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*My Father Spoke Finnish at Work: Finnish Americans in  
Northeast Ohio* (review)

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area now known as the Midwest was vital to electoral politics. In this work Mach frequently refers to Pendleton's "distinct midwestern Democratic ideology" (3). Yet the term "midwestern" was not one in circulation until well after Pendleton's life, and therefore he would not have described his own ideology as such. What, then, would have been the primary way in which the senator thought of himself?

"Gentleman George" is part of Kent State University Press's emerging presence in the study of Ohio history. Thomas Mach's book clearly was a labor of love that helps to fill a gap in the historical record.

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*My Father Spoke Finnish at Work: Finnish Americans in Northeast Ohio*. Edited by Noreen Sippola Fairburn. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2007. xiv, 158 pp. Cloth \$34.95, ISBN 978-0-87338-909-9.)

*My Father Spoke Finnish at Work* is published as part of the new Voices of Diversity Series, which seeks to present firsthand accounts of immigrant and migrant life in northeast Ohio. The volume contains verbatim transcripts of more than forty interviews with Finnish immigrants and second-generation Finns, most of whom lived in Fairport Harbor, Ashtabula, Conneaut, and on nearby farms. It is the product of the efforts of the Finnish American Heritage Association of Ashtabula County, and those interviewed responded to a common series of questions. The volume only has a brief introductory essay, and, likewise, there is only a brief introduction to the book's three sections.

This collection reflects both the strengths and weaknesses of this type of oral history. Certainly, there is much to be learned here about distinctive elements of Finnish life in Ashtabula County. A surprising number of Finns settled first in Monessen, Pennsylvania, before moving to Ohio. As one would expect, others first went to the copper and iron country of Minnesota and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Many of the Finnish men worked for the railroads or on the iron ore docks, though the volume has very little material on the actual work experience. Many of the women and men fondly remember the preparation of special Finnish foods and distinctive ways of celebrating Christmas and the New Year. Men with carpentry skills often built rug looms that women used in their homes. The vast majority of the interviewees belonged to the Lutheran Church, and only one interviewee expressed any resentment toward the church. Much of Finnish social life was organized around the "halls," and people recall the dances, the theatrical performances, and the Humina Band. Finns loved their saunas, and many immigrants built their own, which they shared with neighbors, or visited public saunas. The Finns valued hard work and, according to their

accounts, preferred not to accept public assistance during the Great Depression, though a few people participated in the CCC or WPA. Many of the accounts give testimony to what Finns call *sisu*, a Finnish term expressing the inner strength of their people.

However, many of the accounts are bathed in nostalgia, and one wonders whether the church/socialist division that affected other Finnish communities resonated at all in Ashtabula County. Finns also became divided by the alcohol issue. There is mention of temperance efforts but no indication of the impact alcohol may have had on the community. The lack of an overall, interpretative introductory essay leaves these and other questions unanswered. Someone who picks up this book and knows nothing about Finnish immigrant life will get the impression that there were no problems or divisions in the community.

The book also would have been enhanced by a map of Finland showing the major emigration districts and a brief bibliography to guide readers to other sources. This volume, though, does much to add to our knowledge of a region which, from the earliest Connecticut settlers to present-day Mexican immigrants, has an unusually vivid and colorful history.

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*A Concise History of Kentucky.* By James C. Klotter and Freda C. Klotter. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008. xii, 238 pp. Cloth \$30.00, ISBN 978-0-8131-2498-8; paper \$19.95, ISBN 978-0-8131-9192-8.)

This introduction to Kentucky history is a collaboration between the state's leading historian, James C. Klotter, and educational consultant Freda C. Klotter. In five compact chapters, they outline major influences and developments of the frontier, statehood, Civil War, industrial, and modern periods. Seven other chapters are thematic, focusing on Kentucky government, regions and regionalism, agricultural and material culture, commercial transformation, literature and music, and demography. Occasional sidebars document the lives of well-known and anonymous Kentuckians to illustrate economic, social, and cultural themes. *A Concise History of Kentucky* will be useful to many readers new to the state.

Concision has advantages. A concise history is short and free of rhetorical excess. As the author's preface points out, a concise history is readable and affordable. Concision also requires that the authors limit subtext in the pursuit of brevity. This is unavoidable, but some important omissions from this work reflect not only the inherent drawbacks of brevity but also a larger difficulty. These omissions relate to matters of historical "agency."

One omission comes early, in a descriptive survey of Kentucky's "cultural