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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Lone Stars and State Gazelles: Texas Newspapers Before the Civil War.

Every "ink stained wretch" in Texas, whether currently practicing the craft or not, owes a debt of gratitude for this exhaustively researched history of newspapering before 1861. So, too, do students of Texas history in general for the overview it provides on the forces which shaped a revolution, the republic and the state before secession. In a strictly parochial sense it also is a splendid shelf companion for Donald Reynolds' Editors Make War, a volume which details the influence of the southern press in the decisions which led to secession.

As a former newspaperman, this reviewer found a particular delight in some of the word portraits of nineteenth century editors. These are the kinds of stories which are told when newsmen gather over coffee—or something stronger—and which seldom find their way into print. As might be expected, these men (no ladies of the fourth estate then) came in a wide assortment of physical, mental and moral attributes. By their courage, their vision and their energy they shaped a press which today bears little resemblance to that of the last century but owes much to it. That the work is so pleasingly literate is a bonus.

Of particular interest is a checklist of all newspapers published in Texas from the colonial period forward, along with dates of publication, names of editors, editorial position and changes in name.

The book's title bears testimony to the frequency with which news sheets of the last century bore the name "Star" or "Gazette." A check of Editor & Publisher reveals that fifteen weekly and other less-than-daily newspapers still use the name "Star" either alone or in combination, while only one daily perpetuates the name. Of the fifteen, surely the ultimate accolade must go to The Rising Star of Rising Star. Interestingly, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram in 1983 initiated a slogan, "Reach for a Star," which seems to imply a return to the emphasis which early owners attached to the title.

Publication of this book was made possible in part by grants from Harte-Hanks Communications, Inc., and the Southland Division of St. Regis Paper Company, both major influences on newspapering in this century. Appreciation goes to them as well as Dr. Sibley for this major contribution to the literature.

Max S. Lale
Marshall, Texas

David Weber brings together in admirable fashion the extensive secondary literature on the “American Southwest Under Mexico,” that region from Texas to California which was Mexican in 1821 but became U.S. Territory by the late 1840s. Treatment of this region has suffered, he feels, because Mexican scholars tend to ignore it as no longer part of their country and U.S. historians focus mainly on the involvement of Anglo-Americans there.

Weber documents Mexico’s loss of control over this vast region in the quarter of a century following independence. Indeed, one questions if independent Mexico ever really had control there. He notes that ignorance of conditions and chaotic Mexican politics kept the central government from responding effectively to the special problems of the Northern frontier. These problems included a growing Indian threat as the Mexican army occupied itself in political struggles in Central Mexico and Anglos traded arms to aborigines, the decline of the Church’s influence due to liberal attacks and government financial exactions, and a basic commercial reorientation of the periphery toward the burgeoning United States.

Texas suffered greatly during the Mexican War of Independence, making her unique among the frontier provinces in 1821. Military action occurring in Texas seriously retarded economic and demographic growth. Texas also experienced overwhelming commercial and social influences from the neighboring United States in the 1820s. What is more, Weber states, Mexican officials throughout the frontier and especially in Texas often welcomed Anglo-American penetration as encouraging the recovery and vitality of their province, a regional rather than a national view. By 1830 effective Mexican control of Texas, always tenuous, no longer existed. The author correctly reminds us that the Texas Revolution and abortive uprisings elsewhere on the frontier in the 1830s reflected a broader Mexican reaction to the conservative centralists dominant in Mexico City after 1833. The restlessness of Anglo-American settlers and traders, a familiar separatist force on the frontier, operated within the larger struggle over provincial autonomy in the Mexican federation.

Weber’s book is lavish with illustrations and helpful maps. It contains a useful bibliographical essay as well as extensive and informative notes which will be of value to specialists.

D. S. Chandler
Miami University (Ohio)

Three basic themes—Spanish and Mexican land grants, alien cultural invasion, and armed conflict—permeate the contents of Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest. Interlacing the historical narrative with anthropological and sociological nuances of culture, peasantry, and Hispano attitudes toward land tenure, Robert J. Rosenbaum composed an intensely sharp treatise on the forceful protest and resistance by Spanish-surnamed Southwestern landowners against Anglo American encroachment and ascendancy in Texas, New Mexico, and California from 1848 to 1916.

In the context of cultural preservation rather than national designation, Rosenbaum utilized the term mexicano to identify native borderlanders whose ancestors colonized the region long before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo drastically altered their lifestyles and property rights. Using Texas and California as caliper stages, narrowing the scope of discussion to the exploits of mounted protesters circumspectly called social bandits, the author reserved the central arena to describe and analyze violent resistance in the Land of Enchantment.

As a skillful advocate marshalling every strand of available evidence for a persuasive argument, Rosenbaum examined six stellar episodes of resistance (in Texas, Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, Gregorio Cortez, and Los Sediciosos; in California, Tiburcio Vásquez, Joaquin Murrieta, and Juan Flores) and evaluated them against a three-fold standard of analysis: mexicano resistance in general, salient cultural differences between Anglo Americans and mexicanos, and ethnic and pluralistic diversity in the United States. An inescapable conclusion in Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest is the rejection of a prevalent stereotyped belief that Mexican American history is without dynamics. According to Rosenbaum, the perpetration of violent acts by mexicanos in defense of their vested interests (property and culture) nullified the Anglo American perception of passivity and fatalism. Paradoxically, the mexicanos' resistance occurred within the parameter of the celebrated American principle of self-determination.

