

Local and regional newspapers, however, constitute the major source of contemporary local history, recording, as they do, an area, its people, their customs, economic conditions, festivities and tragedies. In addition, advertisements in newspapers provide invaluable historical information.

Oral history as a means of collecting information is analysed and evaluated by the author in the light of questions such as: How is oral history collected and preserved? How do I use the tape recorder when interviewing? How can oral history be used? What should be avoided in oral history?

Written to help the researcher to create better articles, this comprehensive guide offers many practical hints for publication. It also deals with matters such as the importance of local history organizations, legal implications in using diaries and letters, indexing information by using file cards, copyright, et cetera.

To those who are interested in collecting and writing local history, this informative publication is extremely useful and can be recommended as indispensable.

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D. WEYER CREIGH. *A primer for local historical societies. AASLH:* Nashville, 1976. \$6.50.

Even apart from the title, the front cover of Dorothy Weyer Creigh's book arouses interest by its conspicuous red apple crowning the silhouette of an old-fashioned chair.

Her enthusiasm for her subject, local history, is evident throughout the book. The purpose and functions of a historical society take on a new meaning when one has read it, for it becomes clear that local history can virtually become "a way of living, really, wherein we think, plan, talk even dream about ..."

She starts her subject by stating the important factors which have to be kept in mind before a historical society is even founded, and then continues with advice on how to establish it.

The chapter on finance deals with all the problems of money-raising and gives very practical advice on handling the funds of a society.

The writer goes on to deal with the publicity aspect and with projects for limited budgets. The latter constitute perhaps the most important and valuable chapter in the book. There are practical guidelines on projects such as locating historical information in libraries; where and how to collect local historical material and how to index the information obtained; how to record historical information from cemetery inscriptions, place names, historic sites, and how to make historic maps. Projects could also be made of subjects like the community, the schools, the senior citizens, local fairs, bazaars and film shows. If historical societies were able to put into effect even just a few of these projects the task of the researcher who is to write a local history of a region would be considerably eased.

The chapter on collecting Oral History has interesting information and guidance on how to prepare and conduct an interview and how to transcribe and file the recording.

The next few chapters deal with buildings — the permanent marking of historic sites, the preservation and restoration of buildings and the part which historical societies can play in these activities.

Other subjects dealt with are the arranging of tours (where, what, how?); the establishing of a historical library; how to make use of volunteers from the society; how to set about publishing a manuscript (sources, footnotes, index), or a periodical, or a monthly publication; and finally how to distribute a publication.

In another chapter the writer deals with the local museum which is run by a historical society. Only broad outlines are given about instituting a museum, the display and labelling of objects and the problem of maintaining it.

There are five Appendices, unfortunately not applicable to the South African researcher as they refer to institutions, societies and research addresses in the United States of America. The index, however, is well compiled and helpful.

One of the most valuable assets of the book is a fairly extensive bibliography at the end of each chapter which makes possible more extensive reading on particular subjects. Unfortunately there is no comprehensive alphabetical bibliography.

The book is illustrated with very ordinary photographs some of which, unfortunately, serve little purpose.

Anybody who, until now, has doubted the purpose of a historical

society or its right to exist is bound to alter his opinion after having read this book. Enthusiasm, imagination, ingenuity and the time needed to raise money by various means are the main ingredients for a successful society. Apart from preserving local history such a society will contribute harmony and cohesiveness to the community.

By and large the book is basically intended to be practical and instructive; this makes it a real asset to local historical societies, which can only benefit by having it within reach.

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A.J. CHRISTOPHER. *Southern Africa. Studies in historical geography series.* Dawson: Folkstone/Archon: Hamden, 1976. £8.00.

A 1972 survey of historical geography in Africa by Kwamina B. Dickson (see A.R.H. Baker, *Progress in historical geography* (New York, 1972), pp.187–206 and 273–274) suggests that very little attention is given to this subject on the African Continent and it makes no reference to a single work produced in Africa south of the Zambezi. It is therefore safe to assume that the study of historical geography is comparatively new in South Africa. Because of this people interested in how the cultural landscape of southern Africa had evolved were largely dependent on A.F. Hattersley's *Illustrated social history of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1969).

Dr Christopher has changed this situation by publishing the results of his research on the historical geography of southern Africa; this he has done in local and overseas journals and in this his first comprehensive work on the subject. Apart from the fact that it introduces into South Africa new concepts in the field of historical geography his book is important for its interdisciplinary and human approach to geography, an approach which makes his book valuable also for historians, particularly those specialising in urban and regional history.

It is quite clear that the author does not pretend to describe in detail the way the southern African landscape has been transformed through White settlement. The book is, instead, a broad introductory study of the process, the details of which can be worked out later. The first three chapters deal with the factors which determined the settlement of Whites in the interior of South Africa during the Dutch and early English periods up to 1860. They are followed by a rather short chapter on urban expansion from 1806 to 1860, when major developments took place. These first four chapters virtually cover the history of White settlement in that part of southern Africa which today forms the RSA.

By 1860 the main outlines of White rural development had been drawn. Chapter Five goes on to discuss the years 1860 to 1914, when the processes of filling in and closing the farming frontier took place. The important industrial development which took place at this time through the discovery of diamonds (Kimberley) and gold (Witwatersrand) is described in Chapters Six and Seven.

One of the most interesting though problematical aspects of colonization in southern Africa, that of contact between White and Black, is considered in Chapter Eight. To a large extent the future of White settlement in southern Africa was shaped by the economic and political effects of this contact, and the present situation in the RSA and Rhodesia can hardly be understood without taking these factors into account.

In a final chapter the author offers some perspectives on the historical geography of southern Africa, using Turner's frontier thesis on the settlement of the United States of America as a model and drawing parallels with what has been experienced in southern Africa. Although the process of settlement here was very similar to that in North America, Christopher indicates that in general the characteristics of settlement in southern Africa have been peculiar to this continent.

To conclude: this well-researched and well-written book is a welcome addition to the scientific literature of southern Africa and might well in future be looked back upon as an important pioneering work, valuable to both the study and understanding of the geographical processes and of history.

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