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Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History

Robert H. Bremner

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Robert H. Bremner : Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History:

"According to Greek mythology mankind's first benefactor was the Titan, Prometheus, who gave fire, previously the exclusive possession of the gods, to mortal man." With these words the esteemed scholar Robert Bremner presents the first full-fledged history of attitudes toward charity and philanthropy. Giving is a perfect complement to his earlier work *The Discovery of Poverty in the United States*. The word philanthropy has been translated in a variety of ways: as a loving human disposition, loving kindness, love of mankind, charity, fostering mortal man, championing mankind, and helping people. Bremner's book covers all of these meanings in rich detail. Bremner describes the ancient world and classical attitudes toward giving and begging; Middle Ages and early modern times, emphasizing hospitals and patients and donors and attributes of charity; the eighteenth century and the age of benevolence; the nineteenth century and the growth of the concept of public relief and social policy; and a careful multiple chapter review of the twentieth century. Bremner reviews the act of giving in such comparative contexts as London, England and Kasrilevke, Russia with such figures as Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, and Sholem Aleichem, as well as the more familiar wealthy industrialist/philanthropists, forming part of the narrative. The final chapters bring the story up to date, discussing the relationships of modern philanthropy and organized charity, and the uses of philanthropy in

education and the arts. Bremner has an astonishing knowledge of the cultural context and the economic contents of philanthropy. As a result, this volume is intriguing as well as important history, written with lively style and wit. Whether the reader is a professional in the so-called "third stream" or "independent sector," or simply a citizen wondering just what the act of giving and the spirit of receiving is all about, Giving will be compelling reading.

From Library Journal
Bremner (*The Discovery of Poverty in the United States* , Transaction, 1992) traces the evolution of the uses of charity from Cicero to Carnegie in terms of the relevant social, political, and economic conditions. He examines a multitude of literary sources, ranging from Dickens to Douglas, using materials from England, France, Russia, and Italy and including material about the attitudes of the Jewish population of Eastern Europe. He explores the sources of charity in human nature, using examples that range from the establishment of the first hospital in England to the creation of the modern welfare organization. The author considers motives of donors in rendering gifts, as well as responses of the recipients. This book is an excellent sources document for those wanting to learn about notables whose writings reflect a concern for the human condition. For academic libraries.- Arthur K. Steinberg, Livingstone Coll., Salisbury, N.C. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. This volume is different in that it draws almost entirely on literary sources--stories, poems, ballads, scripture, novels, plays, and essays--for the allusions that profile the cultural attitudes toward charity and philanthropy Recommended for college, university, and professional libraries, and for those who live by the promotion of philanthropy. J. H. Smith, Choice
About the Author
Robert H. Bremner is professor emeritus of history at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. Among his books are *American Philanthropy*; *The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Period*; and *The Discovery of Poverty in the United States*.