The main thrust of Rosenbaum's study is New Mexico, primarily the region east of the Rio Grande. Beginning with tensions emanating from the growth of the inaccurately misnamed Maxwell Land Grant, proceeding with the Lincoln County War, and concluding with the fence-cutting tactics of Las Gorras Blancas (The White Caps) in San Miguel County, the author carefully traced the metamorphosis of resistance from physical violence to self-preservation through politics.
In the summation, Rosenbaum widened the focus of *mexicano* political accommodation to include 20th century phenomena. So long as allusions to modern political developments were natural transitions or continuations of late 19th century movements his interpretation retained cohesive validity. However, in an attempt to provide wider perspective, the author incorporated into the theoretical framework a running commentary of post-World War II events that seriously weakened the merit of his cogent thesis.

It is quite obvious that Rosenbaum devoted ample time and energy to this scholarly enterprise. Even so, the intensity and longevity directed to it probably dulled his literary talent. Besides a few glaring typographical errors (such as Gerro for Guerrero, page 33), the style suffered considerably from repetitive, overworked phrases.

Another shortcoming was the author's inclination to apply the peasant society theory to the Hispano experience in the borderlands, complemented by the arbitrary decision to group inhabitants into *ricos* and *pobres*. Since ownership of property was the most visible sign of status, is it not likely that *mexicanos*, although dollar poor, were land rich? Without such acknowledgment, Anglo American land-grabbing that precipitated much of the violence becomes meaningless.

Overall, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest* is a benchmark contribution to borderlands history. Robert J. Rosenbaum laboriously gathered loose threads of a paramount theme and weaved a variegated design of Spanish-surnamed settlers who struggled vigorously to preserve cultural values and lifestyles in their native land.

Félix D. Almaráz, Jr.
The University of Texas at San Antonio

*Juan Davis Bradburn, A Reappraisal of the Mexican Commander of Anahuac.* By Margaret Swett Henson. (Texas A&M University Press, Drawer C, College Station, TX 77843), 1982. Appendices, Bibliography, Index. P. 159. $9.50.

Early and late Texians have stereotyped Juan Davis Bradburn as a villain. He was a “jack ass,” said Stephen F. Austin; an “unprincipled renegade,” said Henry Stuart Foote; an “arrogant officer,” said T. R. Fehrenbach. Moreover, Bradburn, the American-born commander of the Mexican garrison at Anahuac in 1832, imprisoned William Barret Travis and almost provoked the Texan Revolution four years early.

In this book Margaret Swett Henson takes a fresh look at Bradburn. He was no democrat, she grants, but neither was he the despot pictured in traditional accounts. Rather, he was a career army officer
whose enforcing of national laws brought him in conflict with states' righters in Texas.

The book represents impressive research. Bradburn came from an obscure family, and he emerged from obscurity only because of his controversial role at Anahuac. The evidence is scattered and scanty, but Henson, assisted by John Clay, has tracked Bradburn relentlessly through filibustering expeditions and the web of Mexican politics. Most significantly, she uncovered his own account of events at Anahuac, which appears in an appendix.

Publication of the book coincides appropriately with the sesquicentennial of disturbances at Anahuac, and it represents the first salvo of revisionism as 1986 approaches.

Marilyn McAdams Sibley
Houston Baptist University


Lee Hall had experiences which would have been more than enough for several men. After coming to Texas from North Carolina in 1869, he fashioned a reputation of fearlessness and integrity and leadership. As a consequence he became city marshal at Sherman, then deputy sheriff at Denison, before being appointed a Texas Ranger. By 1877 his deeds warranted promotion to a captaincy whereupon he more than justified such recognition. After three years, however, he resigned because of a promise to his new bride to seek a less dangerous job. Yet as foreman for a 400,000 acre ranch bordering the Rio Grande in South Texas, he was once again an upholder of property rights and an administrator of justice, ever vigilant against Mexican cattle rustlers and Texas thieves. In the mid-1880s he became the Indian agent for the Anadarko Comanches in Oklahoma. After a rather stormy tenure he was forced out of public service, only to appear again as a soldier in the Spanish-American War. And in the twilight of his career he fought against the elusive Philippine rebel Amelio Aguinaldo—and almost captured him.

In this biography Dora Neill Raymond, who was head of the history department at Sweet Briar College in 1940, has also included interesting historical events upon which Lee Hall's life bordered. She has discussed encounters or meetings with such notorious gunmen as Ben Thompson and King Fisher. In detail she has told about the capture of Wes Hardin and Sam Bass. And in four chapters she has investigated certain aspects of the Spanish-American War and its after-
math, specifically the occupation of the Philippines by United States troops.

Because of the breadth and scope of this biography, the Oklahoma University Press has seen fit, after forty-two years, to reprint it for another generation of Americans. And to a certain extent their decision has merit. Ms. Raymond has researched her subject adequately; the writing is clear, although not exciting; and her biographical topic is undoubtedly an intrepid individual who either sought adventure or happened to become involved in dangerous episodes.

Ben Procter
Texas Christian University


This book is a regional history inspired by the author's interest in the life of Emory Rains. At age 29, Rains could neither read nor write. Jonas Harrison, an interesting character introduced in the book, was Rains' mentor and is credited with encouraging Rains to learn to read and write. Rains was judge of Shelby County as a young man, served as representative in the second, fourth, and fifth legislatures and as senator in the Eighth Legislature. He was a member of a committee appointed to select a capitol site and was a part of the Convention of 1845. During his distinguished career, Rains represented Shelby, Sabine, Panola, Wood, Upshur, and San Augustine counties.

Texas' history is reviewed in the book from Republic to statehood to Confederacy and back to statehood, calling attention to Rains' career and contributions as a Texas statesman.

Amis discusses the controversy of who originated the Homestead Law. This controversy stems from a lack of documentation, yet, as the title of the work indicates, Amis feels that Emory Rains fathered the Homestead Law. Others (A. E. Wilkinson in an article for the Southwestern Historical Quarterly and Frank Brown as recorded in the _Annals Of Travis County_, for example) share her conclusion that Rains successfully guided the Homestead Law through the upper house toward the end of the Third Congress.

