

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Robert M. Taylor, Jr., ed. *The State of Indiana History, 2000: Papers Presented at the Indiana Historical Society's Grand Opening*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2001. x + 476 pp. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87195-153-3.

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Published on H-Indiana (October, 2001)



## The State of Indiana History, 2000

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This is a collection of eighteen essays, originally delivered as papers at a conference celebrating the inauguration of the new headquarters of the Indiana Historical Society in July, 1999. Robert M. Taylor, Jr. had planned the conference, acquired the authors and begun work on this volume. Members of the Society's publications staff completed the editing upon Taylor's untimely death and dedicated the book to him. He doubtless would be pleased with the results.

The authors are professors, public historians and professional writers. They review the current historiographical status of and perceived scholarly opportunities in diverse areas of the Hoosier past, such as labor, ethnicity, literature and the Civil War. Most of the essayists provide a good survey of their fields, review the existing literature, and point out areas that need new or revised scholarship. The collective result is a valuable reference tool for teachers of Indiana History and graduate students looking for a new field to plow. Especially effective are the essays by Robert Barrows on urbanization, John Larson on economics, Stephen Towne on the Civil War, Thomas Hamm on religion, Anita Ashendel on women and David Vanderstel on public history.

Several themes emerge from this collection. We learn, for example, that scholars have slighted the twentieth century in most of the areas under consideration. Likewise we learn that writers of the Indiana past need to provide more regional and national context for their

studies. The authors also reveal in the aggregate conclusions that the study of politics and economics is on the decline, and that interest in gender, race and ethnicity is increasing. And from the frequency with which they are mentioned, it becomes obvious how indebted the state is to Eli Lilly for his philanthropy, Emma Lou Thornbrough for her pioneering scholarship, and the Indiana Historical Society for its archives and publications. Almost all of the illustrations in the book come from the Society's archival holdings; one of them, a Gaar Williams cartoon, highlights James Madison's discussion of the 1916 centennial celebration and would have been appropriate on the book jacket.

Some of the suggestions for future research are both provocative and overdue. We have waited more than a century for a comprehensive biography of Oliver P. Morton, and according to at least two of the essayists, it is time to stop treating the Calumet region as a separate entity and integrate it into the state's history. More attention needs to be paid to women's organizations as well as the impact of suburbanization. Institutional religion appears to have been adequately covered, but not its relationship to Native Americans and the Ku Klux Klan. The Great Depression and World War Two are still largely untapped areas that brought much change to Indiana, and several aspects of the African-American experience need work, particularly in the labor movement and self-help initiatives. Worthy suggestions that should be pursued for the good of the discipline.

A few of the essays could have been more convincing if the authors had not focused so narrowly. By omission rather than error they exclude material which readers might find helpful. For example, the survey of politics omits the nineteenth century; the essay on Native Americans omits all tribes except the Shawnee; the discussion of literature covers only novels to the exclusion of poetry and short stories; and the chapter on art says nothing about architecture, ceramics or photography. This latter chapter, more than any other, could have benefited from visual illustrations, but none appeared.

The Indiana Historical Society has provided a genuine service to students and teachers of the Hoosier past with the publication of this book. Despite its minor omissions and stylistic idiosyncrasies, the work is a solid contribution. The bibliographic notes that follow each essay, the thorough index, and the many suggestions for further study all will make this a useful research tool well into the twenty-first century. It is a fitting companion for the new edifice that it helped to inaugurate at the end of the twentieth.

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**Citation:** George T. Blakey. Review of Taylor, Robert M., Jr., ed., *The State of Indiana History, 2000: Papers Presented at the Indiana Historical Society's Grand Opening*. H-Indiana, H-Net Reviews. October, 2001.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=5552>

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