



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Recorder of the Black Experience: A Biography of Monroe Nathan Work. by Linda O. McMurray

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The Journal of Southern History, Vol. 52, No. 2. (May, 1986), pp. 322-323.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-4642%28198605%2952%3A2%3C322%3AROTBEA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-I>

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The Germans in Missouri, 1900-1918: Prohibition, Neutrality, and Assimilation. By David W. Detjen. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985. Pp. xii, 244. \$23.00.)

At the beginning of the twentieth century tens of thousands of German-Americans inhabited Missouri, with the heaviest concentration in St. Louis and St. Louis County. Understandably these immigrants and their descendants established a wide variety of ethnic organizations and businesses. While a sizable minority, these German-Missourians encountered two formidable challenges to the maintenance of their cultural identity between 1900 and 1918. Well-organized and aggressive prohibitionists sought to dry up the state (the ubiquitous German beer-halls would not be exempt), and America's entry into the Great War led to a growing unpopularity of Germans and things German. However, Germans in Missouri did have a pressure group, the German-American Alliance, that eagerly sought to protect their cultural interests. Generally speaking, this organization thwarted the pesky prohibitionists until the war years, but the anti-German hysteria, responsible for countless attacks on "Huns" and "un-Americans," not only led to the triumph of temperance but destroyed the Alliance and prompted much of the German population to assimilate into the larger society. Still, the leadership of the Alliance did not take a low profile during the early part of the conflict, and their comments on the conduct of the nation's foreign policy opened the doors to popular and even legal attacks. Once the war ended, the Alliance never returned, although some German social groups remained to preserve the native heritage.

David Detjen, a New York City attorney, has written a solid account of Germans in Missouri during a critical period of their history. (Actually, the book might have been more correctly called *The Germans in St. Louis* because of their heavy concentration in the Gateway City.) This work is a useful complement to Frederick C. Luebke's perceptive study, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, Ill., 1974), for Detjen sees a sense of Germanness or "Deutschtum" among German-Missourians. Overall, Detjen's treatment is thorough, thoughtful, and judicious. He might have shown German attitudes toward their Missouri brethren during the war, but such an omission is hardly a major flaw. The University of Missouri Press, unfortunately, has missed a splendid opportunity to publish valuable illustrations of Germans in Missouri, whether views of Turnvereine clubs, Missouri-German leaders, or anti-German protests.

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Recorder of the Black Experience: A Biography of Monroe Nathan Work. By Linda O. McMurry. *Southern Biography Series.* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, c. 1985. Pp. xviii, 154. \$20.00.)

For thirty years, from 1908 to 1938, Monroe Work, a Chicago-trained sociologist who was the first black scholar to publish in the *American Jour-*

nal of Sociology, served as director of the Department of Records and Research at Tuskegee Institute. During his professional career, "he issued sixty-six lynching reports, edited nine editions of the *Negro Year Book*, produced the massive *Bibliography of the Negro in Africa and America*, organized seventeen Negro health weeks, published more than seventy articles, participated in dozens of interracial meetings and organizations, directed the study of sociology at Tuskegee, and filled more than thirty filing cabinets with valuable information on blacks" (p. 141).

Born in 1866 in Iredell County, North Carolina, Work did not graduate from high school until the age of twenty-six. He received his M.A. from the University of Chicago in 1903 after having spent three years at the Chicago Theological Seminary and four years in the university's undergraduate program. Following five years on the faculty of Georgia State Industrial College in Savannah, Work was recruited by Booker T. Washington to head up an operation at Tuskegee Institute that in time "functioned as a placement bureau, a public relations office, a social science research center, an academic department, an archive, and an extension bureau" (p. 88).

As an early black sociologist, Work was "the only man to have been closely affiliated with both Du Bois and Washington" (p. xiii), but his appointment at Tuskegee changed Work from "a man with a foot in both camps" (p. 52) to "a disciple" (p. 65) of Washington and "a vital cog in the Tuskegee machine" (p. 69). However, "The principal driving force in Work's life was neither accommodation nor protest; rather, it was an abiding faith in the 'impact of fact'" (p. 52).

Professor McMurry's careful and insightful biography emphasizes that Monroe Work was one of "many quiet crusaders who are now ignored" (p. 148). Although in Work's writings "one has to look closely for a flicker of the man and his own thoughts on the subject" (p. 110), McMurry stresses that "Work pursued knowledge not merely for its own sake but also to provide solutions to current problems. His ultimate goals were to instill black pride and to eradicate white prejudice" (p. 96).

At Tuskegee, Work "encouraged the principal's subtle shift from strict accommodationism" and was "a quiet but insistent voice for change in the institute's approach to both education and race relations" (p. 70). Work's research was notable for its focus upon African history and culture "as a living influence in the United States" (p. 95) at a time when most scholars ignored the topic and gave little thought to black Americans' rich African heritage.

Professor McMurry's able presentation of Monroe Work's ideas and accomplishments reflects her own broad expertise in American black social and intellectual history. Although Work's quiet and reserved nature makes it difficult for a biographer to portray Work's life in richly textured terms, McMurry does an admirable job in using Work's life history as a vehicle for outlining the obstacles and opportunities that confronted early twentieth-century black scholars. This slender but valuable book will be instructive for everyone with an interest in black intellectual history and the Tuskegee story.