lists of proper names, site locations, as well as an analysis of places by such categories as Barns, Libraries, and Museums. Although the guidebook makes no claim to be definitive, it is one of the most usable books of its genre.

Perhaps the only problem with this work is the failure to include a brief overview of the historical development of Western Pennsylvania. While the reader is presented with good capsule histories of each county, the authors do not offer any unifying themes that will unite the fragments of a person's experience as one journeys through Western Pennsylvania. Aside from this criticism, the book is lucid and well organized. It is well worth the investment for any weekend traveler interested in the history of Western Pennsylvania.

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This is a classical Horatio Alger story, one Samuel Smiles would be proud of. Born in Ahoskie, Hertford County, North Carolina, Robert Lee Vann spent his early childhood in the idyllic surroundings of Southern rural aristocracy. But these carefree days, as the son of a favored house servant, were shattered when his mother married a poor black dirt farmer. His new family had to struggle to make ends meet, and young Vann, determined to succeed, worked and saved to attend school. His gifts of perseverance, which would serve him in good stead in his later life, led him first to Virginia Union University, and subsequently as an Avery scholar to the Western University of Pennsylvania at Pittsburgh, where he graduated in 1906. Foregoing his wish to attend a school of journalism, Vann enrolled at the Western University's Law School and became the school's first black graduate in 1910.

His graduation coincided with the founding of the Pittsburgh Courier, the first black newspaper in the city since Martin R. Delany's prestigious Mystery, published between 1843 and 1848. Between 1910 and his death in 1940, Vann took the Courier from local obscurity to the position of the most prestigious national black newspaper with a
circulation that crested in the late 1930s at 250,000. That was no mean achievement in an era when America and the world had experienced the most disastrous economic depression. Success demanded resilience, hard work, flexibility, and a sharp eye for a story, all of which Vann possessed.

To be sure, Vann was no Chandler Owen, A. Philip Randolph, W. E. B. DuBois, or William Monroe Trotter. Radical on issues of race, where political expediency and the Courier’s circulation dictated, Vann was a conservative of the Booker T. Washington mold. A strong believer in the merits of the American economic order, he used the columns of the Courier to condemn all communists and socialists. The logo of the Courier was flanked by two prominent American flags, and when war seemed imminent in 1938, Vann actively campaigned for increased black recruitment and the elimination of segregation in the armed forces, for he argued “... We are Americans. This is our country which we would glorify before the entire world” (p. 303).

Committed to the advancement of blacks, Vann saw the Courier as both a mouthpiece and guardian of the black community. There was more than sufficient work to keep the small staff of the paper occupied. The city’s black labor force, augmented by black migration from the South, was largely unskilled. When Vann graduated from law school he was one of only five attorneys in a black population of 25,000, and there were few blacks in other professions. The few skilled workers, faced with racism in labor unions, had to work longer hours for smaller wages in nonunion jobs. There was discrimination in housing, few blacks were admitted to city hospitals, they were not served at many restaurants, and when they insisted, were likely to find salt in their coffee. Not until 1938 was the first black schoolteacher employed in the city’s school system.

In Vann’s view, changes would come not only through pressuring local industry to employ more blacks, but also by active participation in politics. Like most other blacks, he supported the Republican party, insisting on greater recognition of blacks’ contributions to the party’s electoral success by an increase in black patronage. He saw himself as the logical dispenser of this political largesse, and when the party consistently refused to accede to these demands, he crossed over to the Democrats in 1932, turning, as he said, the picture of Abraham Lincoln to the wall. But the marriage to the Democrats was short-lived, for although he won a federal appointment as an assistant attorney in the attorney general’s office, the Democratic party, with the assurance
of the black vote, soon became indifferent to black aspirations. In exasperation, Vann withdrew his support, but unlike 1932, this time he failed to influence a change among black voters.

A study of one of black America’s most outstanding twentieth-century editors has been long overdue and Andrew Buni has filled this lacuna admirably. Buni’s study is biography at its best. It is never an easy task to write history around an individual, much less when it is a character like Vann, who because of his insistence on privacy in his personal life, left few records. In spite of this, Buni has managed to set Vann in the context of local and national developments. The study is more than biography; it uses Vann as a window through which the author surveys black economic, social, political, and cultural activity in the first four decades of the twentieth century. If there is a criticism of Buni’s book, it is its lack of philipietism. Although Vann was in many ways a very frustrating man, and almost amoebic in his political and ideological positions, Buni’s admirable determination to maintain objectivity may have cost his study that element of “worship” so necessary in any biography. Nonetheless this is a fine study.

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Perhaps the only criticism one can make of this volume that presents thumbnail biographies of the presidents of the United States and descriptions of historic sites associated with them is that it is far too heavy. Because it is such a literally weighty tome, it belies its useful brief guidebook contents.

The first part of the book deals with the historical background of the presidency and then it contains a brief biography amplified with many fine illustrations and a reproduction in color of the portrait of each of the presidents through Gerald Ford. Not only is it terse, but it also succeeds in giving one a very good and quick view of the personality and development of each of these men. A brief summary precedes the biography for each man, which are excellent little indexes