

regrettable that Peel did not underscore two themes that suffuse social-welfare-history historiography.

On the one hand, I wish that Peel had illustrated similarities and differences in the ways that case workers in these far flung agencies during the 1920s and 1930s had sought (and eschewed efforts) to incorporate micro- and macro- theories of human behavior and social environments into their observations of poverty and interactions with the poor. Existing models were failing; many officials were trying to replace them. But “theirs was a clumsy science” (p. 84). On the other hand, there is less sense that case workers felt “compassion” or exercised “social control” in *Miss Cutler and the Case of the Resurrected Horse* than I expected. How hard times spurred both impulses—the magnitude of hopelessness and need amidst limited resources (social capital and human resources) in times of austerity—within the context of bureaucratic guidelines and face-to-face interactions is an important part of the evolving drama.

Comparative approaches, as well as studies of disparities by race, gender, ethnicity, and class, have enriched the field of social-welfare history in recent years. *Miss Cutler and the Case of the Resurrected Horse* adds key facets to the overall picture. We now need a grand synthesis in the tradition of June Axinn, Clarke Chambers, Michael Katz, or Walter Trattner.

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The Thousand-Year Flood: The Ohio-Mississippi Disaster of 1937. By David Welky (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011, xiv plus 355 pp., \$27.50).

It has been three quarters of a century since the Ohio River engulfed the towns, cities, and low-lying farm lands lying in what is termed America’s mightiest flood. While the author of the present work has marvelously captured the drama of the occasion, he has added to it context and historical perspective which those who experienced this Great Depression disaster could not have known.

The nightmare began early in 1937 when the river, swollen by days on end of torrential rain, rose to unprecedented heights. It overwhelmed and in instances had a lasting impact on such river or tributary towns as Portsmouth, Ohio; Jeffersonville and Evansville, Indiana; Louisville, Paducah, and Frankfort, Kentucky, and Shawneetown and Cairo, Illinois. Hilly Cincinnati, which except for its downtown, escaped the river’s full wrath as did Pittsburgh and Wheeling, West Virginia, which are treated lightly. Memphis on the Mississippi, on the other hand, garners notable attention. The author, a St. Louis native, stays fixed on the Ohio, calling the happening “the worst river flood in American history” (preface), the destructive power of which today would today be measured in billions of dollars. Yet the story has been largely lost to historians.

Although this review focuses on the flood itself—especially as it impacted on Cairo and Shawneetown and even more on Louisville—Welky does go beyond it. He reminds us that this was a New Deal event, to be viewed through the prism of centralized planning, TVA, the Flood Control Act of 1936, and the saga of the more important one of 1937. Roosevelt's interest, heartfelt as well as political, energized his response to the calamity and the roles he assigned to Harry Hopkins and WPA's Indiana head, Wayne Coy. The river itself—its beauty, history, size (a run of 981 miles and encompassing some 204,000 square miles), and the fertile farmland and crucial industry contiguous to it—play in Welky's presentation. History illumines the river's taming by examining the roles of the Army Corps of Engineers and the contentious rivalry between two would be tamers, Charles Ellet, Jr. and Captain Andrew Atkinson Humphreys. It shows, too, the concern for flooding which existed long before 1937.

The author's treatment of Black Sunday in Louisville captures the drama of the moment:

The second largest city in the flood zone stood on the verge of an unprecedented crisis. Cold winds hurled angry waves against buildings. Snow blanketed highland areas. Panicked residents jammed the few usable roads, clogged switchboards with frivolous telephone calls, and gouged customers with inflated prices. Supplies of drinking water ran low owing to inundated pumping stations and widespread hoarding. . . . The clouds closed a few hour later as sheets of rain again pelted the streets. This latest squall was part of a weeklong storm system that carpeted Kentucky and Tennessee with the heaviest precipitation of the four-week weather cycle. It dumped fourteen inches of rain on some places before climaxing on . . . Jan. 24, or "Black Sunday." Frozen, saturated ground sped this new precipitation into rivers. Engorged lower tributaries such as the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the Green submerged wide swaths of land before colliding with the wet wall raging down the Ohio. A colossal hydraulic battle played out as water crashed into water. Repelled by the higher, superior stream before them, tributaries spilled onto surrounding lowlands until the liquid roadblock dropped enough to allow them to resume their path to the sea.