Amis' work was hindered by the fact that Rains' collection of public papers was destroyed in a fire at the Rains County Courthouse in 1878. Although the book's organization lacks cohesion and the illustrations are not always pertinent, Amis presents a study of life in Texas during the days of Emory Rains (1800-1878).

Kenneth Ray Estes
Lufkin, Texas


Here are two books that are sure to be of interest to East Texans. After half a lifetime of reading historical works, I find two historical novels that finally portray a different view of East Texas life during the Reconstruction.

Although the volumes devoted to Texas gunmen is extensive, it would seem another book about gunfighting would be doubtful—without fresh insight—which James R. Parrish does, interestingly and vividly. A talented newspaperman and former college English professor, Parrish pays homage to his native Moscow. Making extensive use of folk tales, interviews and his own personal knowledge, Between Loaded Guns becomes a small, but complete story involving John Wesley Hardin.

It is a strong work that treats its characters with respect. There is also a postscript to inform the reader of what became of the central characters.

The text of Frank Smyrl’s Poley Morgan: Son of a Texas Scalawag, focuses on the central character, Poley Morgan, whose father, Frank Henry Morgan, became a part of the Union-imposed Reconstruction government in Smith County.

A grandson of Poley, Smyrl affectionately describes how a 14-year-old boy suddenly became the “man of the house.” With his father’s death in 1870, Poley was thrust into manhood, facing new responsibilities, adventures and experiences.

Smyrl’s work is enlightening and fresh. No historical novel I know gives such a clear picture of family, cultural and social life of East Texas during the post Civil War era.

Maury Darst
Galveston College
Centennial History of the Texas Bar 1882-1982. By Committee on History and Tradition of the State Bar of Texas. (State Bar of Texas, P.O. Box 12487, Austin, TX 78711), 1981. Index. P. 292. $25.00.

For the past thirty years there has been an increasing interest by Texas lawyers in self improvement. Continuing legal study enables the busy practicing lawyer to stay abreast of the many changes in our jurisprudence which occur almost daily through court decisions, statutory enactments and administrative regulations.

The Committee on History and Tradition of the State Bar of Texas has sponsored the publication of this volume under review which is made up of eleven well-written essays. The authors are practicing lawyers, former judges and law professors.

There are articles on the history of the Texas Bar Association and the State Bar, books written and used by Texas lawyers, law licensing and legal education in Texas, a history of the Texas courts, and two articles authored by our leading Texas authorities on the civil law of Spain and Mexico and its influence on Texas jurisprudence.

The most entertaining essay is about lawyers themselves—"The Colorful and Flamboyant Lawyers of Texas" by Traylor Russell.

This book is recommended not only for Texas lawyers and legal scholars, but for anyone interested in Texas history as well.

Cooper K. Ragan
Lawyer, Houston, Texas

A Chronological History of Smith County, Texas. By Donald W. Whisenhunt. (Eakin Press, P.O. Box 23006, Austin, Texas 78735), 1983. Index. $10.95.

There are certain years for which all of us have an affinity: our birthdays, our wedding anniversaries, the dates of our high school graduation, and so on. And, invariably, we have a curiosity about what happened on those days.

For Smith County residents who have been stricken with the "date nut" malady, Donald W. Whisenhunt has produced the perfect book: "A Chronological History of Smith County, Texas," a meticulous compilation of events which have occurred in the county since 1690.

Whisenhunt's book is not designed for reading in a narrative fashion. Instead, it was written largely for reference. But it is also a superb book for browsing through the recorded history of Tyler and Smith County.
Thumbing through the pages, you discover all sorts of remnants which have gone into the makeup of the county's character. For example, during the same month in 1919, Ralph W. Yarborough, later to become a U.S. Senator, graduated from Tyler High School, and the circus scheduled for the city was cancelled because the streets were presumably too muddy for passage. Yarborough was likely delighted that he graduated from high school, but we'll wager he was disappointed that the circus didn't make it.

"A Chronological History of Smith County, Texas" was published through the efforts of the Jack T. Greer Memorial Fund of the Smith County Historical Society in Tyler. Whisenhunt, a former history professor at the University of Texas at Tyler, is a former president in the Smith County Historical Society and has long been active in the East Texas Historical Association.

Bob Bowman
Tyler, Texas


With this effort, George W. Bomar, a meteorologist with the Texas Department of Water Resources, has written a timely, informative volume. Long time residents of Texas may well think they know all they care to know about Texas weather. This reviewer, for example, has enjoyed about all that Texas weather has to offer. He once survived what seemed like a continuous forty-day dust storm in Lubbock. During some of those days, it rained mud. Another time, his house in Commerce got so cold that the water in the john froze. Once, near San Angelo, he was caught in a "whirly-devil," and no matter which way he ran the spiraling "devil" wind seemed to chase him. Yes, this reviewer has thoroughly enjoyed Texas weather. And, to be fair—not to mention serious—this reviewer has experienced many, many a good day, too.

Even to this survivor, however, Bomar's book is informative because he explains all the "why's" of the state's sometimes peculiar and certainly diverse weather patterns. Whether he talks about fronts, hurricanes, or clear, pleasant skies, Bomar gets to the "why." Most seriously, from the 1900 hurricane that devastated Galveston to the tornado that smashed into Paris in 1982, the state's most memorable catastrophes are chronicled and illustrated. Serious readers can learn how best to protect themselves from such catastrophes. Moreover, this book assumes added importance when one considers that thousands of
non-Texans are discovering and moving to the great "sun belt," of which Texas is a part. Thus this book will be especially helpful to all the greenhorns who are moving into the state.

Overall, *Texas Weather* is an entertaining and informative guide to the pleasures, puzzles, and problem of weather in the Lone Star state.

