

3-1967

East Texas Colloquy

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Tell us how this article helped you.

Recommended Citation

(1967) "East Texas Colloquy," *East Texas Historical Journal*: Vol. 5: Iss. 1, Article 11.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj/vol5/iss1/11>

This Colloquy is brought to you for free and open access by SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in *East Texas Historical Journal* by an authorized administrator of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu.

EAST TEXAS COLLOQUY

ARCHIE P. McDONALD

A number of fine books have been published in the past few months dealing with the history of East Texas, or have been published in eastern Texas but treat matters of a broader nature. In keeping with the policy of this column to consider as many of these publications as possible, the following may be found helpful as brief descriptions of the scope and merit of those discussed.

Two recently published books deal with the life of the cowboy as he lived not only in East Texas but in the entire West. *The Cowboy*, written by Vincent Paul Rennert and published by the Crowell-Collier Press in its *America in the Making* series, is an interesting and informative juvenile book. It treats the various topics of cowboy life with realism and sophistication, although the latter is couched in a vocabulary which would be appropriate for the younger teen-age group. Rennert claims to have written his book because the accounts of cowboy life most available to the group for which he is writing are distorted. The usual description ". . . of the old time cowboy is completely false on most counts and highly exaggerated on all the rest. Worst of all, it does not contain a hint of what the real cowboy did or why most boys dreamed of some day being cowboys too!!" (p. 1.) So he sets out to present the "real" life of the cowboy. From the origins of the term and the profession, he discusses the clothes, guns, horses, range, and other obvious aspects of the cowboy. His moving theme is the trail drive, begun with a round-up and ending with the delivery of the beef to market. Rennert's overly moralistic conclusion only slightly mars an otherwise fine book for its intended age group. His pictures are excellent, although in black and white only; his bibliography is broad and sufficient; and a glossary, unfortunately located at the end instead of the beginning of the book, should provide even the most uninitiated with a working vocabulary for the book.

The cowboy is the principal hero of another recently published book. *The Sunny Slopes of Long Ago*, edited by Wilson W. Hudson and Allen Maxwell, was published by the Southern Methodist University Press for the Texas Folklore Society. *Sunny Slopes* is volume XXXIII in the Society's publication. It is another in a series of unofficial eulogies to the late J. Frank Dobie, and doubles as a memento to the late John A. Lomax. Both, of course, were long associated with the Society. The title of the book is derived from a favorite toast of Lomax, and the volume begins with Dobie's commenting on Lomax, a printed version of a speech made by Dobie at the dedicatory unveiling of J. Anthony Wills' portraits of Lomax on April 18, 1964. Its personal revelations of Lomax, particularly a story regarding his feelings about President Franklin D. Roosevelt, make this piece, done in typical Dobie style, the justification of tears and belly laughs.

Lomax's "Cowboy Lingo" provides the same service as Rennert's glossary for a more sophisticated audience. It is more complete, and much more precise and explanatory in most of the terms utilized, and it is obvious that Rennert has read his Lomax. Lomax observes that the cowboy's vocabulary, although limited, was colorful and adequate. Some words had different meanings when used by the cowboy, a master at understatement, and he often made new words or combinations of words to suit peculiar needs. Eugene Manlove Rhodes' "The Cowboy: His Cause and Cure," is slightly mistitled. It is an explanation of what a cowboy is and what his life is all about. Rhodes' discussion, for instance, of the cowboy's attitude toward employment and his obsession with professional dignity, present a side of the western hero seldom seen. Paul Patterson continues the same thought in "The Cowboy's Code." Several other interesting articles grace this fine volume. Mody C. Boatright's "The Cowboy Enters the Movies" is an analysis of various plots and treatments of the cowboy by Hollywood during the days of silent motion pictures. In "Billy The Kid, Hired Gun or Hero," John O. West tries again to put this psychopathic killer into perspective and to bring reality to replace legend in his historical evaluation. John Q. Anderson's "Saved from a Bullet; Miraculous Escapes from Death" considers the brush of angel's wings which many a westerner experienced, particularly the many who were saved by a Testament or Bible which stopped the bullet which would have otherwise meant death; and Francis E. Abernethy's expert story-telling makes "Running the Fox" both interesting and highly amusing.

Other fine selections feature the writing of Andy Adams, Everett A. Gillis, Jan H. Brunvand, James Ward Lee, Jack Solomon, Roger P. McCutcheon, and Wilson M. Hudson. Finally, William D. Wittliff has contributed Dobie's observations on Folklore, and several photographs of Dobie also grace the book.

Southern Methodist University Press has recently published another book of interest to Texas history buffs. John Q. Anderson has edited *Tales of Frontier Texas, 1830-1860*, including some sixty-five selections, all of which were previously published but in obscure or now unavailable places. Many were originally published in eastern newspapers or in English or Scottish papers. All are contemporary, but some have been reprinted previously, although not in the present century. Anderson's editing, as always, is restrained and tasteful. The selections are divided into the following general categories: "The Land of the Lone Star," "Varmits and Mustangs," "Texans," "Heroes, Big and Small," "Rangers and Soldiers," "Tales, Tall or True," and "Jokes and Jokers." The story tellers include Noah Smithwick, John C. Duval, and Bigfoot Wallace, among others, and many that are anonymous.