Black Sunday changed a crisis into a disaster. It also marked the moment when President Roosevelt assumed more direct control over the situation. . . . The next several days were a blur. Harry Hopkins ran laps between the White House and the Red Cross building, gathered information from Local WPA officials, and fielded calls from innumerable elected officials seeking federal assistance. . . . Black Sunday proved the tipping point along the Ohio, the day when a major flood turned into a nightmare. Problems from city to city, with each scenario demanding flexible leadership and effective coordination between volunteers, private agencies, and the federal government. (84–89)

Welky further recounts the unprecedented roles played by radio (notably by WHAS in Louisville) and the Red Cross in rescue operations, and the many different ways—some heroic, some stupid—which afflicted cities dealt with their crises. Louisville made a remarkable recovery (280–86) and even enjoyed a renaissance, while Shawneetown, Illinois's oldest community was abandoned, giving way to a new one. As Welky put it: "New Shawneetown was a river community without a river" (270). The author called the Louisville floodwall "an engineering masterpiece" and "with this legacy of 1937 in place the city opened a new chapter in its history." William Manchester's Harper's article in 1955 validated this view.

“He [Manchester] credited the big flood for jolting the town from its torpor. ‘Modern Louisville started with it,’ he wrote.” “After a generation of running from the Ohio, Louisvillians in the 1960s embraced the waterway responsible for their city’s existence.” Office towers soared in the once moribund downtown; the riverfront was transformed with new hotels. None of this would have happened, it seems safe to say, without the flood and its floodwall, which was finished in 1956.

Author Welky in the cover jacket rightly calls the 1937 flood “a striking narrative of danger and adventure—and the mix of heroism and generosity, greed and pettiness that always accompany disaster—*The Thousand-Year Flood* breathes new life into a fascinating yet little-remembered American story.” His is a diligently researched, well-written, and insightful work about a storied event hitherto ignored by historians but one which had momentous consequences for Middle America and the nation during the oncoming war years.

Welky’s narrative evokes a memorable image: the rescue by row boaters the day before Black Sunday of a family—a father, his pregnant wife, their twelve year old son, and their dog—from their Civil War era home on the banks of Beargrass Creek in Louisville. Although they found quarters on Market Street beyond downtown, they escaped this place at the first opportunity: they discovered their landlord to be a looter who harvested bourbon by the boatload during the days of high water. As the flood waters receded the family trudged two or three miles to the famous pontoon bridge erected over the still swollen waters of Beargrass Creek. This bridge, which rested on encased bourbon barrels, lay opposite the family’s still inundated home and stretched to the foot of the Highlands. Once over, they walked a few miles farther finding refuge among good friends. This family was my own; I was the twelve year old; my sister was born the May following. Oh yes, dog Fritz savored this experience and lived to a ripe age.

As reviewer of this work, I found *The Thousand-Year Flood* worth the wait of a lifetime.

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Empire and Underworld: Captivity in French Guyana. By Miranda Frances Spieler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012. 284 pp. \$49.95).

Empire and Underworld is the first academic monograph by Miranda Frances Spieler, an Associate Professor of History at the University of Arizona. Well aware that her area of specialization, Guyane (French Guiana), was economically an irrelevant corner of the first French empire, she chooses to focus instead on Guyane’s penal establishments from the French Revolution to 1870, a period that saw the deportation of about 70,000 people to Guyane (she does not cover deportations from the Caribbean to France, an interesting topic studied by Claude and

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