

## HOWARD McCORD

### *Three Notes on Ohio*

#### *The Geography of Ohio*

Ohio lies fifteen thousand feet below sea level in a great rift valley bisecting the western portion of the north-eastern corridor. The border with Indiana is considered by some impassable, and by all as rivaled only by lunar structures of yet undetermined origin. A stone dropped from Pennsylvania does not land in Ohio, but Indiana, the prevailing upwardly westerlies prohibiting all but a few major airlines from landing anything in Ohio. Ohio is inhabited solely by *Mucor mucedo*, the common gray mold of bread, and is a very quiet state. Occasional utopian communities have attempted to lower themselves on ropes into Ohio, but there are always mutinies, and the ferocious free balloonists from Winnipeg steal the women with impunity. A scream was heard from Ohio in 1923.

#### *A Ramble In Northwest Ohio*

In the transition zone between the Findlay mangrove swamps and the dense bamboo thickets near the Michigan border lies Yore, Ohio. It is the only inhabited spot in the great twitchweed taiga. The miasmatic fumes which rise from the decaying twitchweed engender in the inhabitants a continual inebriation and confusion (whence the quaint expression, "daze of Yore").

The twitchweed taiga supports little animal life. Most birds bypass the area; those attempting overflight generally succumb to the fumes. The pustulated carrion beetle, the black fly, and the false chinch bug are among the more common arthropods. The vast expanse of twitchweed which surrounds Yore is unequalled elsewhere in the hemisphere. Only a few hardy and noxious plants such as Jimson weed and Sowthistle can co-exist with it, and they are usually stunted.

Considerable research during this century has found no method to eradicate twitchweed, nor any use for it. Land taken over by twitchweed cannot be reclaimed. The plant is unpalatable to most domestic animals, and poisonous to those not offended by its taste. Strenuously resisting combustion, it apparently thrives on all known herbicides. Cut, it grows back denser, stronger, and invigorated. All botanical authorities agree that, though twitchweed is a most interesting plant, it is indeed fortunate for civilization that its range is limited to the taiga about Yore, for it is potentially a plant of catastrophic properties.

The pleasant and friendly citizens of Yore, numbering about fifteen (all census returns are admittedly incomplete) attribute their long lives, good humor, and genial insouciance to the beneficent effects of rotting twitchweed. Unfortunately, no satisfactory analysis of the gas produced has ever been made. Twitchweed rots and ferments all year, though it is August which the inhabitants of Yore call "bubble time." One well acclimatized to the odor (experienced fieldworkers hint this may take several years) can hike the twitchweed taiga and be surrounded by the soft popping of gas bubbles in the soil.

As in muskeg country, rubber boots are a must. A stout heart, a good machete, and a moisture-proof compass are also recommended. Identification should be carried, for personal use on return.

### *The Ethnology of Ohio*

The tribes along the lower Sandusky are cannibalistic, those inhabiting the desolate area between the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas subsist solely on a diet of tires, which they slice, grind, and bake into a filthy black paste which they age and eat with apparent gusto. They call themselves the Akrons, but this is much disputed. Northwestern Ohio is covered by a dense layer of earth mixed with a viscous secretion as yet unidentified, making travel most difficult. The few inhabitants of the region have no name for themselves, or anything else. They wander in small groups, moaning loudly, and are much feared. A significant group of rat worshippers dwell in the valley of Cincinnati, and the singular altars of the sect can be seen for miles. The Zints, as they are called, make a pretense of civilization, but their greatest contribution has been the domestication of moles for the growing of felt.