The material itself is often as interesting as it is enlightening. To be sure, some documents are little more than lists of delegates and of interest to certain specialists only. On the other hand, the following excerpt illustrates not only some humor, but a perennial factor in American politics and life:

I have taken a retrospective view of twenty years past, and find, that whenever all was quiet — no electioneering going forward — no party views in agitation — no public schemes on foot, in which the votes, influence, or contributions of the Germans could be of any service — then, we were ignorant Germans etc. But as soon as our members can be of use in promoting the political maneuvers of any man or party, the newspapers are filled with — the respectable body of Germans — the honest and enlightened Germans etc. And these good souls are much more anxious about our rights, interests and advancement, than we are ourselves (p. 363).

This volume, and the ones that follow, can be highly recommended for historians, as well as for libraries large and small. On a document per dollar basis, it is a bargain!

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BILL L. TURFEN


This fourth volume of James K. Polk's correspondence covers a gloomy period for the Democratic party. After a hard-fought state campaign in which Tennessee Democrats were far too optimistic about their chances, Whigs swept the legislature, the governorship, and the congressional delegation. Polk could only sit helplessly by while the victorious Whigs ran the state to their liking. His correspondents elsewhere in the nation reported equally disastrous results, as the panic of 1837 took its toll of Democratic officeholders.

Although personally secure in his own district, Polk barely won reelection as Speaker in December 1837, and during the entire next year his divided and dispirited party accomplished virtually nothing in a Congress which it nominally controlled. Polk himself adhered firmly to strict Jacksonian hard-money and antibank ideas in the financial crisis and devoted most of his efforts to steering Van Buren's subtreasury bill through a sea of obstacles.

Faced with the likelihood of losing the speakership to a Whig
in the next Congress and worried about the desperate need to rebuild the Democratic party in Tennessee, Polk announced for governor in the fall of 1838 and began a strenuous schedule of speaking and writing to friends around the state.

Throughout these months, personal affairs took a back seat to politics; indeed, there are few major public figures whose extant correspondence is so wholly political as Polk's. Aside from a few letters relating to his plantation interests, his chief personal concern was the welfare of his younger brother Samuel. At Yale, Sam ran afoul of school regulations and was expelled, causing much anxiety in the family. Later he was discovered to have tuberculosis, heightening Polk's unease of mind.

There are several particularly interesting things about this volume's correspondence. One is the persistent habit of Democrats of identifying themselves with the sacred Jeffersonian heritage — in fact, of casting the whole second party system in terms of the first. They often called themselves "Republicans" and referred to the Whigs as "Federalists," a practice that seemed to be matter-of-fact rather than a deliberate propaganda effort to attach an odious label to the other party. This goes to confirm the thesis of Marvin Meyers and others who see Jacksonian ideas as rooted in the Jeffersonian past. Even more, it suggests that Rodger Parker's and Lance Banning's attempt to trace Jeffersonian rhetoric to the English Opposition thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, might apply as well to Jacksonians.

Another point which comes through clearly in these letters is the vital importance of the press in party affairs. Local correspondents wrote urgently about the necessity of keeping or of creating reliable and vigorous Democratic papers in their counties. Polk himself was personally involved in the lengthy and frustrating search for a new and active editor for the state's Democratic organ, the Nashville Union.

One surprise is that patronage matters are far less important a topic than might be expected. Possibly this is because there was no change of parties when Van Buren became president in 1837; eight years of Jackson would not have left very many openings for new Democratic office seekers.

Editorial work on this volume, the last to be directed by Herbert Weaver, maintains the standard set in the first three. Letters from Polk make up almost one-fifth of the total, a higher proportion than in previous volumes. Annotations are kept as brief as possible; there
are no full-page or multipage commentaries which do so much to slow
down progress on the papers of some leading figures of the early
Republic.

Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly
Indiana General Assembly

Immigration and Industrialization: Ethnicity in an American Mill
Town, 1870-1940. By JOHN BODNAR. (Pittsburgh: University of
tion, appendixes, notes, bibliographical essay, index. $11.95.)

Social scientists long refrained from subjecting prevailing as-
sumptions about the fluidity of American society to rigorous, em-
pirical testing. Stephan Thernstrom's pioneering 1964 work, Poverty
and Progress, has, however, inspired a number of case studies of
immigrant mobility. Although the Horatio Alger saga has been gen-
erally discredited, competent scholars have reached widely different
conclusions about the extent of immigrant mobility. A host of local
factors, such as the nature of the regional economy, the demo-
ographic characteristics of both the newcomers and the old stock, the order of
arrival of ethnic groups, and "old world" backgrounds, influence the
extent of immigrant mobility in a particular community. The ques-
tion of immigrant mobility will remain shrouded in contradiction un-
til enough case studies have been undertaken to allow for synthesis.
John Bodnar's examination of ethnic mobility in Steelton, Pennsyl-
vania, brings scholars closer to the day when generalization will be
possible.

Steelton, situated just south of Harrisburg, emerged as a steel-
producing center after 1865. From the beginning, the Pennsylvania
Steel Company dominated the local economy. Before 1890, white
settlers from rural Pennsylvania, England, Ireland, and Germany,
along with a small black minority, comprised Steelton's population.
After 1890, however, heavy immigration from Slavic areas and
Italy commenced. Although individuals descended from northern
and western European groups became a numerical minority, they
successfully conspired to establish and maintain their social and eco-

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