BOOK REVIEWS


The purpose of this collection of readings is to present a cross-section of life in Confederate Texas. The editor includes excerpts from first-hand accounts written by individuals who were involved in trying to live through those difficult years. The selections came from letters, diaries, journals, speeches, memoirs and reminiscences.

As is reasonable in such readers, the selections are arranged in chronological order, preceded by short introductions to keep the reader “briefed” on what is happening and why and where.

As Dr. Joe B. Frantz acknowledges in the foreword, the “collection here does not break new ground, but does give a judicious and handy collection of some of the basic corner-cleaning” which has been going on during the hundred years since the War.

James L. Nichols
Stephen F. Austin State College


The rise of Houston from a village of shacks and tents to its present status as sixth largest city in the United States has been due, at least in part, to its position as a port. This interestingly written and attractively illustrated study by Mrs. Marilyn McAdams Sibley is a history of the development of that port. Basing her work on a wide range of materials, reports of the Harris County Houston Ship Channel Navigation District, personal correspondence, newspaper files, and published secondary accounts, Professor Sibley has produced a welcome contribution to Texas and Southern history. It will probably be the standard account of the Port of Houston for years to come.

Situated some fifty miles from open water, Houston offered few advantages to the casual observer in competition to the port of Galveston which boasted a good harbor and an island location on the Gulf of Mexico. But Galveston’s location was also a prime cause for its decline as the chief port of entry for Texas. The entire island lay practically at sea level and it was repeatedly the victim of violent storms. Furthermore the most practical route to the Texas interior lay through Houston. In contrast, Houston was protected from the worst of Gulf storms, and became the center of the early state railroad net. The city’s promoters advertised Houston as lying at “the head of navigation” and Buffalo Bayou as the natural water route to the interior.

The author has focused attention both on the narrow, twisting, tortuous stream that was the Buffalo Bayou and on the men who envisioned its potential
as a salt water port. Beginning with John Kirby Allen’s bold venture in bringing the steamboat *Laura* up the Bayou to the foot of Main Street in 1837, a succession of civic leaders worked untiringly to convert the snag-filled Bayou into a navigable channel. Such entrepreneurs as William Marsh Rice and Paul Bremond joined with steamboat Captain John H. Sterrett and others to form the Houston Navigation Company, the predecessor of the Houston Direct Navigation Company which dominated traffic during the post-Civil War decades. Not until the city freed the Bayou from the control of Charles Morgan who had kept a chain across his canal through Morgan’s point and thus maintained a monopoly on traffic, did the federal government provide sufficient appropriations to deepen the channel for ocean-going vessels. Under the leadership of Ross Sterling, Jesse H. Jones, Tom Ball and others, the Houston Ship Channel was finally opened in 1914 amid speeches and festivities. Since that date Houston and its ocean traffic have grown rapidly until the Port of Houston now ranks as the nation’s third largest Port.

The study was commissioned by the Board of Navigation and Canal Commissioners of the Port of Houston to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Houston as a deep-water port. Written for the general reader, Mrs. Sibley’s book has nevertheless included sufficient statistics and tables to demonstrate the costs of developing the waterway and its economic impact on the city. The reader could wish for more attention to waterfront labor policies, unionization, strikes, racketeering, and the effects of air and water pollution. But these are relatively minor criticisms. Mrs. Sibley has written a fascinating account of the development of a great international trade artery from “a stream of very inconvenient size—not quite narrow enough to jump over, a little too deep to wade through without taking off your shoes.”

Robert S. Maxwell
Stephen F. Austin State College


As is obvious from the foregoing heading, the University of Texas Press has been doing a lot of “picture books” in the past year. Besides sharing an expensive price tag, these volumes also reveal a mutual concern for the cultural outlook of Texas and the Southwest, and they tell their story in pictures. Pictures, as the proverb goes, are worth many thousands of words, and one book uses them to depict the struggle for existence of an ironically alien yet native people, one, virtually wordless, shows central Texas architecture, and the third uses photographic reproduction to demonstrate the growth of art in oil and water color
over the past decades. Each has made an interesting and unique case for itself, and of course each succeeds in some areas and has some shortcomings.

