

Ohio and the World, 1753-2053: Essays toward a New History of Ohio. Edited by Geoffrey Parker, Richard Sisson, and William Russ Coil. (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2005. xiii, 256 pp. Cloth, \$49.95, ISBN 0-8142-0939-4. Paper, \$22.95, ISBN 0-8142-5115-3.)

In an essay titled "Ohio States" from the book of the same name, Jeffrey Hammond noted that Ohio appeared average because it was, meaning that Ohio is an amalgam of U.S. society, notable for being the middle against which more radical, trendy or controversial events are measured.¹ In his introduction to *Ohio and the World*, Andrew R.L. Cayton, author of several books on Ohio and frontier North America, takes exception to this characterization as incomplete. As he notes, Ohio possessed real leadership, since from "the mid-eighteenth through the mid-twentieth century, Ohio was at the forefront of most major developments in the Americas and Europe" (2).

Ohio and the World began as a series of lectures in honor of Ohio's bicentennial. Now revised and edited, the essays by R. David Edmunds, James Oliver Horton, Eric Foner, Kathryn Kish Sklar, James T. Patterson, Herbert Asher, and William Kirwan seek to explain Ohio's past and future as intimately involved with globalization. The larger purpose is to push Ohioans to once again make the state a destination point, an economic and socially progressive leader. The overall trope of the book is declension, articulating how and why Ohio moved from being at the forefront of global trends towards a state of decay, of falling behind. Instead of pursuing new frontiers, Ohioans are happy with the status quo. But *Ohio and the World* offers an uneven effort in connecting Ohio and world history the essays might be useful in stimulating class discussions, suggesting lines of further research, and in creating a usable past.

The essay with the best global connection is the first, R. David Edmunds' "A German Chocolate Cake, With White Coconut Icing: Ohio and the Native American World." His purpose is to bring Native American history to the center of analysis of not only Ohio but also American history. Thus, his title and central argument: "[The] entire span of American history is not a white cake with considerable marbling in its most recent layer. Indeed, in chronological terms, American history is instead, a rich, brown, multi-layered, German chocolate cake, with a white coconut icing" (37).

Edmunds begins by noting the rich and lengthy history of Ohio's native period, from the pre-Columbian to the eighteenth century. Moving first through the pre-

¹ Jeffrey Hammond, *Ohio States: A Twentieth-Century Midwestern*, Kent: Kent State University Press, 2002.

Columbian peoples, Adena and Hopewell, Edmunds places them in a global context by comparing them to early cultures who built complex and powerful city-states along the Tigris and Euphrates, the Nile and the Tiber. All had some elements in common (e.g. priest king rulers, monuments). The point is that Ohio history did not begin with the first Europeans, but is situated within a larger global development of complex societies that predates Spanish, French and British exploration and conquest. Yet, as Edmunds notes, the native cultures did not remain dominant, so Ohioans speak English, not Shawnee or Sioux. Although native peoples lost control of Ohio, they were not merely pawns of the Europeans, they (and Ohio) were a critical part of the struggle for empire in North America. The successful war for independence by the newly formed United States did not mean peace in Ohio; the bloody struggle continued until roughly 1815 when Tecumseh's last efforts to keep Ohio for Indians failed.

Moving forward with the theme of race in Ohio but losing the global focus, James Horton's piece "Race and Region: Ohio, America's Middle Ground" carries the narrative into the nineteenth century. Horton discusses the movement of blacks into Ohio, despite the passage of Black Laws in 1803 and 1807 that sought to discourage such behavior, and the growth of anti-slavery and abolitionism. Horton characterizes Ohio through 1850 as a geographic, economic, political, and racial middle ground between the slave South and the free North. Within the state, differences emerged between the more racially tense, southern focused Cincinnati and the somewhat more tolerant Cleveland and northeast section of the state. Horton's essay uses most of the space to discuss anti-slavery and abolition efforts developing in Ohio through 1850, noting the creation of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, integrated and strong anti-slavery Oberlin College, and the activities of various Underground Railroad conductors such as John Rankin and John Parker. In the end, Horton provides an interesting overview of Ohio's divided nature and importance in anti-slavery and abolition, but he fails to place these developments in a global context. For example, it might have been useful to examine Ohio as part of an Atlantic World effort to abolish slavery.

