

Remembrance

Andrew R. L. Cayton: Midwesterner
1954–2015

Last spring, at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the historian Andrew R. L. Cayton participated in a panel discussion at the first annual history conference of the newly organized Midwestern History Association. Cayton held forth on the future of the field of midwestern studies, which he had done so much to lead for over two decades. He offered smart advice, gentle reminders, historical perspective, important warnings, and some grand plans. Little did the assembled participants know that Drew, as he was widely known, would soon be diagnosed with colon cancer and that his Michigan remarks would be one of the final times he would offer his thoughts on the Midwest and its history.

Drew was about as midwestern as it was possible to be. Born in Cincinnati, he mostly grew up in Marietta, Ohio, where the Muskingum River drains into the Ohio River, which forms the southern boundary of the Midwest. Marietta was the first town established in the Northwest Territory by the Americans after the revolution forced the British to cede the future Midwest to its rebellious colony. Drew's father was head of the library at Marietta College and his mother taught art at the local high school. Although he took an expansive view of midwestern history and the various histories contained therein, including the darker stories, Drew recalled his youth in Marietta with great fondness and said he believed "strongly in the basic values associated with that world: family, respectability, mutual respect, and integrity, what my mother used to call character."

After graduating from high school in Marietta in 1972, Drew went to the University of Virginia, where he earned his BA in 1976. At Virginia, he decided to pursue academic history instead of becoming a high school teacher because he read Ray Allen Billington's biography of Frederick Jackson Turner. He also met Mary Kupiec during his second year of college at Vir-

ginia and they were married in August 1975. Later followed his daughter Elizabeth Renanne, who was born in November 1984, and his daughter Hannah Kupiec, who was born in July 1988.

After graduating from Virginia, Drew and Mary moved north to Brown University, where he studied for his Ph.D. under the famous historian of the American Revolution, Gordon Wood, and Mary earned her Ph.D. in American Civilization. Not surprisingly, Drew's doctoral research focused on the era of the revolution and its implications for frontier Ohio. His dissertation-turned-book was published under the title *Frontier Republic: Ideology and Politics in the Ohio Country, 1780–1825* (Kent State University Press, 1986) and reflected the influence of Wood's research on the political culture and thought of the revolutionary era. Drew followed with a collection about early Ohio politics, coedited with Jeffrey Brown, entitled *The Pursuit of Public Power: Political Culture in Ohio, 1788–1861* (Kent State University Press, 1994). During this time period, Drew was also thinking about the development of the Midwest in conjunction with the bicentennial of the Northwest Ordinance, the foundational statute which shaped the history of the Midwest. This led to Drew's book with Peter Onuf entitled *The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region* (Indiana University Press, 1990), which offered an exhaustive review of the relevant literature on the Midwest and several conceptualizations of how the Midwest had been viewed in other eras.

About the time of the publication of *The Midwest and the Nation* and after teaching at Harvard (1980–82), Wellesley (1981–82), and Ball State (1982–90), Drew settled down in his home state of Ohio and took a post in the history department at Miami University, where Mary was already teaching. Miami University, appropriately enough, was founded in 1809 during the earliest stages of the Ohio history that Drew had mastered and would share with the world through his books. Drew's work on the Midwest continued apace at Miami, where he would teach for twenty-five years. He served as coeditor of Miami's regionally focused journal *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* for a half-dozen years. He also continued work on his next book, which he had started in Indiana when he taught at Ball State in Muncie. Taking the next logical step (in regional terms) after his first monograph on early Ohio, Drew researched and wrote the history of early Indiana and his book was published as *Frontier Indiana* (Indiana University Press, 1996). Drew's connection to Indiana remained strong by way of his role as coeditor, at the invitation of Indiana University historian James

Madison, of Indiana University Press's series "Midwestern History and Culture," which yielded many of the best books about midwestern history published during the 1980s and 1990s.

In the mid-1990s, Drew worked to organize a conference and a later book on the Midwest with Susan Gray, with whom he held, as Gray recalled, a "set of shared irritations arising from the historiographic burden that people who worked in the Midwest then carried," not the least of which was that the region's history "had come to be regarded as irrelevant." They brought forth what still remains the best available edited volume of essays about midwestern history, *The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History* (Indiana University Press, 2001). For good measure, the next year Drew published a major monographic history of his home state entitled *Ohio: The History of a People* (Ohio State University Press, 2002). Soon after, along with Stuart D. Hobbs, Drew also edited *The Center of a Great Empire: The Ohio Country in the Early Republic* (Ohio University Press, 2005), a brilliant collection of essays which placed the history of Ohio in the broadest historical perspective. Drew's placement of the history of Ohio in the broader historiography of the early republic was reflective of his strong involvement in the Society of Historians of the Early American Republic, for which he served as president in 2011–12.

