Book Notes
Texas presses keep producing interesting books. The *Journal* finds competent reviewers for most that come our way, but alas, sometimes only the editor is available to provide notice of them to our readers. That is the case with the following works:

*The Mystery of Lady Bountiful*, by Bob Bowman, Doris Bowman, and Edward Barrett (Best of East Texas Publishers, Box 1647, Lufkin, TX 75902, $32), became a labor of love for the Bowmans. That is the case with all of Bob’s nearly thirty books on the history and folklore of Texas, but this one, as they say, became “personal.” Bob and I travel a good deal to various meetings during the year, and each time he would share a new anecdote about Lillian Marshall Knox, alleged murderess but also generous benefactor to residents of Hemphill and East Mayfield. Tragedy seemed to follow Miss Lillian around. Those whom she nursed, or married, ended up dead, and somehow she benefited financially from their demise. But she spent more than she gained on others and ended up a pauper. My favorite story on Lillian Marshall Knox that Bob related in our travels was rooted in Bob’s and Doris’ love of research. After trips to various archives and locations of her alleged crimes and philanthropy, Bob finally located family members of Lillian Knox. They were reluctant to talk with him until Bob assured them that she really and truly had died in Illinois in 1966. Bob presented an excellent paper on Lillian Marshall Knox at the Association’s meeting in September 2002; those who missed it, or who want to know the “rest of the story,” will find a good account in *The Mystery of Lady Bountiful.*

Old Friend and Neighbor Joe Ellis Ericson’s *Early East Texas: A History From Indian Settlement To Statehood* (Heritage Books, 1540E Pointer Ridge Place, Bowie Maryland 20716), presents in modern form the story first told by George L. Crocket in *Two Centuries In East Texas* in 1932. Here are familiar accounts of early settlement in Nacogdoches and San Augustine, filibusters, the revolution from Mexico, and such postwar developments as the Cordovan Rebellion, the Cherokee War, and the Regulator-Moderator Feud. Concluding chapters focus on the legal system, medical services, and daily activities of the folk. Of special interest are several appendices that list East Texas congressmen, judges, lawyers, and physicians.

Bill C. Malone’s *Country Music, USA, Second Revised Edition* (University of Texas Press, Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819), returns in yet another verse. Malone “fathered” the field of the history of country music with the original publication in 1968, and a reissue in 1985. As the editions had progressed, the text has been increased to include chapters on bluegrass developments in the field through 2002. Growth in the bibliographic essay also testifies to the increasing number of researchers/writers who are interested in this genre of popular culture. My own interest in country music, which began with Roy Acuff and had pretty well run out by the time Willie and Waylon and The
Boys had taken over, is just one more evidence of the passing times. Obviously, country music is a vital entertainment form, and Malone is still the chief fiddler of its history.

One of my favorite East Texans is Bill O’Neal, anchor of history instruction at Panola College in Carthage. Bill has served ETHA as president and chairman of nearly every one of its committees; he is also one of the most prolific writers in the region. Bill’s latest, written with Bill Goodwin, is The Sons of the Pioneers (Eakin Press, P.O. Drawer 90159, Austin, TX 78709-0159). This follows Bill’s successful biography of Tex Ritter. His interest in Western movies is sufficiently broad to include the premier musical group associated with early movies starring Charles Starrett (The Durango Kid) and Roy Rogers, but also associated with “A” films such as John Ford’s “The Searchers” (1957). Some readers will be surprised to learn that Rogers himself, nee Leonard Slye, was a member of the Pioneers before his solo stardom, and that Pat Brady and Ken Curtis also sang with the group. To real aficionados, however, Bob Nolan remains the quintessential Pioneer – almost a star but really always a backgrounder whose support helped Rogers and others succeed. No other American singing group has lasted as long as the Pioneers, and no other group has achieved such synchronicity of “sound.” Even imitators sound good singing “Cool Water” or “Tumbling Tumbleweeds” because what we really hear in the mind is the original Pioneers.

More Basic Texas Books, by Mike Cox (Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library, Midland, Texas), continues a concept begun a century ago by C.W. Raines to identify the most worthy of books on Texana and the Southwest. The idea was advanced during the twentieth century by, among others, J. Frank Dobie, A.C. Greene, and, specifically, John Jenkins with his Basic Texas Books, published in 1983. Jenkins, says Cox, “anointed 224 non-fiction Texas titles as ‘fundamental Texas books, the works every general Texana library should include.’” The Texas State Historical Association published a new edition of Jenkins’ book, corrected, in 1988 and it is still in print. Comes now Cox’s More Basic Texas Books, or books he judges as “fundamental” as those cited by Jenkins but published subsequent to Jenkins’ work. Cox is a worthy successor to the late John Jenkins as a judge of Texana. Known for a number of years as the “voice” of the Texas Department of Public Safety, Cox used weekends prior to his retirement to develop the hobby that became a business as a bookseller, and he is regarded as one of the leading authorities on Texana. In More, Cox lists 126 additional basic books, and concludes with mild chiding of Jenkins for including a few obscure publications – one not in print since 1747—on his original list. Cox also indicates areas of needed research in Texana in a section titled “Future Basic Texas Books.” The reader is referred to Item 78 on page 40.

