

CLAUDE CLAYTON SMITH

OHIO *Outback*

Learning to Love
the
Great Black Swamp

"Claude Clayton Smith, an Easterner who found himself transplanted to the 'outback' of northwest Ohio, has written a poignant and funny account of his longstanding attempt to feel at home there. The happy result of his struggle to come to terms with the region's landscape, customs, and history is a thoughtful meditation on the charms and challenges of an obscure part of the world that some of us, no matter where we ended up, still call home."

—**Jeffrey Hammond**, author of *Ohio States: A Twentieth-Century Midwestern* and *Small Comforts: Essays at Middle Age*

"Claude Clayton Smith has lived the center of his life in Ohio, and he's talented, friendly, and wily enough to be a true buckeye. Even though he wasn't born in what he calls 'the Ohio outback,' he's grown to feel enough at home in it to write these pieces with his usual wit and clarity. They are an enjoyable read."

—**Paul Zimmer**, winner of the 2005 Ohioana Book Award for *Trains in the Distance*

"Claude Clayton Smith writes of his adventures in the countryside of northwest Ohio with a bemused humor that fans of James Thurber (one of his heroes) and Dave Barry will appreciate. Natives may think that only an immigrant like Smith would find cottonwood fluff, horseflies, driveway gravel, woodlots, cicadas, feisty red squirrels, and birds that attack picture windows so exotic. But his perplexed celebration of his struggles to coexist with these—and much more—reminds us all just how much strangeness lurks within the everyday."

—**Jeff Gundy**, author of *Trees* and *Scattering Point: The World in a Mennonite Eye*

"*Ohio Outback* is a breezy mix of Smith's previous articles and book excerpts folded into his memoirs based on life in a small college setting. It's a paean to life in Ohio's small towns and rolling farmland, outback territory found far away from the maddening interstates that bleed the character out of rural America."—**Jim Sielicki**, *The Toledo Blade*

The Kent State University Press

Kent, Ohio 44242

www.kentstateuniversitypress.com

ISBN 978-1-60635-054-6



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