All the while, Drew was leading the effort, along with Ohio State University scholars Richard Sisson and Christian Zacher, to organize and publish a massive encyclopedia focused on midwestern history. The final result was the monumental doorstopper *The American Midwest: An Interpretive Encyclopedia* (Indiana University Press, 2006), which ran to one thousand entries. As the great sweep of the encyclopedia indicated, Drew appreciated the importance of big projects and ambitious goals. These qualities helped him conceive of the broad interpretive frameworks that underlie *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750–1830* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998), coedited with Fredrika J. Teute, and *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500–2000* (Pennsylvania, 2005), cowritten with Fred Anderson.

As Drew's impressive publication record demonstrates, he had a knack for teamwork and projects involving multiple authors and coediting responsibilities. He embodied collegiality and midwestern friendliness, and he never failed to lend a hand to a budding scholarly enterprise. In 2014, Drew eagerly signed on to the board of directors of the new Midwestern History Association and served as one of its great cheerleaders because,

given his many years in the history profession, he fully understood the many difficulties that hobbled the development of the field of midwestern studies, and he wanted to help. In 2015, Drew gladly chaired the MHA's first book prize committee, which reported out its winner, Brenda Child's *My Grandfather's Walking Sticks: Ojibwe Family Life and Labor on the Reservation* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2014). In August, a few months before Drew's death.

Drew also continued his dedication to Ohio and its history until the very end. During the spring of 2015 Drew accepted an appointment as the Warner Woodring Chair in Early American History at The Ohio State University in Columbus, where he moved over the summer. He also became president of the Ohio Academy of History in March 2015, a one-year term of service that he would not complete. Despite being gravely ill, Drew made a point of coming to and leading the fall executive council meeting of the Academy, admitting that he was being treated for cancer but never acknowledging how very ill he was.

Drew's continuing dedication to service, his friendly manner with all colleagues, and his brilliance in the classroom are constant refrains from those who knew him or had him for a teacher. His Miami University colleague David Fahey, recalling Drew's teaching prowess, called him a "campus legend." One undergraduate at Miami, Scott Barkett, upon hearing of Drew's death, wrote a letter to the editor of the student newspaper about how he joyfully "skipped across campus" to Upham Hall three times a week to hear Drew lecture about the history of the early American republic. Drew was such an impressive scholar, this student noted, that a "compliment from Dr. Cayton felt akin to receiving a championship belt." In an era of student disillusionment and iPhone addling, there is no greater testament to Drew's ability to make history important than Mr. Barkett's. Susanne DeBerry Cole of Washington College, one of Drew's teaching assistants at Miami and a Miami Ph.D. (1997), recalled how "three-hundred students sat rapt every morning listening to his exploration of the American Experience" and how "he was a genius at reaching young people with no interest in history at all." Drew's ability to connect with graduate students is testified to by A. James Fuller, who earned his MA (1992) and Ph.D. (1995) from Miami University and now teaches at the University of Indianapolis. "Drew took me under his wing," Fuller remembers, and "set out to help polish me into a professional historian" and made "a working-class kid of Appalachian origin who carried around the writings of Jefferson" into a scholar.

In his final months, Drew never stopped thinking about the Midwest and its history. In December, only a few weeks before his death, he submitted his thoughts on the future of the field of midwestern history to H-Midwest's forum "Why Midwestern Studies?" Drew wanted to us to begin formulating the key questions that will define and guide the field of midwestern history in the future. He also urged scholars to study and understand regionalism, both in the United States and elsewhere, as a way of developing a method of seeing the Midwest. He was pleading with us to recognize how much place matters to history. This is why Drew took time last year to weigh in on Ohio radio stations about the cultural and historical distinctions between Cincinnati and Cleveland. His comments were reminiscent of an article Drew wrote for the *Journal of Urban History* in which he warned about the real "danger of homogenizing the past, of flattening the very real regional and local idiosyncrasies" that constitute the American past and the "often quirky texture of life" (Cayton, "On the Importance of Place, or, a Plea for Idiosyncrasy," *Journal of Urban History* 24, no. 1 [November 1997]: 80, 86). Drew was making the case for taking American regions seriously or, more particularly, for putting the Midwest on the American map, a cause which no other person in living memory has done more to advance. This is Drew Cayton's greatest scholarly legacy.

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