Robert Maberry Jr.’s Texas Flags (Texas A&M Press, in association with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 4354 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-4354), won ETHA’s Ottis Lock Award, the T.R. Fehrenbach Award from the Texas Historical Commission, and just about everything else for
which it was eligible. The focus is upon 109 illustrations and thirty-two superior color photos of flags associated with Texas' political affiliations and military organizations. The accompanying text provides information that is most useful, one could say crucial, to an understanding of the flags, but the illustrations of flags themselves provide the reason for the publication. Only a few people at a time could appreciate them in a museum setting; in these pages, all may see the vividness of color and learn about the governments and organizations these standards represented. Good book. Certainly every library needs a copy.

In the light of last year's flap over then Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott's half-century late endorsement of the presidential candidacy of Strom Thurmond, Kari Frederickson's The Dixiecrat Revolt And The End Of The Solid South, 1932-1968 (University of North Carolina Press, P.O. Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2288) is of special interest: it explains how a Republican such as Lott ever got elected to the Senate and could become majority leader. It is not surprising that race is a large part of the explanation. Any forum that helps us understand what is going on in the South is a blessing.

Davis W. Houck's FDR And Fear Itself: The First Inaugural Address (Texas A&M University Press, 4354 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-4354), traces the thought processes, motives, and goals ofBrains Truster Raymond Moley and Franklin D. Roosevelt's close friend Louis Howe, who framed and focused the president's most important inaugural address, indeed, one of the great inaugural addresses of all time. This study will be of value not only to students of history and forensics as well, for Roosevelt was one of the centuries' leading masters of the spoken word.

Behind The Walls: A Guide For Families And Friends Of Texas Prison Inmates, by Jorge Antonio Renaud, with photographs by Alan Pogue (University of North Texas Press, P.O. Box 311336, Denton, TX 76203-1336), is a sign of the times. Texas suffers the embarrassment of having one of the largest prison populations of any state or country in the world, which means we either have more criminals than others, that we criminalize more things than others do, or that we are putting our money on the wrong end of the education equation – or maybe all three. At any rate, though we do not like to think of such, doubtless some of the Journal's readers will find themselves standing at the prison door fishing for their driver's license and preparing to undergo the mandatory search before entering to see a loved one or friend. This guide will tell you what goes on "behind the walls" when you are not there; perhaps that will ease anxiety for some and create it for others. But remember, "The truth shall make you free."

Desert Sanctuaries: The Chinatis Of The Big Bend, by Wyman Meinzer with an introduction by David Alloway (Texas Tech University Press, P.O. Box 41037, Lubbock, TX 79410), is set far from East Texas, but the photos in this slender book are spectacular. Anyway, most of us visit the Bend sometime or the other and we should be aware of the rest of Texas, even the far part.

I am still trying to decide what I think about Growing Up Simple ...
Texas, An Irreverent Look At Kids In The 1950s, by George Arnold with Foreword by Liz Carpenter (Eakin Press, P.O. Box 90159, Austin, TX 78709-0159). Arnold, a retired advertising executive and confessed prankster, alerts the reader that some of his memoir of growing up “in between” the Great Depression Generation and the Baby Boomers may not be entirely accurate. I suspect most of it is truthful, that he did not bring up some of his escapades, and that at least some part of it was wishful thinking. I base this entirely on growing up just a few years earlier – Arnold became a high school graduate in 1960 while I crossed the boards six years earlier – and recognizing a dreamer. My principal was called “Dupsy” instead of “Lippy” behind his back, but I recognize nearly all in the cast of characters in Arnold’s story. They had clones in Beaumont. And nearly all of that is the truth. If you, too, did some growing up anywhere near that last “normal” decade, you will enjoy the memories Arnold’s story kindles.

In some ways similar, other ways vastly different, we have another “growing up in Texas” book by Red McCombs with Mickey Herskowitz, The Red Zone: Cars, Cows and Coaches (Eakin Press, P.O. Box 90159, Austin, TX 78709-0159). Red McCombs began life in Spur, and reveals that entrepreneurism hatched as early as his first effort to sell peanuts to migrant workers. From that beginning, McCombs developed a considerable fortune. He is sufficiently modest only to hint at his wealth, but it must be a considerable, and the subtitle tells us all about it. McCombs became one of Ford’s leading dealers, had a major role in resurrecting the longhorn breed in Texas as an investment, and twice owned the San Antonio Spurs, once owned the Denver Nuggets, and still owns the Minnesota Vikings. What the subtitled omits is McCombs’ role in founding Clear Channel Radio Network and investments in motion picture distribution and in oil & gas, and his considerable public service in behalf of Southwestern University, M.D. Anderson Hospital, and at-risk kids in San Antonio. McComb has lived a full life; it is obvious that he enjoyed it. If they make this one into a movie I hope they dye James Garner’s hair red and let him play the lead. Only a “maverick” could do justice to such a wheeler-dealer part.

Finally, Blackie Sherrod At Large, by Blackie Sherrod (Eakin Press, P.O Drawer 90159, Austin, TX 78709-0159, $24.95), reproduces seventy-eight columns Sherrod wrote for several newspapers, including the Dallas Times Herald and especially the Dallas Morning News. Subjects vary from moon shots to old-time sports reporters to war, but the fare always is Sherrod’s personal take on the topic. Sherrod proves himself a worthy wordsmith while delivering opinions on the Kennedy assassination, the media, filmmakers, or whatnot, and he uses what might be called the “O. Henry Surprise” technique quite well. Best of all, the group to which he frequently refers as “geezers” will have little difficulty understanding Sherrod’s point of view. Easy, and enjoyable read, that mostly reminds us of where we have been.