A different kind of book than the above is William Seale's biography of a *Texas Riverman, The Life and Times of Captain Andrew Smyth*. *Texas Riverman* was published late in 1966 by the University of Texas Press. Seales' principal source for this biography was the bulging contents of an old steamer trunk belonging to Smyth, who was his ancestor. The trunk,

with its valuable contents, was haphazardly preserved until eventually it was made available to Seale, who used it to prepare a Master of Arts thesis and ultimately this book. *Texas Riverman* relates the story of Captain Andrew Smyth from his native Alabama to his eventual establishment as a businessman-sailor during the steamboat era of American and Texas history. Its import is broader than the story of a single man, however, since he is really a prototype of a now extinct breed of men who plied the inland waters of the nation. The riverman performed a valuable if transitory service to the development of American social and economic history, and richly deserve the notice they are winning in recent historical publications such as this one. (See "River People," by William Seale on Page 43 of this *Journal*.)

A growing center of historical publication in East Texas, although it is situated on its geographic border, is the Hill County Junior College Press, located at Hillsboro. Director Harold B. Simpson has made available the following information concerning the Press, which will be of particular interest to those interested in military history and the role of Texas in the Civil War.

The Hill Junior College Press was established in July, 1964 by the Board of Regents of the College, with Harold B. Simpson, a retired Air Force Colonel, as Director. It employs college students for much of its office work, and subcontracts the actual printing to the Waco firm which also performs this service for the Texian Press. The binding is done by the Library Binding Company, also of Waco. Simpson is in charge of selecting manuscripts, proofreading, indexing, advertising, and marketing the books. Simpson stresses that the Hill Junior College Press is independent and not connected with Texian or any other Press.

Present plans call for the continuation of the scheduled publication of two titles a year, mainly concentrating on Texas Confederate history. The Press is not opposed to considering straight Confederate history, however. Thus far they have published the following three books: *Touched With Valor: Civil War Papers and Casualty Reports of Hood's Texas Brigade*, which was compiled by General Jerome B. Robertson. Simpson edited the work and added a brief biography of Robertson. *Texas in the War, 1861-1865*, also edited by Simpson but written by General Marcus Wright, CSA; and *Robert E. Lee*, by Jefferson Davis, with notes by the Director. Scheduled for future publication are "Hood's Texas Brigade in Poetry and Song," and "Twilight in Grey: The Story of Hood's Texas Brigade." The Hill County Junior College Press always prints a limited edition for collectors and private libraries in leather. It enjoys an international distribution.

The Davis biography of Lee was available for review. It is a handsome little volume of eighty pages, containing a brief introduction by Editor Simpson explaining some of the more inobvious aspects of the association between author and subject, the short biography itself which was originally published in the *North American Review* in 1890 and in the *Southern Historical Society Papers* in the same year, a lengthy section of notes,

an appendix of one letter each between the two principals, and a bibliography. A photographic section at the center of the book provides both standard and previously unpublished portraits of Lee, including a death mask.

At its Spring, 1966, meeting in Commerce, the Board of Directors of the East Texas Historical Association authorized the announcement of an unusual Essay Contest to be sponsored by the *East Texas Historical Journal*. The contest will be primarily oriented to students in the secondary schools of East Texas, but essays on historical topics dealing with East Texas will be accepted from all interested parties. Members of the association who are teachers are especially urged to encourage their students to compete in this contest. The rules are simple and the object is obvious: to encourage by competition an appreciation for and a participation in the writing of East Texas history. In order to be considered for the first round of competition, all essays must be in the office of the chairman of the judges committee on or before July 1, 1967. They should be neatly typed, no longer than ten pages, and adequately documented for accuracy. Entries cannot be returned unless a stamped, addressed envelope is provided; they should be mailed to East Texas Essay Contest, c/o Archie P. McDonald, Box 6223, SFA Station, Stephen F. Austin State College, Nacogdoches, Texas 75961. The winner will be announced at the Fall meeting of the Association, 1967, and the winning essay may be published in the Spring issue of the *East Texas Historical Journal*. All entries will be considered for publication.

In the days before political administrations could be evaluated by the frequency with which their names appeared on the superstructure of bridges, river and creek crossings were effected only with difficulty and inconvenience. Fords were found early for those streams that were shallow enough to allow them, but many continued to present an impediment to transportation that remained until relatively modern times. The progress that filled the gap between the ford and modern bridging was ferriage. More than a business, it could become a way of life for the ferryman who took a professional pride in his equipment and service. It was, however, cloaked sufficiently with the public interest to require some regulation. Thus G. B. Burr appeared before the May term of the Newton County, Texas, Commissioners Court in 1855 to secure permission to operate a ferry over the Sabine River, and provide one more avenue for the migratory drain from Louisiana. The proceedings of the meeting are recorded in the Court Minutes, Volume A, page 95, and specify not only location, but also contain a very interesting price scale:

Mr. G. B. Burr appeared and applied for a license to keep a ferry across the Sabine, said licence only to extend to such stage of water as that which will permit persons desirous of crossing to come to the bank of the river on this side and presented a list of charges for ferriage which he wishes to have adopted for his ferry.

On motion of Mr. Marshall ordered that a licence be granted to Mr. Burr to keep a ferry across the Sabine opposite the mouth of Pearl Creek upon his paying to the Treasurer of Newton County the sum of fifteen dollars and giving bond for one thousand dollars and that he be authorized to charge the following rates of ferriage.

Each wagon or carriage drawn by one horse or other animal50
two horses or other animal75
more than two	1.00
each foot man12½
each horse man25
Each Negro except drivers of wagons10
Horses & cattle each per head10
Hogs & sheep5
