In most ways there is little new about Stange’s stinging commentary on the limitations of the American reform tradition. Political historians as mainstream as Robert Weibe and Irving Bernstein argued a quarter of a century ago that Progressive and New Deal reformers were just that—reformers. While most wanted to ameliorate the harshness of capitalism, very few sought to dismantle or even weaken the capitalist system. Stange joins a long line of more radical critics who see such meliorism as not only hopeless, but counterproductive. Hine, Lange and other documentary photographers, however, are saved from damnation because, at least in Stange’s view, they were not bourgeois reformers misusing photographs as instruments of social engineering, but artists honestly attempting to depict the complexities and agonies of the industrial world.

Stange argues her views forcefully if not well. Her text is heavy going, not because of the ideas but because of a writing style that conceals considerably more than it reveals. One can tolerate political buzz words, but the post-structuralist jargon is deadening. The photos “mediate” and “signify” as we “deconstruct” the “gaze.” The text is larded with “codes,” “inscriptions,” “icons” and “indexes,” the last defined for us twice (pages xii and 66). A brief quote by Louis Hine (86) is more helpful in understanding Stange’s point than several paragraphs of her own prose. Thankfully, we have the photographs which help us again and again in understanding Stange’s argument.

None of these problems mar Mind’s Eye, Mind’s Truth, James Curtis’s study of Depression-era photography of the Farm Security Administration. Like Stange, Curtis is centrally concerned with what he calls a fundamental “conflict over the process of photography and the meaning of the individual image.” However, Curtis’s study benefits both from clear, crisp, jargon-free prose and its concentration on photographers Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Arthur Rothstein and Russell Lee. They were all linked to Roy Stryker, the tireless bureaucrat who directed the FSA photographic efforts, and who was always eager to draw positive, even cheerful, messages from the most doleful images of 1930s America. Curtis does a masterful job of showing how each photographer worked through, around and sometimes in open opposition to Stryker’s manipulative efforts.

Curtis’s research is thorough, especially in his deep mining of the almost 40,000 images in the FSA archives. The results of this research are especially evident when Curtis, in almost cinematic fashion, zooms in on alternative takes of some of the best-known FSA photographs. His analysis of Evans’s 1936 “street scene, Vicksburg, Mississippi,” for example, reveals the conflict between the techniques Evans used in composing the photographs and the social “truths” they seem to imply.

Curtis is equally impressive in his handling of other FSA photographers. Most stunning is his treatment of Lange’s “Migrant Mother” photographs, one of which is arguably the best known image to come out of the Depression. In this and related photos Lange was able to create what Curtis calls the “shock of displacement” we associate so closely with the era’s rural migration. Almost as impressive is his chapter on Lee’s “Pic Town” photographs, where the commitment of both Stryker and Lee to a story on “frontier democracy” often conflicted with the social/political realities of the small New Mexico town.

Finally, both publishers deserve praise for the high quality of the volumes. Cambridge University Press and Temple University Press clearly took care in such matters as jacket design, typeface, paper quality and larger than usual format, so as to do justice to the artistry of the photographers and the scholarship of the authors.

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The Atlas of Pennsylvania
Edited by David J. Cuff, William J. Young, Edward K. Muller, Wilbur Zelinsky, and Ronald F. Abler

ANYONE would be proud to own this magnificent book. Among the various state atlases, it stands alone in comprehensiveness, visual presentation, and overall scholarly quality; at nearly 300 pages, it is a third longer than any other. Unfortunately, the high price will probably deter some from purchasing it. After all, a good collection of maps can be found in Pennsylvania: Atlas and Gazetteer (DeLorme Mapping Co., 1987), available for $12.95 in large format paperback. That said, there is really nothing that approaches The Atlas of Pennsylvania. It includes a wealth of information and such a gorgeous array of maps and illustrations that it is best appreciated when read in small doses. Each reading, no matter how brief, rewards one with greater insights into Pennsylvania.
Unabashedly referred to in the dust jacket as The Atlas, this is not the sort of book you can curl up with in a chair. With its hard binding, huge format (opened, it measures 15 1/2 inches by 27 inches) and considerable weight (more than 7 pounds), I found myself placing the book respectfully on a sturdy table to enjoy its content.

This atlas was conceived in 1981 by two geography professors (Wilbur Zelinsky and Ronald F. Abler) at Pennsylvania State University. Zelinsky, along with John R. Rooney and Dean R. Louder, had just completed This Remarkable Continent: An Atlas of United States and Canadian Society and Cultures (Texas A & M University Press, 1982). At about the same time, other geographers (David J. Cuff and William J. Young) at Temple University had become aware of a need for a comprehensive, up-to-date atlas of Pennsylvania. They had recently published The United States Energy Atlas (The Free Press, 1980). By 1983, Zelinsky, Abler, Cuff and Young had decided to collaborate, and to ask a fifth geographer, Edward Muller of the History Department at the University of Pittsburgh, to join them in forming an editorial committee. Muller's collaboration proved invaluable. He authored and edited significant portions of the atlas for which the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation has recently awarded him one of their 1990 awards of merit.

