

Book Reviews

midlands. Her research and publication has followed these lines. In this book she has made use of available business records for pork packing plants in the Middle West between 1840 and the late 1870s which were supported by widespread secondary sources. She concentrated on packers in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, but also used other states in the West of 1860 and 1870—Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Kentucky.

The earliest concentration of pork packing was in the vicinity of Cincinnati, most often in conjunction with related businesses. Packing operations were generally restricted to cold weather, about four months each year, and workers came from neighboring rural areas. Early packing houses were little more than warehouses which had available space while the river was frozen and transportation by water curtailed. Hogs were supplied by nearby farmers, either on the hoof or already slaughtered. Little attention was paid, at first, to by-products of the hog. Capital needed for such enterprises permitted easy entry into the business which was potentially lucrative but possessing high risk. Walsh estimates the funds needed by a typical packing operation in different settings.

Railroads influenced pork packing by providing transportation of hogs to market, by encouraging concentration around larger rail termini, and by making inter-regional shipment less difficult. Also significant in altering the character of the business was the Civil War, with large-scale sales to the Army, and suspension of shipment down the Mississippi. Chicago emerged as the largest meat packer when enterprises in that city responded more actively to changing marketing conditions than did those in Cincinnati and elsewhere. Walsh cites the factors which brought Chicago dominance in the years after the Civil War, such as a widespread rail network, a centralized stockyard, better business organizations, improved personal communications and information flow, development of professional organizations, use of new technology, and response to new urban centers and foreign markets. Pork packing came to be a year-round business.

The author uses the pork packing industry, the nation's leading manufacturer in 1850, to examine the midwestern economy of the times. She also uses maps, a large number of tables, and a graphic appendix to illustrate her premise, that the area "was already laying the foundations of the Great Lakes' manufacturing complex which would reach maturity by the end of the century" (2-3). Individual entrepreneurs' activities are provided as illustration, but the emphasis in this book is on the statistical story. Overall, this work offers much on interpreting American economic history for the mid-nineteenth century.

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Crime of the Century: The Kennedy Assassination From A Historian's Perspective. By Michael L. Kurtz. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982. Pp. xi, 291. \$17.50.)

Responsible and irresponsible books about the murder of President John F. Kennedy appeared at a steady pace as the twentieth anniversary of November 22, 1963 approached. This well-written and extensively-researched volume by a professor at Southeastern Louisiana University is a competent and reputable piece of work, albeit one that stops far short of offering its own explanation of the crime. Although the author announces in the preface that "the assassination was a cleverly planned and carefully executed operation" (vii), nowhere in the remainder of the volume does he suggest with any precision just who the supposed conspirators were.

Kurtz contends that his training and experience as a historian and scholar allow him to bring superior skills and greater objectivity to the study of Kennedy's murder than most prior investigators and writers. That stance does not keep Kurtz from voicing strong

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opinions, nor from harshly criticizing both of the major, official investigations of the crime, conducted by the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations. His own review of the evidence and the investigatory studies, Kurtz declares, "clearly demonstrates that John Kennedy was killed as a result of a conspiracy and that, intentionally or unintentionally, the federal government assisted in concealing proof of that conspiracy" (vii).

Major portions of the book are devoted to detailed examinations of ballistics and medical evidence related to the actual shooting. Kurtz attempts to build a case that four different gunmen each fired one shot at the presidential limousine, with three bullets striking Kennedy and the fourth wounding Texas Governor John B. Connally. Kurtz hypothesizes that three of the shooters were located in different windows of the Texas School Book Depository Building, but he contends that there is no conclusive evidence proving that Lee Harvey Oswald was one of those gunmen.

Kurtz argues strongly that neither the Warren Commission nor the more recent House investigation were competent endeavors. "The Warren Commission had presumed Lee Harvey Oswald guilty and attempted to fabricate a case against him" (112), and the House panel engaged in "twisting of the evidence" so as "to force it to conform to the presupposition that Oswald was the assassin" (173). Though Kurtz accepts the validity of the controversial acoustical analysis that led the House committee to conclude that more than one gunman had fired, Kurtz rejects other findings that do not support his own view. "The committee's scientific 'experts' frequently distorted the evidence to prove their theses and often engaged in pseudo-scientific speculation" (216). Some readers might level that same charge against Kurtz himself.

If the book's major contentions are bold or surprising, a number of smaller matters are also disconcerting. At one point Secret Service Agent "William Greer" (4) is identified as the presidential limousine's driver; ten chapters later he is "James Greer" (194). Late in the book Kurtz names two "key individuals in the Kennedy assassination" (195) besides Oswald, David Ferrie, and James R. Hoffa; unfortunately that reference is the first mention of Ferrie and the first substantive allusion to Hoffa. At other times Kurtz attempts to buttress some of his contentions by citing unspecified interviews with unnamed doctors, or imprecise information uncovered by an incompletely-identified journalist.

Despite its shortcomings, Kurtz's easy-to-read volume is a useful contribution to a burgeoning literature.

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Tucson: Life and Times of an American City. By C. L. Sonnichsen. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982. Pp. xiv, 369. \$29.95.)

Few readers with a serious interest in the American Southwest will be unfamiliar with the writings of C. L. Sonnichsen, longtime Professor of English at the University of Texas, El Paso. During a career that has spanned over four decades, Sonnichsen has authored over twenty books, and a surprising number of his books are considered western classics. Now he gives us a fascinating piece of regional-urban history, *Tucson: The Life and Times of an American City*. This history of the Old Pueblo supplants and replaces all earlier treatments of the community's past, including such efforts as Frank Lockwood's *Tucson: the Old Pueblo* and Bernice Cosulich's *Tucson*. In the future, all Arizona historians will be forced to consult this work. Yet, most people will want this book simply because Sonnichsen knows how to tell a good story.