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Gentleman George Hunt Pendleton: Party Politics and Ideological Identity in Nineteenth-Century America

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"Gentleman George" Hunt Pendleton: Party Politics and Ideological Identity in Nineteenth-Century America, by Thomas S. Mach. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2007. ix, 307 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Jeffrey J. Pilz is an instructor in the social science division at North Iowa Area Community College. He is the author of *The Life, Work and Times of George Henry Evans: Newspaperman, Activist and Reformer* (2001).

I once wrote of a brilliant but forgotten newspaperman of the nineteenth century that he was "a person who tried to change things and failed." That so few show interest in the person who fails is no surprise, but that does not deter historian Thomas Mach from attempting to rescue another forgotten nineteenth-century subject from obscurity. His well-structured study of a relatively unsuccessful man and the complex political times in which he lived and worked ensures that his subject will not be forgotten.

"Gentleman George" Hunt Pendleton: Party Politics and Ideological Identity in Nineteenth-Century America is more about the latter than the former, making this a more rewarding read for the political specialist than the historian. There are two reasons for this. First, the political ideology of the latter half of the nineteenth century—especially for the Democratic Party, steeped in Jacksonian individualism and states' rights, haunted by the ghosts of slavery and war, and faced with the challenges of racism and isolationism—is far more complex and interesting than any of the men who shaped, espoused, and practiced it. Second, source materials for and analyses of party ideology are plentiful, broad, and deep, but Pendleton "left no diaries, memoirs or journals . . . nor [did he] deposit his correspondence in a public archive" (1). The man has been forgotten, argues Mach, due to this dearth of sources rather than his lack of contribution to the American political process. Pendleton's resumé seems to point to an accomplished man—state senator in his native Ohio; U.S. representative, 1857–1865; George McClellan's running mate on the Peace Democrat ticket in 1864; U.S. senator, 1879–1885; "father" of the Civil Service Reform Act (or Pendleton Act) of 1883; minister to Berlin in 1885. But Pendleton was not what Mach wishes him to have been.

"Gentleman George" is a favorite son, in his own time and of his biographer. From the advantage of a well-to-do family in Ohio, Pendleton attempted to mesh the Whiggish ideas of his father with those of pre-war, pre-industrial Jacksonian individualists. But the realities of the late nineteenth century—urbanization, mechanization, diversification, increasing corporate/government partnership—prevented not only success but the notice of his own party. That did not matter at

home where he remained, well, a favorite son. Mach's analysis of Pendleton's roots, his idealism and ideology, and his efforts to breathe life into anachronism in the face of daunting challenges, is complete and compelling. But even his subject's keystone accomplishment denied him ideological success. The Civil Service Reform Act was one of the most intrusive federal programs of the day, and Pendleton was its guiding light. In the end, the reader is less convinced than the Ohio author that Pendleton was a success in a Jacksonian sense. He remains a favorite son.

That does not diminish the value of the work, however. That Mach has constructed a valuable history of Pendleton and a viable account of his efforts to shape his party, without traditional sources, is a testament to his research skills and political acumen. To explain in such detail the inner struggle of a man, his party, and his country in the face of the sea change that was the post-Civil War era is a notable feat. That he fails to resurrect Pendleton as a significant figure in American political history, or even in his own party, reflects not on the author but on his subject. Mach cannot make Pendleton brilliant, but he has ensured that he will not be forgotten.

Small Strangers: The Experiences of Immigrant Children in America, 1880–1925, by Melissa R. Klapper. American Childhoods Series. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007. xix, 219 pp. Illustrations, notes, note on sources, index. \$27.50 cloth.

Reviewer Joy K. Lintelman is professor of history at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota. Her book, *I Go to America*, on Swedish American women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, will be published in early 2009.

Melissa Klapper's examination of immigrant children in the United States during the era of mass immigration is the most recent addition to publisher Ivan R. Dee's American Childhoods Series. In a brief and accessible monograph, Klapper synthesizes existing work on immigration relating to children. She also incorporates primary research of her own, although, as she states clearly in her preface, she "makes no claim to provide a theoretical outlook on the historical experiences of immigrant children" (xii). Klapper focuses on the decades from 1880 through 1920 and defines immigrant children as individuals "whose childhood and adolescence were centrally shaped by immigration and adaptation to the United States, whether they were born abroad or in America" (xi).

Klapper's study opens with a chapter outlining nineteenth-century ideas about childhood and youth as life phases distinct from adult-