

Brownell, Blaine A., and Goldfield, David R., eds. *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South*. "National University Publications." Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977. Pp. 228. \$7.50

T. E. Vadney

Numéro 3-77, february 1978

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019511ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019511ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Vadney, T. E. (1978). Compte rendu de [Brownell, Blaine A., and Goldfield, David R., eds. *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South*. "National University Publications." Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977. Pp. 228. \$7.50]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, (3-77), 114–116. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019511ar>

cities. This she dismisses on wholly inadequate grounds as probably an artifact of bad data. That simply won't do.

The book also waffles on its major arguments. The author would like to argue that the Italian experience had unique elements which reflect the particular components of Italian culture. But she is forced to admit there may have been certain commonalities in the experience of immigrants. Also, the extent of continuity between the old and the new world is strained. Is working in a cannery--albeit in a family group--really just a continuation of working the family farm? It is essential here to have comparative information about other immigrant groups. The author does state that the Italian experience was different than the Polish, but she provides almost no evidence.

It is doubtful that earlier historians were quite as insensitive as those plying the new ethnic history would like to imagine them. Surely, Oscar Handlin never believed that immigrants came to America with no culture or tradition. Despite its problems, moreover, Handlin's Boston's Immigrants remains by far the best study of the immigrant experience in a North American city.

Family and Community is gracefully written. It is full of many interesting observations and provocative ideas. In fact, it will seduce most readers. But it should be treated with caution and care.

Michael B. Katz
Department of History
York University

* * *

Brownell, Blaine A., and Goldfield, David R., eds. The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South. "National University Publications." Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977. Pp. 228. \$7.50.

The City in Southern History consists of six essays, some jointly-authored, by Blaine Brownell, David Goldfield, Carville Earle, Ronald Hoffman, Howard Rabinowitz, and Edward Haas. An introductory

chapter previews the contributors' findings and considers the conceptual problem of examining the city in a region usually defined by agrarian and commercial interests and often portrayed in plantation--indeed, feudal--images. The five remaining chapters present a chronological survey of Southern urban growth, organized according to the usual periodization of United States history: the Colonial and Revolutionary era; the Antebellum period; 1860-1900; 1900-1940; and 1940-1976.

Because the essays were conceived and executed as part of a common undertaking, they mesh extremely well, and approach their subject from the same perspective. This perspective is guided by the dictum of British historian Lynn Lees to "produce fewer studies of whole cities and more analysis of the process of urban development." Thus, the authors attempt "to place their periods of urban growth within a coherent framework" and "to illustrate the regional, national, and at times international linkages involved in urban development," pursuing a comparative approach "both intra- and inter-regionally" so as "to assess southern urbanization beyond the particularistic context of a single city " (p.18).

The overall result, however, is more a textbook than a series of essays which break new ground conceptually or methodologically. This is not to suggest that the essays make no contribution, for they do identify the boundaries of Southern urban history, pointing out that historians have neglected it compared to the lavish attention given Northern and particularly New England towns. But the authors eschew the massive job of applying the methods of the new urban history to the American South in favour of synthesizing the extant, and rather conventional, historical literature. Because there are few monographs which apply innovative approaches to the South, the essays are necessarily conventional in both their techniques and--except for the creation of a broad overview--their findings.

The problem of sorting out what is distinctly national or sectional as opposed to urban will be familiar to students of Canadian regionalism. Many of the processes of which the authors write affected cities outside the South. But the contributors wish to defend the South as an area with a separate identity, so that much of what they describe follows in the tradition of authors who emphasize Southern uniqueness.

Several of the essays attempt to draw comparisons with other regions, but on balance, these efforts are not as prominent as one might expect given the stated goals of the editors.

What, then, is the value of this volume? First, as an attempt to comprehend the South as a whole, it provides a needed overview of urbanization in a region neglected by urban historians. Second, the limitations of the extant literature which form the basis of these essays are clearly evident, so that researches may use this volume to identify problems in need of further investigation. And third, as a well-integrated, chronological survey, it can serve as a comprehensive textbook for students beginning the study of the urban South.

T.E. Vadney
 Department of History
 University of Manitoba

* * *

Berry, B.J.L., ed. The Social Burdens of Environmental Pollution: A Comparative Metropolitan Data Source. Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1977. Pp. 613.

Who bears the main impact and cost of pollution in the American city? Is it the residents of the inner city, who tend to be poor, members of minority groups and lacking political weight or is pollution modern society's eighth deadly sin, pervading the metropolis and affecting all urban dwellers irrespective of income and status? In what ways do different types of pollution namely air, water, noise and solid waste vary in distribution and are there significant inter-metropolitan variations across the United States?

This lengthy volume is basically a research report compiled under the editorship of B.J.L. Berry to examine these three complex, interrelated aspects of environmental pollution. That anyone should even conceive of tackling such a monumental task is in itself commendable. The clear statement of approach and the enumeration of the operational