Book Notes

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BOOK NOTES

James A. Michener's *TEXAS* helped us celebrate our Sesquicentennial a few years back, and despite roaming the world to continue his research and writing of other areas, Texas is now one of his "permanent" homes. And he continues to publish about Texas, witness *The Eagle and The Raven* (State House Press, P.O. Box 15247, Austin, TX 78761) published just last year. If memory serves, I believe this originally was intended as a chapter for his aforementioned book on our state. The story will be familiar to all of us, but offers some details that will enlighten and some interpretations that will cause you to ponder.

What makes this little book so interesting, and potentially so valuable to those who follow and admire Jim Michener (myself included), is his lengthy introduction to this book. Using the allegory of an old apple tree past bearing, into which a farmer drove rusty nails to stimulate production, Michener compared recent health problems to the farmer's nails as the source of urgency that caused him to produce several volumes of varying lengths over the past decade at a rate that was out of proportion to his previous record. And he opens a window into his philosophy of work and of life in this introductory essay. As usual, he is quick to credit many for their help, in this case especially publisher Debbie Brothers, who worked for him as a secretary while he wrote *Texas*. The present writer is proud to know both Michener and Brothers, and forgives them the minor transgression of assigning another of his friends, William Barret Travis, with an incorrect military rank. If you like Michener and you like Texas, you will like this book.

Association member and past president Bob Bowman of Lufkin has published another of his interesting observations about our region. After a successful series on "The Best" of nearly everything in East Texas, books of East Texas colloqualisms, and a restaurant guide, comes now *The East Texas Sunday Drive Book*. It is available from The Best of East Texas Books, Box 1647, Lufkin, TX 75901 (409—634-7444). Bob recalls the pleasure of his Sunday drives with his parents and siblings to various places in East Texas. Each recommended drive — thirty are included — is designed to take about a half-day and averages 120 miles. Roads designated usually are improved, even paved. Each suggests interesting places to visit or to see, and a recommended restaurant. Maps accompany each drive, but the author recommends that you carry an official highway map along as well. The author's advice on how to enjoy a Sunday drive: "Take it easy, don't worry about the time, and occasionally stop along the roadside to smell the flowers or listen to the birds."

Another friend of things historical, Bill Timmons of El Paso, has published an excellent history of his city. *El Paso: A Borderlands History*, by W.H. Timmons (Texas Western Press, El Paso, TX 79968-0633, $20). Bill, who taught the history of Mexico and the Southwest at the University of Texas at El Paso for many years, became "Mr. History" in his community several years ago — literally. As part of a grant to instill a greater appreciation for
history in El Paso’s schools and other organizations, Bill dressed up in costume and visited classrooms and club rooms to remind residents of their rich heritage. A good-natured rivalry between Bill and myself over which is older, Nacogdoches or El Paso, has produced a stronger friendship between us. Bill’s book is recommended highly for those who want to know more about the border Southwest, and about our state’s second-oldest city.

*Encyclopedia USA: The Encyclopedia of the United States of America, Past & Present,* volume 12, has just appeared. *Encyclopedia USA* is edited by Don Whisenhunt and published by Academic International Press, Box 111, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561. This volume contains a number of articles by East Texans, including topics of interest to East Texans. As a former editor of this publication, your Journal editor continues to enjoy an interest in this publication. It contains much useful information about our nation.

Lincoln King has sent along the latest issue of *Loblolly* (Winter, 1991). It is available for $3 from Lincoln at Gary High School, Box 189, Gary, TX 75643. This issue, which is produced by Lincoln’s students, is dedicated to World War II, especially the veterans of that conflict who live in Panola County.

Bill Groneman, *Alamo Defenders, A Genealogy: The People And Their Words* (Eakin Publications, P.O. Box 90159, Austin, TX 78709, $12.95), is, as its title suggests, a list of those who fought at the Alamo. After a two-page introduction, what follows is approximately 120 pages of biological data. A typical entry would include name, life dates, age at time of death in the Alamo, residence, military rank or duty, and a few words about the individual, with length determined by importance and/or availability of data. Another section quotes from letters or papers of the individuals. There are a dozen or so illustrations.

Malcolm D. McLean’s latest volume in the series of *Papers Concerning Robertson’s Colony in Texas,* volume XVI, is available from UTA Press, Box 190929, The University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX 76019-0929. This volume covers the period from August 10, 1837 through November, 1838. The volume was conceived, says McLean, as a simple task since he only intended to “tell what Sterling C. Robertson did in the Second Congress of the Republic...” However, he discovered that there were three sessions of the Congress instead of one, and that Robertson’s activities were more extensive than first thought. To substantiate titles under the new government to lands long claimed, he had, among other things, to sue President Sam Houston, work to establish the General Land Office, and pass several pieces of legislation. McLean’s book contains documents and data on the formation of counties, Robertson’s work on various committees, and involvement in the location of a seat of government. Those who have followed this series definitely will want to continue their study of it, and those who may be discovering it for the first time will want to write to McLean to find out about the previous volumes.