The lack of global focus continues in Eric Foner's "Ohio and the World: The Civil War Era." While there is ample discussion of Ohio's importance in the Civil War, Foner's only global connection is his brief mention of immigration to Ohio from Ireland and Germany. Otherwise, Foner reiterates the many Ohioans who played key roles, including Salmon P. Chase, Benjamin F. Wade, John Sherman, Clement Vallandigham, John Bingham and Rutherford B. Hayes, Edwin Stanton, Jay Cooke and generals such as Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman and Philip H. Sheridan. Of course, Ohio's

importance to the war meant its continued centrality to party politics afterwards. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, and William McKinley all fought in the war and Ohio dominated presidential politics at least through 1900. The war led Chase, Hayes and other Republicans to craft “a comprehensive world view glorifying the North as the home of progress, opportunity, and freedom” (78). Republicans also played key roles in passage of the 1866 Civil Rights Act and Congressman John Bingham was the major author of the 14th Amendment. There were some small changes in race relations in Ohio as a result of the war. Some 5,000 blacks served in the Union army, Cleveland and Cincinnati desegregated street cars during the war, and passage of the 15th Amendment meant that blacks in Ohio could vote for first time in 1870. Sadly, blacks were still barred from public facilities and skilled employment, but won legal battles against discrimination in railroads, hospitals, asylums, and in some communities, schools. Women also experienced new roles during the war, and this helped lead to calls for suffrage.

Economically, the war made significant changes to Ohio. The state had become an industrial powerhouse, with growing urban centers and a burgeoning labor movement. The completion of railroads to Ohio solidified the connection between Northwest and Northeast and Ohio led nation in railroad track mileage. Railroads helped spur other changes to the economy, including mining and manufacturing. Education also spread more widely.

For all its leadership in promoting progressive changes in race relations, Ohio was by no means unified. There were racist reactions against blacks in the military and Lincoln’s call for emancipation. The prosperity of war did not reach smaller farmers in southern portion of the state and many Ohioans were upset at the growing power of the federal government. All of this helped fuel support for Democrat Clement Vallandigham, who, though imprisoned for “violating a military order that forbade expressing sympathy for the enemy” (82-3) nonetheless ran for governor (and lost) and sparked significant debate over the changes in Ohio.

Of course the lecture series and the book needed a strong contribution detailing Ohio’s central role in the Civil War era and Foner delivered. And, it does fit within the purpose of detailing Ohio’s rise (and fall) from leadership. Yet, if the goal is to frame Ohio history as global history, or at least to show Ohio connections to global events, then this essay fell short.

Kathryn Kish Sklar’s essay, “Ohio 1903: Heartland of Progressive Reform” aims to show the richness of what Sklar calls Ohio’s civil society as the reason behind the

state's key place in national politics during this period. She argues that, among other things, industrial tensions between 1876 and 1920 were violent in other parts of Europe and the United States, but not on Ohio, where she argues a rich civil society where citizens could work out differences more peacefully allowed for a smoother experience with industrialization. Furthermore, the weak national state in the United States meant Europeans moved earliest to craft social legislation. The weak state, in turn, led state governments to fill in for the federal, and being closer to the people, this meant civil society played a strong role in social reform. She argues that women and men countered the anti-democratic trends in the Progressive era to build a more inclusive society.

Her first piece of evidence is the railroad strike of 1877 centered in Newark. While violence occurred in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Chicago, a rich civil society in Newark mitigated against it. For example, playing baseball together brought troops and strikers closer together. She also discusses Washington Gladden and Tom Johnson and argues that they fostered common ground among Ohioans of all classes to address the issues of poverty, corruption, and social justice.

In seeking to understand how this new public culture emerged, Sklar argues that it did so because middle class women "rendered public life more expressive of grassroots needs, more responsive to social problems, and more democratic in its embrace of new groups" (112). For example, she asserts that women in Springfield, Ohio made temperance into one of the most inclusive social movements in American history, especially through the leadership of Eliza Stewart. It drew international attention and Stewart lectured and organized across Ohio and in Europe. Sklar also notes how these temperance organizations branched out into various other social issues including prison reform and settlement houses. Ohio women also helped lead the suffrage movement and Sklar notes the contributions of Harriet Taylor Upton, who served as president of the Ohio Woman Suffrage Association almost continuously from 1899 to 1920 and Hallie Quinn Brown, an African American leader from Wilberforce who helped create the Colored Woman's League of Washington, D.C., "a forerunner of the National Association of Colored Women" (120).

Sklar provides a stimulating set of ideas. But while Ohio's centrality to progressive reform is clear, her analysis could have been deeper. In part this may reflect one of the messages of the book, to instill hope and activism among Ohioans so that they can reclaim progressive leadership among the states. Unfortunately, she ignores both the role of the labor movement in Ohio during these years, making them

only passive supporters of Tom Johnson, as well as the local success of the Socialist Party. Including these two might have strengthened her essay, which relies on leaders and is heavily weighted toward middle class reformers. Her argument that temperance was one of the most inclusive movements in American history seems overstated, given the intense opposition and overt religious and ethnic tensions associated with it. She also failed to analyze the governorship of James M. Cox, who, like Gladden, supported significant progressive reforms while maintaining a deep hostility to African Americans and Catholic immigrants. As for Tom Johnson, he made the middle class nervous as he gathered support from working class Clevelanders, and avoided cultural issues like temperance. Sklar also avoids a discussion of the violence and unrest in Ohio associated with WWI, which brought forward all of the tensions and contradictions within progressive reform by repressing labor, immigrant, and Socialist groups and providing the impetus to pass both woman suffrage and prohibition. In short, as Drew Cayton has noted, the reform impulse was as much about social justice as it was making Ohio's public culture reflect middle-class Protestant values, a nuanced view missing from Sklar's analysis of Ohio circa 1903.²