James Smallwood
Oklahoma State University


Beaumont, Texas has been called one of the fastest growing cities in America. With its economy booming while the rest of the country suffers financial reversal, Beaumont is an attractive prospect for young people interested in careers, especially in the field of business.

The authors portray Beaumont as the product of mixed cultures and customs. From the first chapter, which deals with the early pre-historic history of Beaumont, to the last chapter, a listing and description of the industries of Beaumont, the book reads like a hymn of praise. The authors’ writing style lends itself to tongue-in-cheek humor, as is indicated by their description of why the Attakapa Indians, the first residents of the Beaumont area, wore alligator oil on their bodies. The accepted reason is that they wished to repel mosquitoes. Linsley and Rienstra, however, suggest that they only succeeded in repelling early explorers and missionaries.

The book is well illustrated with an average of three photographs per page, over two hundred in all. Chapter IX is composed entirely of colored photographs showing both the beauty and growth of the city. All photographs were researched and presented by Wesley Norton.

Two chapters in the book are particularly interesting. Chapter III deals with Beaumont's part as a coastal port in the Civil War, and Chapter V is concerned with the eruption of the Spindletop gusher and its consequences. The influx of people into the city and its instant millionaires changed the character of Beaumont forever.

This history of an attractive city is both informative and interesting. As a first book, the authors have been successful. The book is large and brightly colored, making it an attractive prospect for any library. The book is a tribute to a city which deserves such recognition.

J. M. Tanner
Burkeville, Texas
Lambshead Before Interwoven: A Texas Range Chronicle 1848-1878.
By Frances Mayhugh Holden. (Texas A&M University Press, Box C, College Station, TX 77843), 1982. Addenda, Notes, Bibliography, Index, Illustrations. P. 230. $15.95.


Although Interwoven was previously published in limited editions, first in 1936 and subsequently in 1958, the third publication by the University of Texas at Austin Press in 1974 was the first time this important historical-autobiographical book has been readily available to the reading public. Presently republished as a companion volume to the first publication of Lambshead Before Interwoven, these two volumes address the history of the Lambshead range along the banks of the Clear Forks of the Brazos River in Northwest Texas. The historical chronicle of the people and land in the Lambshead range during the period 1848-1878 is covered by Lambshead Before Interwoven; and by Interwoven beginning with the birth of the author, Sallie Reynolds Matthews, in 1863 through the birth of her youngest child in 1899.

Mrs. Frances Holden, wife of Texas historian and author William Curry Holden, traces the unfolding of events on this approximately fifty thousand acres, mostly located in Throckmorton and Shackelford counties, a short horse ride north of Fort Griffin. In 1849 Captain Randolph B. Marcy of the U.S. Army was one of the first white men to leave a written observation of the Lambshead portion of the Clear Forks. Mrs. Holden's recounting of the history of this topographically protected clear water valley and its cattle-rich grasslands concludes in 1878 with the vigilante killing of John Larn, husband of Mary Jane Matthews, which climaxed the violent conflict between cattle owners and cattle thieves in the Clear Forks area. Perhaps the recounting of John Larn's episode is what prompted Sallie Reynolds Matthews to have written the following in her foreword of Interwoven: "There were some tragic and harrowing experiences that have been purposefully left out. This family has not been exempt from trials and tribulations."

Interwoven is the chronicle of the "interweaving" of the Reynolds family and the Matthews family through marriage and descendants. As the book portrays the heritage of these two pioneer cattle ranching families from their arrival in pre-Civil War Northwest Texas through the turn of the century, the courageousness of their life style is reflected in the vibrant, warm, and refreshingly open writing style of Sallie Reynolds Matthews. With a profoundly personal homespun wisdom, she
sketches her life and times primarily at the request and for the benefit of her children and their children.

Duncan G. Muckelroy  
San Jose Mission State Historic Site  
San Antonio, Texas


Titanic Thompson was an expert gambler and con man who won—and sometimes lost—enormous sums of money on poker, golf, trap shooting, and various ingeniously conceived “propositions.” In 1909 sixteen-year-old farm boy Alvin Clarence Thomas left his native Arkansas to become a professional gambler, and as “Titanic Thompson” he spent the remainder of his life following the “action,” gravitating to cities throughout America where high rollers and easy money abounded.

Titanic first attained widespread notoriety when he was involved in New York’s sensational Arnold Rothstein murder trial. Although Titanic was merely a witness in this 1929 homicide case, during his often hazardous heyday he killed a total of five men with an ever-present .45 pistol. Partially because of his nomadic and unstable lifestyle he went through five wives: when he was fifty-four he married a sixteen-year-old and in his sixties he wed an eighteen-year-old. Throughout this hectic existence he gambled incessantly, always going to elaborate lengths to insure that the odds were in his favor.

Carlton Stowers has written Titanic’s biography, but the book is largely unsatisfactory. As a biography it is superficial and unreliable; there is no bibliography, no footnotes are provided, and the index is quite brief. Clearly the book is intended to be popular fare, and on every page the author has invented conversations between Titanic and his acquaintances. But this manufactured dialogue is stilted and unbelievable and, along with the lack of any documentation, creates a total lack of credibility.

I long have enjoyed Mr. Stowers’ sports columns, and he has several well-written non-fiction books to his credit. Obviously he was fascinated by the exploits of Titanic Thompson, but even though he has amassed a rich collection of anecdotes about high-stakes gambling, overall his book on the legendary gambler is a disappointing account of a promising subject.

Bill O’Neal  
Panola Junior College

Marvin Jones was a Texas congressman and federal claims court judge who played an influential role in shaping American agricultural policies, particularly during the 1920s and the Great Depression. A product of a north Texas farm, Jones was graduated from Georgetown (Texas) University and the University of Texas law school, practiced law in Amarillo, and was elected to Congress in 1916, where he became a protege of Sam Rayburn.

