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Nash, Gary B. *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988. Pp. xii, 354. Illustrations, maps, index. \$29.95 (U.S.)

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Both of these monographs tell of black migrants who fled southern poverty and oppression in the hope of forging better lives for themselves in northern cities, but the books focus on quite different times and places. *Forging Freedom* deals with Philadelphia from the late colonial period through the Jacksonian era, while *Land of Hope* concentrates upon Chicago primarily during World War I but with glances backward into the late nineteenth century and forward into the 1920s. The books differ also in style and emphasis, but both make significant contributions to knowledge. Read back to back, they illuminate much of the black experience in urban America over the better part of two hundred years.

In *Forging Freedom*, Gary Nash begins by describing two events. The first is an idyllic scene in 1793 where white and black Philadelphians sat down together at a banquet celebrating the raising of roof beams for the first free black church in the northern states. The second is an angry confrontation in 1832 where a white mob prevented the docking of a ship carrying ninety-two ex-slaves from South Carolina. The purpose of Nash's book is, first, to recount this declension from brotherly love to racial hatred, and, second, to describe how the free black community of Philadelphia was able to

survive and develop even as Quaker benevolence gave way to virulent racism on the part of whites. Nash's pursuit of his first objective is somewhat unsatisfying in that while he provides ample illustration of the gradual intensification of white racism, he does not explain it, other than by repeating the hoary cliché that the blurring of class distinctions in Jacksonian America led to a heightened emphasis upon racial stratification. In describing the evolution of the Philadelphia black community, on the other hand, Nash succeeds brilliantly. Often working with meagre and obscure evidence, he nevertheless is able to provide a sensitive, nuanced account of family life, residential and occupational patterns, and the emergence of institutions such as mutual aid societies and, most importantly, the independent black churches that were at the heart of community development.

Nash describes the remarkable achievements of Philadelphia blacks in the face of adversity, and he leaves the reader with powerful images of pivotal leaders like Richard Allen, who managed to buy his way out of slavery and then made himself a pillar of religious and social community in black Philadelphia, while simultaneously earning his living as shoemaker, bleeder, chimney sweep and entrepreneur. Nash is careful to present a balanced, warts-and-all portrait of Philadelphia blacks; he does not neglect to provide such glimpses as he can of that subculture of blacks who on occasion "spoke in southern dialect, drank and gambled, dressed flamboyantly, sometimes ran afoul of the law, and affected a body language . . . that set them apart from 'respectable' black society." Even when delving into complex matters, such as when he analyzes naming patterns as evidence of acculturation, or

when he challenges Theodore Hershberg's contention that slave-born blacks did better than free-born ones, Nash presents his findings in admirably spare and unambiguous prose.

In contrast to Nash's *Forging Freedom*, James Grossman's *Land of Hope* is a typical revised dissertation, clogged with excessive and sometimes repetitious detail. Sometimes Grossman's analysis is confusing, and often he drags the reader back and forth over the conflicting evidence that he uncovered in his research, instead of presenting his conclusions clearly and succinctly. Still, for readers patient enough to work their way through it, *Land of Hope* yields ample rewards. Grossman is at his best in his earlier chapters, in which he explores the southern context and then describes the migration process through which tens of thousands of blacks came to Chicago during the First World War. Grossman analyzes perceptively the mix of factors that inspired this great migration. Whereas most contemporaries and some later writers emphasized only the economic pull of job opportunities, Grossman argues persuasively that the social push of southern racial oppression cannot be discounted. For example, whereas some studies have denied the importance of lynching as a spur to black migration because they found no correlation between frequency of lynchings and extent of migration from various southern counties, Grossman says that such calculations are meaningless because the *Chicago Defender* circulated throughout the South and spread news of every lynching to all parts of Dixie. Grossman argues also that the role of labour agents was minor, but that there emerged among southern blacks a network that distributed information and organized the movement of groups and

sometimes even whole communities, despite vigorous opposition from white and black elites. In contrast to those who have described the migration as leaderless, Grossman argues that there were leaders (including many women), although it does not appear from his evidence that there was much co-ordination of effort above the local level.

When Grossman turns his attention to the black experience in Chicago, he enters upon well-trod ground, and so his contributions are less original. Still, he has mined a huge range of sources, and he provides a wealth of useful information about the black encounter with Chicago's industrial work environment, the various institutions that aided and oppressed black migrants, and the migrants' encounters with labor unions, local politics and the public schools. Particularly interesting is the discussion of the Wabash Avenue YMCA and the Chicago Urban League, both of which provided significant services to the black community but were compromised by their dependence on white support; Grossman reports that 90 percent of the Urban League's 1917 budget came from whites, and he argues that the YMCA rendered so much assistance to employers in their anti-unionization efforts that "more than any other institution, the YMCA deserved the abuse that union leaders later heaped on the black middle-class." Unlike Nash, Grossman says little about family life, other than to assert that "black family structure was not a victim of the Great Migration; rather, its flexibility and strength anchored the movement," and he tends to ignore negative social phenomena such as crime and violence.

These books reveal interesting parallels between black life in Philadelphia in the

early national period and in Chicago a century later. In both cities residential segregation by race was the norm; such segregation emerged rather suddenly in Philadelphia between 1800 and 1810 but was already pervasive in Chicago long before the great migration of World War I. In both settings black churches were key institutions. In both environments an established black elite tried to impose its standards of behaviour on newcomers; in Philadelphia Richard Allen and others organized a Society for the Suppression of Vice, while in Chicago the Defender and the Urban League issued elaborate instructions to newly-arrived migrants urging them to behave courteously and not wear head rags.

As might be expected, however, the differences loom even larger. Blacks in Philadelphia were disenfranchised by custom (although not in law), while in Chicago black voting was a political force to be reckoned with and the black community received a share of the spoils from the political machine headed by Mayor "Big Bill" Thompson; indeed, Grossman implies that the perception by immigrant whites that black votes had caused Thompson's electoral success in April 1919 was a major cause of the terrible race riot that occurred the following summer. In Philadelphia in 1815 adult blacks tended to be relatively uninterested in education, while in Chicago in 1921 night classes at Wendell Phillips High School enrolled an impressive 4,000 students in a range of courses that even included Afro-American literature and history. Above all, blacks in Nash's Philadelphia were totally excluded from industrial employment, while in Grossman's Chicago blacks poured by the tens of thousands into the packinghouses and steel mills.

Despite its stylistic deficiencies, Grossman's *Land of Hope* is a thoroughly researched and informative monograph. Nash's *Forging Freedom* is a lucid and fascinating work of mature scholarship. Both books are essential reading for urban historians.

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**C. J. Taylor. *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Canada's National Historic Parks and Sites*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990. Pp. 288. \$32.95 (cloth).**

C.J. Taylor's *Negotiating the Past* traces the history of one of Canada's largest federal cultural programs, that of national historic parks and sites. Despite their role in the commemoration and preservation of the nation's past, Canadian historic parks and sites have been little studied as a federal cultural program of national significance. Taylor's work, the core of which was written as a doctoral thesis at Carleton University, aims to provide the biography of a federal cultural agency, explaining its program development as well as documenting initiatives to commemorate and preserve the past: it analyses the functioning of a federal government agency, studies the history of heritage conservation in Canada, and considers Canadian cultural policy and the shaping of national identity. Beyond its merits as a well-researched and readable work, Taylor's book is an original and timely addition to the sparse scholarship on the history of heritage conservation in Canada.

The central theme in Taylor's interpretation of the development of Canada's historic parks and sites lies in a dynamic