Miss Pinckney’s Painting in Texas begins with a discussion of the “limners” who travelled from place to place seeking subjects, who recorded the scenes of colonization, wilderness conquest, and political revolution as they saw it. Of limited skill and hampered by sparsity of tools and equipment, nevertheless asserted the author, “... these artists arrived eventually with something of intrinsic and lasting value.” (p. vii). There were also the portrait painters who have left us the likenesses of our Texas heroes. Miss Pinckney discovered that a significant migration of European born and trained, and especially well-equipped, artists occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. So important was this European orientation considered that many Americans travelled to Europe to acquire the necessary background. Miss Pinckney has devoted little effort to evaluating the works of those artists who worked in Texas, but has concentrated on accumulating the facts about their work, its circumstance, and why it is important. A chronological presentation was followed, and through this method the author sought to acquaint her readers with Texas art by informing them about the lives of the artists with some reproduction of their work. The biographical sketches seem to be well researched, are pleasingly written, and are frequently accompanied by examples of the artists’s work. Unfortunately, too few are in color.

Mr. Heimsath’s Pioneer Texas Buildings is a series of pictures taken by his wife, presumably arranged by himself, and accompanied by a text. Its subtitle, ... A Geometry Lesson, is pursued through a series of elementary drawings which cite examples of forms that are accompanied by pictures of actual building incorporating those forms. As such, it succeeds very well. One must, however, wonder why Mr. Heimsath did not find it necessary to travel further afield to find pictures to work under the title he selected. The map on page 159 reveals that this is essentially a book about pioneer German homes, and ignores French, American, and especially Spanish influences. After turning its pages, one is forced to wonder why the Press chose to publish this book. Fortunately the Postscript by Mr. Heimsath salvages this, although his justification for ignoring the other cultural influences is hardly sufficient. Some of his other remarks, however, are good, and deserve repeating. The pioneer buildings, he argues, were useful, and utilized all available space without unnecessary frill or sham. Their very simplicity was their greatest quality. “... the fraud of current American domestic architecture is institutionalized; each Sunday across the country a Home Building Section appears, calling these stylistic frauds beautiful, elegant, classic, and well balanced. A generation is growing up believing only the fraud, believing their parents live in a beautiful house because the paper says that a large, aluminum-windowed, two-carred, interior-bathed, vinyl-floored “Early Colonial” is beautiful.” (p. 153) Sounds like home. But I must confess that a colleague has borrowed my copy to consider ways to design his new home, so perhaps Mr. Heimsath’s work is an influential, important work.

Miss Gilpin’s The Enduring Navaho is a rhapsody, a pictorial love affair spanning thirty years. Her descriptions of experiences with the Navaho, in a text largely styled to accompany her magnificent pictures, is sometimes dragging, sometimes irrelevant, often interesting, and in one instance magnificent. It is, in a word, uneven. Her description of the Navaho version of Genesis is tremendous;
her discussion of Navaho crafts is meaty, slow paced, and only occasionally gifted. But above it all are her photographs. The black and white photographs, both landscape and portraits, are masterpieces of art, and the color pictures feature some of the truest representation of natural hues to be found in printed form. The Indian art, especially in turquoise, is beautifully photographed. Miss Gilpin does not plea for the Navaho as if he were a pitiable creature, as so many Indian books do, but through the power of her photography shows him as a product of his element, civilized, human, dignified. Would that we could see more of the world through her lens.

