Missouri State University has a long research record of settlement studies and cartography. His Immigrants in the Ozarks (1976) is a basic study of immigration and settlement in Missouri. Now Settlement Patterns in Missouri is a tour de force, a geographic study with a wall map of such scale and color notation as to be truly informative as well as attractive. The focus of the book's narrative is the map; without it the value of the text would be greatly diminished, so it is fortunate that the map is placed in such a manner as to be available for continual reference.

This book is filled with secondary maps in addition to the main map, so the reader is fully informed about the role of place in settlement patterns. Gerlach breaks down the settlement process in chronological order, starting with pre-territorial Missouri and concluding with ethnic settlement patterns in Missouri disclosed by the 1980 census. Appendix A lists population data for each county, with 1860 origins of Old Stock America, slaves in 1860, and blacks in 1980. Also included are American Indian and Spanish origins in 1980, ethnic settlements, if any, and 1980 ancestry. Appendix B lists multiple origin ancestry groups and Appendix C gives the total number of respondents reporting ancestry groups in Missouri for 1980. The bibliography is extensive for a work of this nature and, with the other data, worth the price of the book. Settlement Patterns in Missouri should be in the libraries of all students of settlement. I hope that Gerlach or others will continue to proceed in this manner on a state-by-state basis, in order for the settlement patterns of the United States to be revealed at last.

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Vestiges of a Proud Nation: The Ogden B. Read Northern Plains Indian Collection, edited by Glenn E. Markoe, with essays by Raymond J. DeMallie and Royal B. Hassrick. Burlington, Vermont: Robert Hull Fleming Museum, 1986; distributed by University of Nebraska Press. 176 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendix. $35.00 cloth, $20.00 paper.

During the 1970s, several major exhibitions of American Indian art attracted unexpectedly large crowds and set off a minor revolution in American Indian art. Museum curators from coast to coast took new looks at their collections and planned exhibitions and catalogs. Vestiges