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English Ethnicity and Culture in North America

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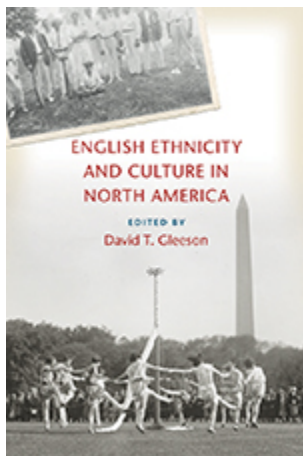
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Recommended for public and academic libraries, archival collections and societies serving related interests. Over 266 pages, black and white illustrations, a list of public library protestors, notes, notes on primary sources and an index.

Carol Walker Jordan
Librarian and Consultant

English Ethnicity and Culture in North America. David T. Gleeson, ed. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-61117-786-2 (Hardback); ISBN: 978-1-61117-787-9 (ebook). \$49.99. 240 p.



According to David Gleeson's introduction, Canada had 1.2 million residents of English origin, based on the 1901 census; and the English were the largest immigrant group coming to the American colonies in the 17th century, constituting 80 percent of the British who came to the U.S. between 1820 and 1910. Yet many leading scholars assert that "English immigrants contributed nothing substantial to the varied palette of ethnicity in North America." The established view has been that there existed an "Anglo cultural mainstream" into which the English just disappeared as "invisible immigrants." Typically, the Irish, the Scots, the Germans, and other immigrants, have been recognized as distinct ethnic groups. However, this recognition has not been afforded the English which, we are reminded, is not synonymous with British. The essays compiled by Gleeson for *English Ethnicity and Culture in North America*, examine the English Diaspora and attempt to show the links between England, its people and its culture to various parts of North America – particularly the United States – in the 19th and 20th centuries and, as such, challenge this established view.

Looking simply at the cover and title, one might expect Gleeson's book to be primarily about the finer details of English culture such as beliefs, rituals, social practices, religion, language, dress, music, dance, art, etc. that were introduced to American society. These things are indeed of interest and discussed as part of the evidence to consider;

but, the ten essays cover even broader territory than this. The essays provide a wealth of information regarding the English Diaspora, including but not limited to immigrant statistics; the role of English benevolent societies in maintaining and protecting English ethnicity; cultural mentalities relating to work and standards that influenced socio-political changes in the U.S.; the Anglican Church's influence on religion, education and architecture; English social ideals and customs that influenced America's attitudes toward land ownership, freedom and liberty; and even sports ideals and leisure pastimes that influenced contemporary society, some of which we still see the effects of today. This at first seemingly disparate collection of essays shows different and unique aspects of the claimed English contribution.

The stated primary goal of Gleeson's work was to challenge the established view that English immigrants made no significant contribution to ethnicity in North America. Each of the essays is well-researched and cited, but do they work together as a whole to effectively challenge the established view? While the book would have benefited from a concluding chapter to tie together the wealth of information unpacked by the essays with that of the challenge that was issued; I think the answer is, yes, there is evidence of such contribution. Ultimately, in many cases the English cultural contributions to America discussed in the essays were taken and transformed over the years into something more uniquely American and woven into the fabric of the culture so seamlessly that they apparently became invisible to many scholars. The essays contained in Gleeson's book expertly highlight some of the Anglo threads of the American cultural tapestry.

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Andrew Jackson: A Rhetorical Portrayal of Presidential Leadership. Amos Kiewe. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2019. \$39.95.