From the beginning Jones' congressional career revolved around the House Agriculture Committee, whose chairmanship he finally assumed in 1931. During the 1920s he became known as an advocate for the farmers of his district and the nation generally, as well as a tireless worker for the Democratic Party. Campaigning for Franklin Roosevelt, he became a close political associate of the President and authored legislation that was the forerunner of the Agricultural Adjustment Act. He successfully battled to keep supervision over farm credit and financing policies under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee rather than the House Banking and Currency Committee, and his congressional career culminated in the passage of the second Agricultural Adjustment Act in 1938, which was in many ways a movement to Jones' influence and political skills.

By this time Jones was anxious for a career change and particularly desirous of a federal judicial position. He finally secured an appointment to the United States Court of Claims in 1940. However, during World War II he was persuaded by FDR to take a leave of absence and serve as a top aide to James F. Byrnes in the Office of Economic Stabilization. Eventually Jones became War Food Administrator. Following the war he returned to the court of claims.

Jones was essentially a practical jurist who depended more upon common sense and fairness than upon the strict letter of the law in preparing his decisions. His most important decision was in a 1946 case which gave illegally dismissed federal employees the right to sue the government. His opinions were sometimes overturned, and probably his most important contribution to the court was his service as Chief Judge, during which he streamlined the court's administrative procedures and battled for greater financial support, culminating in the dedication of a new court building in 1967. By that time Jones had been semi-retired as a senior judge for three years, and he continued in that capacity until his death at the age of ninety-four in 1976.

May portrays Jones as an essentially conservative man who lived according to a rather vaguely-defined agrarian philosophy that was
significantly influenced by his rural background and strong Methodist religious convictions, political professionalism, and loyalty to the Democratic Party. One gets occasional glimpses of Jones' humor, but this book is dominantly concerned with the intimate details of the agricultural legislation and administrative and judicial activities of his professional life. Treatment of these matters is judicious and is based on thorough research. The book is well-organized and written in a clear narrative style. Jones comes off as an important, if uninspired, participant in the formulation of significant agricultural policies during the 1920s and 1930s. It is unfortunate, however, that the reader is not allowed a closer look at the man behind the public figure.

James E. Fickle
Memphis State University

The Conscience of the University and Other Essays. By Harry Huntt Ransom, (ed. by Hazel H. Ransom). (University of Texas Press, P.O. Box 7819, Austin, TX 78712), 1982. P. 105. $12.50.

Harry Ransom devoted a lifetime of service to the University of Texas, beginning as an Assistant Professor of English in 1935 and retiring as Chancellor of the System in 1971. In between he advanced through the academic ranks and held increasingly important administrative posts. He left his mark upon the university he served and upon higher education in his state.

This slim volume is a collection of speeches and written essays produced over a period of about seventeen years, including items such as a commencement address (the title essay), a number of essays written for the Texas Quarterly, and speeches delivered to special groups, such as an archival association. Whether originally prepared for public delivery or for publication, all share a gracefulness of speech that provides pleasurable reading.

All of the items in this volume were produced when Harry Ransom was in an administrative post. They reflect his thought concerning the essential nature of learning, in particular of higher education. This is not an administrative handbook in the sense that Ransom's attention, in these selections, is focused upon management techniques. Rather his thought is directed to the ends of education and to the role universities should occupy in our society.

A reading of the essays in this volume provides considerable insight into Chancellor Ransom's educational and moral values. He believed that the university, for example, was intimately involved in the fate of mankind. Thus, the university provides opportunity for the
pursuit of knowledge and an opportunity for the understanding of others. He understood the value of educational resources to the State of Texas and encouraged their expansion. "Educational Resources in Texas" could be read profitably by members of the state legislature and other elected or appointed leaders in the state. The state that did not place the proper emphasis upon education did so at its peril, Ransom said. "But one big fact should be kept straight," he warned, "for popular ignorance, for a state's undereducation, there can be no price but public ignominy."

Above all, The Conscience of the University portrays a man who was deeply humanistic. Indeed, his essay on the humanities, entitled "The Arts of Uncertainty," is especially thoughtful and compelling. It is, in fact, a masterful essay on the humanities, both in the university and without. These are the subjects, Ransom says, that confront man, and in confronting man are obliged to deal with the vague, the changeful, the unpredictable, etc. He challenges educators to provide the individual student, through the humanities, with a basis for understanding, a level beyond knowledge.

For educators or political leaders, The Conscience of the University is highly productive reading. It is also worthwhile for anyone who wishes to share the insights of an educator whose outlooks reflect the best of educational philosophy of our time. Especially this is a valuable book for university administrators, particularly presidents, who see their roles as primarily managers and tend to misplace, because of the pressures of the day, or the demands of budgets, the true purpose of university education.

William R. Johnson
Stephen F. Austin State University

James Ash has chosen to chronicle the story of William Warren Sweet's intellectual development and professional career because Sweet effectively created the study of the history of religion in the United States. In two decades at the University of Chicago William Warren Sweet built a library of source documents on American church history. He sent his students across the nation to teach the new discipline which he was in the process of creating.

Ash describes the narrow emotional and intellectual confines of Sweet's early years growing up in Baldwin, Kansas. From that restricted environment came Sweet's synthesis of American religious history. Professor Sweet was convinced that the frontier development of the United States marked decisively the future of the American churches. Those churches which best followed and served the westward expansion of the American population were the ones who became, in Sweet's estimation, the great American churches. Methodism, the church to which Sweet belonged, bore the standard for the other great American churches. These were strongly centralized denominational organizations which majored on the use of revivalism as a means to reach the frontier. The Methodist church was particularly blessed with an itinerant ministry and an Arminian theology. The former took the preacher everywhere and the latter made everyone a suitable candidate for church membership.

