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**NEW TITLES**


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*History*

**THE VIRGINIA JOURNALS OF BENJAMIN HENRY LATROBE, 1795-1798**  
 (2 vols., 1795-1797 and 1797-1798)  
 by Edward C. Carter II  
 Yale, 1977  
 667 pp. \$60 set  
 L of C 77-76301  
 ISBN 0-300-02198-4



When Thomas Jefferson needed professional help for his building projects, he turned to Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1820), perhaps the finest architect in America before Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. Latrobe's talents, embodied in his work on the U.S. Capitol, assured his place in history—but obscured his boundless activity in other fields. In his papers, Latrobe emerges as the antithesis of the specialized professional who is the norm today. A pioneer engineer, master draftsman, and water colorist, he was also a botanist, chemist, poet, linguist, author of Gothic tales, and a passable clarinetist and pianist. These volumes (of a projected 10) cover the first three years after his arrival from England in 1795. Latrobe roamed the young Republic, recording his impressions in paintings, drawings, and urbane, often bemused descriptions. The journals must have delighted his children, for whom they were intended. He was a good listener to whom George Washington could confide his fears for public morals if valuable minerals were to be found in Virginia. And he had a keen eye. On the banks of the York River, Latrobe sketched mason wasps, locally called "dirtdaubers," which yielded up to his pen the secrets of their "architecture."

**IN THE MATTER OF COLOR: Race and the American Legal Process: The Colonial Period**  
 by A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr.  
 Oxford, 1978  
 448 pp. \$15  
 L of C 76-51713  
 ISBN 0-19-502387-0 (v. 1)

U.S. Circuit Court Judge Higginbotham provides a painstaking, moving survey of slavery, the courts, and the legal codes in colonial America. (Later volumes will carry his "lineage of contemptuous law" forward through 1964.) At issue: whether the slaves were human; if so, whether they were a species apart. Most colonies said "yes" to the second question if they said "yes" to the first. But in Virginia, from the time of their arrival

in 1619, slaves were held equivalent to "horses, dogs, and real estate." Georgia, oddly enough, briefly outlawed slavery in 1730; more gradual, lasting reforms came in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. In general, however, equal justice proved elusive. Indeed, Higginbotham contends, with the famous *Sommersett* case (1772), England proved itself "more hostile to domestic slavery than the colonies." Does his legal study give too restricted a view of slavery? Perhaps. But as abolitionist William Goodell put it, "no people were ever yet found who were better than their laws."

**THE TWILIGHT LORDS:**

**An Irish Chronicle**  
by Richard Berleth  
Knopf, 1978  
316 pp. \$12.95  
L of C 77-15125  
ISBN 0-394-49667-1

Nowhere was the dark underside of the reign of Elizabeth "Gloriana" (1558-1603) demonstrated with more ferocity than in Ireland, where for 30 years Protestant England fought a kind of Vietnam War against feudal, Gaelicized Norman Catholic lords. The long fighting resulted in the near depopulation of the country as the peasants, "mere Irish" discounted by both sides, died by sword and rope or from starvation, exposure, and disease. Destruction of forests, cattle, and cropland, as well as people, was particularly heavy during the "Desmond Wars" (1568-83) in the once rich southeast province of Munster. Here the defending twilight lords, descendants of William the Conqueror's followers, fought against the encroachment of such new English landlords as Sir Walter Raleigh and poet-courtier Edmund Spenser. Berleth displays a grasp of detail and sense of a tragic story's inexorable sweep. Admittedly, he skimps a bit on the last uprising led by Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, a true Gael who, though raised in England, in 1595 united his countrymen and went on to defeat Elizabeth's favorite, the Earl of Essex. But O'Neill's forces lost in the end, and the English established their first authentic colony with the Ulster plantation. "The face of Ireland," Berleth says, "was altered permanently," and the estrangement of the two countries hardened finally into a lasting enmity that still haunts them.