

Carol Kammen & Norma Prendergast, (editors)

*Encyclopedia of Local History*

(New York, Altamira Press, 2000), 539 p.

Originally the editors of this volume wanted to call it “a compendium of useful information, interesting scholarship and other good stuff.” (p. xii) The title *Encyclopedia of Local History* is somewhat more prosaic nevertheless the book still contains the useful stuff that Carol Kammen and Morna Prendergast refer to. This volume is part of the American Association for State and Local History Series and complements the diverse range of useful technical and professional information that the Association has provided for over three decades on matters of concern to local history societies, museums and historians.

The *Encyclopedia of Local History* contains over 500 pages of alphabetically arranged entries written by 130 historians from a variety of national perspectives including Canada, Australia, Germany, England and Nigeria. Not surprisingly, the numerous entries about ethnic groups and religious organizations are U.S. focused but the volume does deal with matters of more universal appeal like account books, gravestones, historic preservation, obituaries, through to zoos and animal collections. Of particular value is that each entry is accompanied by both bibliographies and web site addresses for further research. The oral history entry, by Michael Frisch for example, includes references to both the “How-to” manuals of oral history as well as the various approaches to oral history taken by such well known practitioners as Paul Thompson (England) and Alessandro Portelli (Italy).

At a time when the local history of the “amateur historian” is achieving much greater status among the “professional historians” this book is a useful addition to the bookshelves of either amateur or professional. For local history societies and museums it is an exceptionally useful compendium of “good stuff.”