Sweet praised the Methodists, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and sometimes the Congregationalists. He ignored Catholics, Lutherans, and Jews. In a balanced fashion Ash comments on the contributions which Sweet made to the study of church history in the United States and the weaknesses of his synthesis.

The value of the book is enhanced with a foldout map of Baldwin, Kansas, an appendix presenting Sweet's retirement speech at the University of Chicago—Every Dog Has His Day and I've Had Mine—and another appendix which is Sweet's letter to President Harry S Truman opposing a diplomatic representative to the Vatican. There are extensive footnotes throughout the book and a thorough bibliography of works by and about William Warren Sweet.

Jerry M. Self
Director of Public Affairs
and Christian Life Committee
Tennessee Baptist Convention

An individual familiar with recent Southern Baptist history might very well read James Thompson’s book convinced that Thompson has his names and dates wrong. The cultural influences and internal struggles of the Southern Baptist Convention following World War I sent the Baptists stumbling and lurching across the pages of history as though in an awkward rehearsal for the 1980s.

Thompson’s very readable book describes the postwar attitudes in America molding the young Southern Baptist Convention and then chronicles the crushing of their optimism through a variety of controversies. The theme of the story seems to emphasize the Southern Baptist’s conviction that they are to evangelize the world, a conviction continually derailed by external circumstances and internal warfare. The enemies which thwart the evangelical fervor of the convention include the contesting of the social implications of the gospel; the fundamentalist against modernist bloodletting that victimized many of America’s churches during that decade; the struggles over the nature of the Bible and the value of scholarly research upon the Scripture; the controversy regarding evolution and its impact on the public schools; the dynamic although divisive nature of the personality of J. Frank Norris; the threat faced by provincial, rural, Protestant folk who saw their world turning urban and Roman Catholic; and the economic depression of the late 1920s which contributed mightily to the religious depression of American Christianity.

Thompson writes of Southern Baptists with considerable sympathy for their plight and respect for their diversity. His well researched writing describes the tensions existing between different factions of a large body of people made up of some of the nation’s leading scholars, a large portion of simple, God-fearing folk, and a few old grousers.

Thompson’s well thought out critical analysis of a pivotal decade in America’s largest Protestant denomination serves well to instruct us about influences within American Christianity, southern culture, and dynamic social issues which are very much alive today.

Jerry M. Self
Director of Public Affairs
and Christian Life Committee
Tennessee Baptist Convention

Most will wonder at the inclusion of Theodore Roethke and perhaps even William Stafford in a book entitled Fifty Western Writers. The wonder may move toward skepticism when the reader checks the Table of Contents for the likes of J. Frank Dobie, Ross Santee, Will Henry, Max Evans, Claire Huffaker, Elmore Leonard, Stephen Crane, or even William Sydney Porter—who do not appear. Unlike the professional writers of the Western Writers of America (Roundup, Editorial, January 1983), however, this reader is not willing to shuck what is here for what isn't. And he is plumb tickled at many who are included in the fifty. (Mark "regional colloquialism" over the inappropriate diction.)

Most avid readers of Western literature, and especially its teachers—those used to reading long bookjacket synopses and Reader's Digest excerpts in "original" student papers—are not used to looking at wolf teeth in gift horses' mouths anyway.

Fifty Western Writers, as its authors state, "is an introductory reference and research guide" to western American literature. As such, it more than fulfills its promise. Each section, written by a legitimate authority, contains an opening statement followed by "Biography," "Major Themes," "Survey of Criticism," and "Bibliography." Credentials are offered in an appendix on "Contributors."

The digest format seems, as in most comparable works, to effectively kill any attempt at style. But even with this restriction, a number of the contributions are downright well written. Noteworthy are chapters on Max Brand/Frederick Faust (William Bloodworth); Benjamin Capps (James W. Lee); Willa Cather (John J. Murphy); William Eastlake (Gerald Haslam); Vardis Fisher (Joseph M. Flora); Zane Grey (Gary Topping); Bret Harte (Patrick D. Morrow); Larry McMurtry (Kerry Ahearn); Eugene Manlove Rhodes (Edwin Gaston, Jr.); Mari Sandoz (Helen Stauffer); and Ruth Suckow (Leedice Kissane). Etulain's piece on Luke Short and Erisman's on A. B. Guthrie are also among the best of the fifty.

Fifty Western Writers is a literary reference tool; the digest or catalogue entry imposes severe limitations on contributors. The hyperbolic prefaces, the impersonality of the short fact-laden biographies, the pseudotechnical diction of the more academic pieces, and the general "sameness" of fifty pieces on fifty writers result from those reference book strictures. Notwithstanding these limitations, the work is a necessity—for scholars, students, teachers, and Western fiction buffs. It belongs on library shelves. It is not the last word (Haslam sees fit
not to include Eastlake’s book of verse in his bibliography, for instance); but it is the first word for anyone beginning a serious look at any of the fifty writers included.

Selections on Wallace Stegner (a matter of both McMurtry and Kesey), Gary Snyder, Ken Kesey, William Stafford, Robinson Jeffers, John Steinbeck, even Theodore Roethke, go a long way toward deprovincializing our Western treasures. But if Steinbeck, then why not Twain? And if Twain’s *Roughing It*, then certainly Whitman’s *Songs “of the Redwood Tree,” “of the Broad-Axe,” “of the Open Road.”* Surely a revised—and expanded—edition is called for. Perhaps the next time including Dobie, Santee, Crane, Henry Huffaker, Leonard; and not slighting Porter, or Charlie Russell, or Sam Clemens...

For the present, a large thank-you is due Erisman and Etulain.

