

In This Issue

From how Italian immigrants came to Ohio to how oatmeal came to your table, this edition of the *Northeast Ohio Journal of History* answers some questions you may never have considered. In addition, a new "discussion" feature we are adding will allow you to ask your own questions and answer those of others.

In this issue, we feature a group of pieces that challenge us to rethink conventional wisdom. For example, Margaret Pallante's feature article on Italian workers in the Niles, Ohio brick works demonstrates that oft-repeated historical generalizations about Italian immigrants to America do not fit the experiences these brick makers. Pallante, Chair of the Department of History at Youngstown State University, argues that Italian workers at Niles Fire Brick were more likely to assimilate, rapidly acquire property, and pursue educational opportunities than their counterparts in large Eastern cities.

Similarly, Robert Reszler's piece on Erhard Steinbacher overturns a century-old myth regarding the origins of the oatmeal industry in America. Local legend (supported by Quaker Oats' own history and publicity) has long held that America's embrace of oatmeal began with a one hundred barrel order the Union Army placed with Ferdinand Schumacher during the Civil War. Reszler's research not only reveals that this legendary order almost certainly never happened, but offers an alternative, more interesting, and more likely explanation of how oatmeal got to Union troops (and thus to America's breakfast tables).

Gregory Wilson's item in "Notes and Comments" also challenges us to rethink what is meant by the term "region." The *Northeast Ohio Journal of History* is by definition a regional history publication, but how should that region be defined? Politically? Geographically? Culturally? Environmentally? Wilson, *NOJH's* Publication Director and Assistant Professor of History at the University of Akron, means to provoke discussion and debate with this piece.

To add your part to this debate, please feel free to visit our new "discussion board" feature. Taking advantage of the technology available to us as an electronic journal, we are endeavoring to make the *NOJH* an interactive publication in which our readers can comment on and discuss issues pertaining to our content and Ohio history.

In lieu of our usual virtual museum exhibit, we are featuring a link to the Ohio Memory Project. This outstanding website—a cooperative venture of the Ohio Historical Society, the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board, the State Library of Ohio, the Ohio Public Library Information Network, and the Ohio Library council—recently won the prestigious "Award of Merit" from the American Association for State and Local History. It is a tremendous achievement in public history and a "must-see" for anyone interested in Ohio History.

In addition to the usual book reviews, we also encourage the reader to explore the other features of our site. For those who missed earlier issues, please visit our "Archives" link, which contains the entire contents of our first volume. We have expanded our "Research Links"

feature, adding not only more primary sources but also more links to local historical agencies. We strongly encourage the reader to suggest or send new links for this page. The same is true for items in "Current History," which is a clearinghouse for information on events of a historical nature in Northeast Ohio. Because we update this section constantly, please feel free to send announcements for it at any time.

We would also like to remind our readers that printer-friendly versions accompany each item. These PDF files are not only easier on the eyes when printed, but also contain basic issue data and page numbers for convenience in citation.

As always, please address any inquiries about this project (or about any other aspect of the journal) to the editor at kkern@uakron.edu. We welcome all comments and suggestions.

Kevin Kern

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome Jordan Broderick as our new assistant editor, and to extend our thanks for his hard work in getting this issue online.