

MARCIA M. MILLER. *How to collect and write local history.*
Sunstone Press, Santa Fe, 1975. R3,55 (\$1,95).

At a time when the world seems to be more involved in global problems and space exploration than in everyday life, many question the rôle and importance of local history. And yet it is a microcosm of the larger scene; it is the history of people, events and institutions in a specifically designated and geographically circumscribed area — local history is, after all, the true beginning of all history.

In this booklet, consisting of seventeen pages, the author endeavours to answer some of the questions most asked by those writing local history, which she maintains should be collected and preserved because it is an essential part of the national heritage. It is not necessary for a person to be a professional historian to write local history. On the contrary, most of it is written by amateurs who are usually as well trained in basic methods as the professional historian.

Among the special aptitudes required are an enthusiastic zeal and a tremendous interest in the subject, the mind of a detective, and plenty of patience — because collecting and writing local history takes not only tact but time.

The author lists some of the public sources which might contain useful information, e.g. telephone directories, local and regional maps, newspapers and magazines, school records and annuals, state and regional histories, census reports, anniversary booklets and council or commission minutes. Private sources are family albums, diaries and journals, letters, genealogies and scrapbooks.

Local and regional newspapers, however, constitute the major source of contemporary local history, recording, as they do, an area, its people, their customs, economic conditions, festivities and tragedies. In addition, advertisements in newspapers provide invaluable historical information.

Oral history as a means of collecting information is analysed and evaluated by the author in the light of questions such as: How is oral history collected and preserved? How do I use the tape recorder when interviewing? How can oral history be used? What should be avoided in oral history?

Written to help the researcher to create better articles, this comprehensive guide offers many practical hints for publication. It also deals with matters such as the importance of local history organizations, legal implications in using diaries and letters, indexing information by using file cards, copyright, et cetera.

To those who are interested in collecting and writing local history, this informative publication is extremely useful and can be recommended as indispensable.

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