The next essay is James T. Patterson's "Ohio 1953: Problems and Prospects." Like most others in the collection, there is little that is global here, but it does serve as the turning point in the book, for it is between 1940 and 1960 that Ohio reaches its apogee, falling away from its leadership role afterwards. Patterson notes that Ohioans, like many Americans during these years, had reason to be optimistic. Advances in medicine and science and a strong economy based on consumption helped keep Ohio on solid ground in terms of research and per capita income. The state's population grew by 22 percent in the 1950s, the number of highways and automobiles expanded, and Ohioans generally felt positive about the state. However, there were problems. Ohioans were not immune from the excesses of anti-Communism. Conservatives were stronger and liberals and reformers were weaker in Ohio than other places, and spending on education and social services lagged other states with similar per capita wealth.

Two areas in particular arose at this time that deflated the optimistic assessments emerging from Ohio, race relations and economic troubles. As Patterson notes, Ohio had developed a reputation as a moderate, if not progressive, place for race relations. The Cleveland Browns had been the first team to sign black players and the city was the first major city to create a fair employment practices commission. Still, the black ghetto

² See Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Ohio: The History of a People* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002), 210.

continued to grow and violence broke out in Cleveland and Cincinnati in the 1960s. Meanwhile, the population of the central cities declined as the overwhelmingly white suburbs increased. Ohio's economy also showed signs of weakness during these years. Its share of prime military contracts declined and manufacturing employment slipped below services as the mainstay of Ohio's economy. Under governor James A. Rhodes, Ohio sought to promote development and Rhodes succeeded in obtaining bond issues to construct educational facilities and transportation infrastructure. Unfortunately, while buildings went up, spending on education fell as a percentage of the state budget. In the 1970s, Ohio lost some 247,000 manufacturing jobs, unemployment increased while state spending on social services remained relatively low. All this meant that since the 1970s "some of the buoyancy that had lifted grand expectations in the sesquicentennial era had weakened" (145).

The last two essays carry forward with this theme of a weaker and troubled Buckeye State and uncover the real rationale for the book: a usable past. Ohio State political scientist Herb Asher argues in "Ohio 2003: Transitions and Challenges" that "as the twenty-first century began, Ohio had slipped, that it was no longer the heart of it all" (150). Ohio is an undereducated state, falling below the national average in the percentage of its adult population with a post-secondary education, and typically ranks near the bottom in state spending on higher education. Meanwhile, it ranks high in average cost of tuition at its public universities. A large part of the explanation is economic. Ohio was primarily a manufacturing state and as that declined, so too did Ohio's leadership role. The reliance on manufacturing also meant less of a demand for investing in higher education. As manufacturing shifted to the Sunbelt and overseas, and the U.S. economy came to rely on technology and services, Ohio slipped behind California and other states that invested in attracting these emerging industries and in growing more populous and more powerful. In turn, these new industries demand a highly educated workforce, something Ohio has not prioritized. As Asher sees things, Ohio must "lessen the negative impacts of globalization, preserve as many of its current jobs, and yet position and transform Ohio so that there will be new opportunities and good jobs for Ohioans" (154). Ohio must overcome the regional differences in the state, invest in higher education and new technologies, and promote greater diversity to secure its future and keep pace with other states who have already gained a significant advantage.

Former Ohio State president William "Brit" Kirwan had the task of reviewing the history of Ohio as noted in the other essays and imagining Ohio in 2053, wondering

whether or not the state seized the moment to return it to glory. Kirwan reiterates Asher's points about Ohio's difficulties and adds significant data to reinforce the point that Ohio lags behind on indexes that measure likely future growth. To become a leader, Kirwan argues that Ohio must invest in knowledge by creating a highly educated citizenry – and not simply in science and engineering. As Asher also argued, education must include arts, humanities and social sciences at both the post-secondary and K-12 levels. To do this, the state's leaders must develop a greater sense of urgency, and there must be the creation of plan for the future, and greater investment in higher education that reaches a broader sector of the population and works closely with the private sector and political leaders to promote economic development.

Whether Ohio does this or not depends on whether these essays reach their intended audience. As much as anything, the lecture series and the book create a usable past so that Ohio can chart a positive course into the future. While the trope of decline embodied in the essays no doubt fits into this larger design, and the global theme does not always succeed, if *Ohio and the World* can help transform Ohio's present to create a better, more inclusive future for all Ohioans then it will have served a noble purpose.

Gregory Wilson
Assistant Professor
University of Akron