Lee Schultz
Stephen F. Austin State University


There is a Southern character, a Southern caricature, a Southern tradition—then there is a Southern reality. That is harder to pin down. Because it includes a large mix of myth and mystique, of legend and lore, it evades precise definition.

No component of “the South” is more difficult to analyze than the Southern woman. Anne Goodwyn Jones implies that “the Lady” concept came to represent the best of the South. Yet how best to address the idea of such a woman? As regional or racial, feminist or feminine?

Because writing and letters historically have been so important to Southern women, literature seems an especially appropriate entree. The author selected seven prominent Southern writers to examine the issue: Augusta Jane Evans, Grace King, Kate Chopin, Mary Johnston, Ellen Glasgow, Frances Newman, and Margaret Mitchell.

These women wrote prolifically in an era spanning the final pre-Civil War days through the publication of *Gone With the Wind.* This age witnessed profound changes for American women of all regions. These authors wrote about ideals that often differed in popularity as well as writing quality. Jones notes in the Preface that these novelists tried to cope with their Southern experiences by writing. Such an
occupation—or avocation—in the South required special inner discipline and independence. As females in a socially regimented realm, women faced unique problems in “getting published” and as “serious.” Copyright difficulties, contract details, and royalty collections presented no end of headaches. Yet many women persisted. These seven women well exemplify such outer expression of that inner spirit.

Professional achievement often was considered inappropriate for females. Thus writing placed Southern women in direct opposition to “acceptable” socially prescribed norms. Conflicts were inevitable. The “hearth and home” strictures still receive overwhelming acceptance in the South. As Jones presciently notes, it came as no surprise that Southern legislatures so openly hostile to the Constitutional amendment for woman suffrage could be equally adamant against the ERA a half century later.

This author plows much new literary ground. Provocative questions are raised. Physical and psychic realms of the South are ably described. From all seven authors, a common theme emerged: a rebellious strength defying the Southern belle code of being obedient and ornamental.

This book can be read on two levels: first, as an adventure story that chronicles well the careers of these women, then as an important historical document. The presents of mind and presence of mind provided by these talented artisans—and the characters they created—appear on virtually every page. They offered an interesting relationship of the observer to the things observed. This shared theme of independence helps explain why Scarlett O’Hara was so popular, almost canonized by readers. She was a far different product of the mold. Nor was it accidental that her friend Melanie Wilkes became a heroine for millions of readers: a classic example of a steely Southern woman thinly veiled in fragility.

Jones transports the reader into many different stories via vivid passages and correspondence of these women. Especially admirable is her long chapter on Margaret Mitchell. It raises many new ideas. With the exception of Ellen Glasgow, she probably is the author most familiar to readers of this book. In a letter quoted from 1936, Mitchell may provide a central theme for this book. Noting the tightly defined gender roles, she commented that many Southern women were actually outspoken and shocking, “But they never got too old to be attractive to the gentlemen.” (p. 326)

In an overwhelmingly visual era such as ours, it is refreshing to find a volume with minimal photography and such lucid writing. Likewise, these authors knew well the essence of language in eras before
theatre and film made us so visually oriented. Often I found myself reading special sentences aloud to savor their quality. This volume is enhanced by attractive printing, elegant binding, imaginative illustrations, and forty pages of estimable documentation. The cover photograph choice of “Spanish moss”—evoking an unchanging Southern civilization—is especially clever. An important addition to this volume would have been a literary map devoted to these novelists and their interrelated penned territories. A glossary of other Southern women writers of this time span, well-known or not, would have been helpful. Nonetheless the book is consistently powerful. This ambitious achievement has succeeded. The reader is amply rewarded by impeccable scholarship which dissects so much so well. We are unlikely to see soon another so commendable study of this subject. Its contents and author deserve much attention. The proof lies within this book jacket.

Staley Hitchcock
Union Theological Seminary
Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You. By David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty. (The American Association for State and Local History, 708 Berry Road, Nashville, Tennessee 37204), 1982. Photographs, Appendices, Acknowledgements, Picture Credits, Index. P. 300. $15.95 ($11.95 to AASLH members).

Can we bring together professional and amateur historians to provide a balanced while satisfying interpretation of the past? If this feat is possible, surmounting mutual suspicions and different priorities, perhaps the common meeting ground is local history.

Midwestern historians David E. Kyvig, an Iowan archivist, and Myron A. Marty, an Illinois community college instructor now with the National Endowment for the Humanities, offer a useful guidebook to the study of “nearby history.” The work is a product of fellowships at the Family and Community History Center of the Newberry Library in Chicago.

Kyvig and Marty suggest a range of possibilities for research focusing on the family, community, and material culture where one may examine change over time as reflected in one’s immediate environment. Admitting in the preface that their work is introductory and superficial, the authors offer a lengthy bibliography for readers who require greater depth.

Practical, specific suggestions abound, including examples of current projects, sample forms, addresses, lists of questions to raise, methods for evaluating evidence collected, and means of organizing and sharing data. It is an ambitious yet modest and helpful volume.

Two chapters on documents, published and unpublished, chapters on oral and visual documents, another on artifacts of the material culture contribute to the comprehensiveness of the work. There is a whole chapter on historical storytelling, how a historical story is built from inquiry to description to interpretation. Suggestions are made for fitting the local experience into the larger historical context. A section on historical preservation issues and one on writing and leaving a record complete Nearby History which should have wide appeal and usefulness to those interested in the capture and preservation of the local past.

Susanne Starling
Eastfield College

Robert M. Denhardt is the modern day historian of the American Quarter Horse. Since he helped organize the American Quarter Horse Association in 1940, he has written the authoritative books on this breed including the three volume set, The American Quarter Horse, (1941-50). He edited a 1949 edition of R. B. Cunninghame Graham's classic work, The Horses of the Conquest and has written The Horse of the Americas, (1947); Quarter Horses: A Story of Two Centuries (1967); and The King Ranch Quarter Horses: and Something of the Ranch and the Men That Bred Them (1970). He has recently written The Quarter Running Horse: America's Oldest Breed (1979), and has now compiled this book which is a companion volume to Foundation Sires of the American Quarter Horse published in 1976.