Professor Muller also recruited important foundation and corporate support for the atlas project, particularly in southwestern Pennsylvania. For example, during the critical early stage, the Pittsburgh Foundation and the Duquesne Light Company made important contributions. Later, the Howard Heinz Endowment and the Richard King Mellon Foundation provided major grants. The strong conservationist tone of the atlas attracted support from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. Total contributions, from across the state, topped $600,000. While corporations and foundations provided most of the donations, about a third came from the Commonwealth itself. (Details on financial support for the project appear on page vii.) When this subsidy is factored in, each copy of the atlas might be selling for less than it cost to produce.

All three of the Commonwealth research universities, (Temple University, the University of Pittsburgh and Penn State) normally inclined to compete with one another, collaborated effectively in this project. During a formal ceremony in Harrisburg in January 1990, the presidents of the three universities proudly presented a copy of the atlas to Governor Robert Casey. Their comments stressed the cooperative effort involved. Ironically, Pitt President Wesley Posvar, an enthusiastic supporter of the atlas as a project conceived and managed by professional geographers, was the person who had obliterated the Geography department at his own university in 1983.

The Atlas of Pennsylvania is divided into seven sections. The first, "Pennsylvania Mosaic," sets the tone. In only a few pages Peirce Lewis presents the settlement history of the Commonwealth and its regional variations. The long second section, "Land and Resources," edited by Cuff, deals very effectively with the natural environment. It ranges from land forms and climate through habitat types and faunal distributions, to environmental threats and stewardship of the land. Section three, edited by Muller and called "Pennsylvania's Past," consists of a comprehensive cultural history. A fourth section, "Human Patterns," examines numerous demographic and cultural features. The editor of this section, Zelinsky, includes such things as levels of educational aspiration and even professional football and basketball "fansheds" (areas of support for specific teams). The fifth section, "Economic Activity," was edited by Young; this long section deals with all sorts of occupations, as well as transportation, energy and recreation. A sixth section examines the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh metropolitan areas and was written by Roman Cybriwsky and Muller, respectively. The seventh and final section is a brief one, entitled "Reference." It provides detailed topographic maps of the state, in addition to maps of state legislative, judicial and executive districts. It also includes a guide to Pennsylvania counties, and information on state superlatives and such things as the state dog, fish, and insect. (This last part was bound out of order, after the index, in my copy.)

The atlas contains a most effective balance of maps, illustrations (diagrams, graphs, drawings, photographs) and text. Averaging nearly one-third of each page, the textual material is very valuable, explaining the maps, and providing a wealth of background information that puts them into context. Each page is esthetically pleasing, due in large measure to the talents of Nancy Anderson Tsakos of the Temple University Cartographic Lab. It is not hyperbole when the dust jacket describes the atlas as a "visual cornucopia." Among my favorite illustrations are: the aerial photographs of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, taken at 40,000 feet (page 230-31); the huge population map that gives information down to the township level (122-23); the drawing of noon sun angles as related to the placement of solar energy collec-
A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History

By Michael Frisch

The 13 essays in this volume, all previously published, are collected for the first time and enhanced by a solid introduction. They focus on case studies of the doing of oral history and of public historic presentations to general audiences. Professor Frisch, a noted practitioner in these fields, details his own experiences and also includes extended reviews of a number of historical documentaries, "coffee table" histories of several New York cities, and urban museum presentations in New York City, Philadelphia and St. Louis.

Structurally, the essays are grouped in three sections: those specifically on oral history, those on documentary form (where hands-on experiences are particularly emphasized), and finally those on public history programming including various exhibition projects. Thematically, Professor Frisch fairly consistently grapples with two related issues. He is concerned with making history effective for audiences — and he believes that many efforts misfire, including those informed by radical as well as by conservative political purposes. He recurrently engages the problem of relating scholarly history and especially the analytical questions raised by various forms of social history, to the historical experiences and judgments of the general public. Neither a how-to manual nor a theoretical statement on oral and public history, the collection revolves around the marriage of practical experience with underlying concerns about what historical evidence and historical learning consist of.

Essay collections are notoriously difficult to review, and even this one by a single author concerned with closely related topics poses problems. Many readers will prefer to pick and choose individual essays of interest rather than reading straight through, for segments are of uneven quality and generality. Several of the essays that are little more than review essays of previously issued material have limited interest, though Frisch seeks to draw more general themes from particular topics. Certain essays fall rather flat. A long piece on problems of editing oral history testimony, while including some sensible injunctions, consists mainly of edited and then unedited transcripts of a single interview which add little to the injunctions themselves. An essay recalling the author's 1972 book on Springfield, Massachusetts, on the occasion of a later visit, is rather trite — a bit self-indulgent — for it offers little more than a few notes on how the city has changed. (Also indulgent are undue introductory layouts on when the author initially wrote each essay.) Two different essays deal with the Public Broadcasting System's documentary on Vietnam; they repeat judgments annoyingly, though the second's more extended comment is interesting in itself.

There are also some troubling omissions that reflect but go beyond Frisch's desire to avoid elaborate theory. While his fascination with oral history as a historical source and a basis for public history presentations conveys the author's excitement, it can also mislead. None of the essays explicitly discusses how to blend oral history evidence with data of other sorts, or the desirability of doing so, though the author's views are compatible with this approach. Public history is so firmly equated with oral history materials that it risks being confined to contemporary topics alone — for in no essay, save the throw away on Springfield...