

Norwegian-American Studies, Volume 26. (Northfield, Minnesota: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1974. Pp. 269. Preface. \$7.50.)

Much recent comment has dealt with the "rediscovery" of ethnic heritage by residents of the United States. Publications on ethnic groups, some of them reviewed in the pages of this magazine, have become commonplace in the last few years. The impression is sometimes given that much of the talk about ethnic pride is merely a fad in response to black pride among American Negroes.

Yet some ethnic groups, and a few scholars, had an interest in these matters long before they became fashionable. Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, with their diverse peoples, give evidence of this concern. The multitude of ethnically based clubs and fraternal associations in this area is probably unsurpassed anywhere. The volume under review is a further indication that some scholars have had an old interest in ethnicity. The first volume in this series was published in 1926, when the Melting Pot was still the dominant American ideology. The publications cited in the footnotes of this volume reflect an even older interest in their past by Norwegian-Americans. Ethnic pride and interest in the past existed; they had not become "respectable" enough to rate favorable coverage by the news media, nor, admittedly, had they attracted as broad a support among the mass public. Perhaps the passage of time helps to account for such contemporary interest. It may well be true that "the grandson wants to remember what the son wants to forget."

Norwegian-American Studies, Volume 26 contains thirteen selections varying widely in length and quality. Some are written by scholars and others by interested laypersons. A few seem to be older articles recast from journals, but this is an old pattern in the academic world, and their publication in this form does make them accessible to students of American ethnic groups who do not specialize in Norwegian-Americans. Topics presented include the dispute over public versus Lutheran parochial schools; a discussion of the works of a leading Norwegian-American author; the translation of the autobiography of an early settler; and a study of the assimilation process as it affected Danes and Norwegians.

Especially interesting are an examination of factors in Norway which led to major immigration to the United States and a study of the rapid assimilation experienced by Norwegian-Americans converted to

Mormonism before leaving the mother country. In the latter case, the Mormon insistence that America was Zion and the rest of the world Babylon, coupled with residence in Utah where there was little Norwegian culture, led to remarkably rapid assimilation. Second-generation members of this group had to study Norwegian as a foreign language before returning to the homeland to proselytize. Their experience contrasts sharply with their countrymen who lived in ethnic enclaves, spoke the mother tongue frequently, and belonged to ethnic-oriented churches in the United States.

One wonders how different these people were in Norway. What led them to become Mormons in the first place, and were those factors related to their willingness to reject their native language and culture? Were there social, economic, political, or psychological reasons which made them significantly different from their fellow immigrants? Such research, if it could be conducted, would be fascinating to all students of ethnic groups and the process of assimilation.

Many will criticize this volume because it shows little evidence of modern social science concepts. Such critics should reflect, however, that the authors are mainly interested in maintaining a record of their past and the problems of adaptation to a new society. Others with a different approach can use the materials in publications such as this one to generate their broad generalizations about ethnicity. The more traditional approach represented here is valuable and, although in disfavor among most contemporary social scientists, will also appeal to laypersons who are not as interested in the theoretical concerns of modern scholars. The main audience for this volume, indeed, seems to be the Norwegian-Americans themselves.

Future students of Norwegian-American life will undoubtedly be more familiar with modern social science, but studies such as this one remain worthwhile. (Unfortunately, the one attempt in this collection to utilize modern social science is not very successful. The author of that effort even has a strange reference to the well-known American sociologist, Milton Gordon, author of the important work *Assimilation in American Life*, as "the British historian.")

The value of this book is greatly increased by a useful list of recent publications on American ethnic groups — not only Norwegian-Americans. Many of these materials are from esoteric sources.

Some of the articles in this book do confirm the effects of language usage, intermarriage, housing concentrations, religion, and the demography of immigrant migrations which are familiar to students of

ethnicity. Such confirmation is helpful, and, as indicated, fruitful research concerns may be generated by some of the articles.

Department of Political Science
University of Pittsburgh
at Greensburg

MYRON R. RUBINOFF

The Law in America: A History. By BERNARD SCHWARTZ. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974. Pp. 382. \$12.50.)

Americans have historically viewed both the law and its practitioners ambivalently. To begin, the American Revolution, observes Bernard Schwartz in *The Law in America*, was a "legal struggle" in which legal-minded patriots defied British law by first resisting the lawful levies of the crown and then launching a revolution against constituted authority. A half-century later, Jacksonian Americans railed against pompous lawyers who vested chartered privileges in "monster" banks, which were believed to wantonly oppress the toiling working-class. Most recently, legalist and layman alike writhed with anguish while a rogues' gallery of lawyers, including a dethroned president, stood tried and convicted of the crimes of Watergate.

But the very revilers of the Watergate masterminds rejoiced that the law had triumphed in the conviction of the "conspirators"; thus America had hurdled another obstacle in the testing of the Constitution. Like a modern Vergil, Bernard Schwartz in *The Law in America* journeys his readers across the rubble and through the vales of American legal history pointing out the tome-like refuse jettisoned along the way. Schwartz, however, is most intent explaining the evolving edifice of contemporary law. His method, in the expository fashion befitting his own legal background, is both topical and chronological. After explaining the evolution in the "new nation" of public law, private law, and the law governing institutions, Schwartz traces the path of the law through America's three jurisprudentially fecund periods: the "Gilded Age," the "New Deal," and the age of the "Warren Court."

Schwartz's thesis is almost blatantly simple. Holding up Justice Holmes's metaphorical "mirror," Schwartz contends that the law reflects — in fact to be effective must reflect — the history of the nation. Therefore, the changes that can be observed in the course of American history are more visible in the tomes of the law than in the metamorphosis of social and political institutions.