Bob Denhardt's output of information on the American Quarter Horse has been nothing short of prodigious. While it has been enough to satisfy even the most avid fan of the breed, each book he produces continues to add valuable information about the history and development of this remarkable horse.

The first eighty pages of the book evaluate the relative importance of the dam and the sire in producing a foal and then contains a narrative in which the foundation dams are divided into four eras beginning in 1700 and ending in 1940. The remainder of the book is a "Foundation Dam Registry" wherein the author names each of the foundation dams he has identified adding a few lines of information about each mare.

As has been true with all of Denhardt's books, Foundation Dams of the American Quarter Horse contains much grass roots history and furnishes the reader with an insight into the interests of rural Americans of the 18th and 19th centuries. Horse historians and Quarter Horse breeders are indebted to Bob Denhardt for another valuable book on the breed. Without it, most of the information contained in this book would be lost for all time.

F. Lee Lawrence
Tyler, Texas
The Compassionate Samaritan: The Life of Lyndon Baines Johnson.

There have been more than a score of biographical treatments of Lyndon Johnson. As do all of the Johnson biographers, Rulon asks the question, "What forces shaped and colored the actions and thought of Lyndon B. Johnson, and how, in turn, did he affect the age that produced him?" That question is asked with special reference to educational policy. The result is an interesting framework where Rulon attempts to tie the life and values of Johnson to the educational initiatives of the Johnson Administration. The framework is an unusual and promising one for a biography, but ultimately it is an effort that fails.

The book becomes, after an interesting and useful description of Johnson's early life, a political biography that shows remarkable political naivete. Congressman, Senator, and President Johnson was limited by external political pressures and influences. There were political debts to pay, interest groups to reward and punish, and votes to cultivate. Yet the political environment in which Johnson operated is largely ignored. Policy is explained not in terms of the interaction of political personality and political environment, but mostly as the effect of a political personality. With Rulon's framework, Headstart is developed because Johnson started school at four; the Job Corps because Johnson had trouble getting a job in his youthful trip to California; Guaranteed Loans because Johnson got a loan from a banker when he went to college; and the Teacher Corps because of Johnson's success in teaching Mexican American children in Cotulla. It may be that Johnson's personal experiences translated into educational policies, but there has to be more to it than that. Would, for example, such policies pass Congress in the 1980s? Why did they pass in the 1960s? Could it be that in addition to reflecting Johnson's values, important interests within the Democratic Party also benefited? Rulon should have taken to heart Johnson's comment to Richard Nixon, "Before you get to be president you think you can do anything. You think you're the most powerful leader since God. But when you get in that tall chair, as you're gonna find out, Mr. President, you can't count on people. . . . The office is kinda like the little country boy found the hoochie-koochie show at the carnival, once he'd paid his dime and got inside the tent: 'It ain't exactly as it was advertised.'"

One final point should be made. While the book is supposed to examine the Johnson Administration's attainments in education, there is little assessment of the impact of any of those programs. To understand how Johnson affected "the age that produced him" in reference
to educational policy, one must assess the impact of Johnson's policies. There have been several excellent studies of the effect of some of Johnson's educational programs—Head Start and school desegregation under the 1964 Civil Rights Act come readily to mind—but little effort has been made in this book to determine whether Johnson's policies made any difference in people's lives.

Anthony Champagne
The University of Texas at Dallas


This book gives a step-by-step method for using local history in the classroom. Local history is the record of a location, usually a town or area, of local interest. The authors, both teachers of local history, have pooled their knowledge to produce this book as an aid to others who are beginners in the field.

The authors show how to use records such as photographs to understand the past. There is a section on how to interpret photographs to get desired information. Forms and examples, based on the experiences of the authors, are provided. The same sort of aids have been provided for the various other records. This book does not claim to have covered all types of the records, but it does cover the major ones—public records, deeds, newspapers, church records and cemeteries.

For the benefit of the teachers, who will get the most use from the book, the authors have provided suggestions on the use of some information in classes other than history.

Beth Arganbright
Nacogdoches, Texas
The Best of East Texas II. By Bob Bowman. (Lufkin Printing Company, Box 589, Lufkin, TX 75901), 1983. Index. P. 93. $10.95.

About five years ago Bob Bowman started a lot of arguments in East Texas. He didn't do it on purpose, exactly, but anyone who tries to tell East Texans that this barbeque stand is the BEST, or that that church has the BEST choir, he just naturally has got to be ready to prove it. A good many folks and places and events were flattered, and just as many became miffed about either being considered second BEST or not being included at all.

"Feller kinda fancies hisself, don't he?" East Texans asked, Chill Wills style, "Tryin' to tell us what's BEST!"

Well, Bob has made amends, or tried to, but likely he will start just as many arguments with Best of East Texas II, because he's meddling and preaching again. This time his volume is divided into four chapters—Foods, Places, People, Events—and he touts dozens of samples and examples for each. Since I was included in this volume (see page 61, please) as the Source of the Best Place to Gain Mainly From Wayne, why naturally this has just got to be called the BEST book on East Texas published so far this year, the BEST place to learn unique and interesting names for East Texas towns, the BEST travel guide to out-of-the-way places, the BEST food guide, and the BEST overall look at our region's folkways.

Now if you don't agree with that, Bowman has provided for you too. Even if you failed to be included in the text, he has provided end-pages with entry slots of your own making. He thought of everything: that way you can argue your point in print and not feel compelled to take it up with him directly.

Archie P. McDonald