Archie P. McDonald
Stephen F. Austin State College


Colonel Harold B. Simpson, United States Air Force (Retired), has done research on Hood’s Texas Brigade for eight years. This book is the product of that study. It is divided into two parts: Part I includes poetry which is subdivided into that written as dedication to the Brigade, that pertaining to the Brigade, that composed by members of the Brigade, that written for or dedicated to Hood’s Veterans Association, those favorite poems of Hood’s Veterans Association, and the doggerel recited by members of the Brigade during the Civil War; Part II includes songs subdivided into those dedicated to the Brigade, those pertaining to the Brigade, those composed by members of the Brigade, those favorite songs of the Brigade in camp and on march, and those favorite songs of Hood’s Veterans Association. The appendices include biographical sketches of the poets and songwriters; summaries of battles in which the Brigade took a conspicuous part; a short biography of General John Bell Hood; the origin of “The Old Gray Mare;” and various versions of “Dixie.”

This book of some sixty-two poems and songs is to be the first volume of a three volume study of Hood’s Texas Brigade. The next volume of the trilogy will be concerned with the story of the Brigade during the war. The third volume will deal with Hood’s Texas Brigade Association.

Betty Tyer
Nacogdoches, Texas

The manuscript journal of James Wilson Nichols was presented to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library in San Antonio by thirteen year old Sylvia Peters, his great-great granddaughter, in 1962. Miss Peters claimed that Nichols had been present at the Alamo but left before the final siege to find more beves and was prevented from returning by the Mexican army. The library historian, Miss Catherine W. McDowell, thoroughly investigated the manuscript with the possibility in mind of adding a new name to the list of men who had been at the Alamo.

The manuscript does not verify Nichols' presence at the Alamo, but it does provide a very valuable account of the life of an early Texas pioneer. Nichols completed the journal in 1887 at the age of sixty-seven. He had kept journals or diaries since he was twelve and therefore his account was not produced from memory alone.

The journal appears here as it was written. Nichols' syntax and spelling have been preserved along with his original chapter headings. Punctuation has been added where it was necessary to clarify the meaning. In places where sentences or paragraphs are missing, an attempt has been made to convey what Nichols evidently had intended to say.

Although lacking in formal education, Nichols was gifted with writing ability. His vivid narrative reveals the hardships, joys, and sorrows of frontier life. Nichols was no hero in Texas history. He was simply one of the thousands of early pioneers, many of whom have long since been forgotten. He did possess, however, a keen awareness of the importance of preserving an account of this period in Texas history.

Lindsay Pack
Nacogdoches, Texas


In 1966 Arlington State College organized an annual series of lectures on selected topics in American history which were dedicated to the memory of Walter Prescott Webb. The present volume, the first fruit of this series, is a compilation of the 1966 lectures which were devoted to the American Civil War. These include: Homer L. Kerr, “Battle of Elkhorn: The Gettysburg of the Trans-Mississippi West,” Martin Hardwick Hall, “Planter vs. Frontiersman: Conflict in Confederate Indian Policy,” and Frank E. Vandiver, “The Civil War as an Institutionalizing Force.”

In addition, the volume contains a “Letter to a College President,” delivered February 27, 1960, on the occasion of Jack R. Woolf’s inauguration as President at Arlington. E. C. Barksdale’s Introduction gives special prominence to Webb’s
manifold merits in historical research and teaching, and the book ends with a Webb Bibliography compiled by Margaret Francine Morris.

H. L. Kerr's essay on the Battle of Elkhorn comes out as a scrupulously documented and detailed narration, and also an attempt to view this action in the context of the entire war. Showing briefly the political development since the presidential election of 1860, the author points out that the Battle of Elkhorn was the inevitable result of the opposing political, martial, and strategic aims of the Unionists and Confederates. The latter's lack of material, inferior position, and loss of man power, the particular results of the defeat of the Confederates in this early and significant battle, are submitted as examples of the principal Confederate disadvantages in this War. The author concludes that "... in some ways the story of the Confederate situation at Elkhorn is the story of the Confederacy in general". (p. 44) A map of the battlefield illustrates this essay.

M. A. Hall's essay on "Planter vs. Frontiersman: Conflict in Confederate Indian Policy," deals with an individual conflict on the Confederate side which illustrates their attitude toward the Indians. The author tells the excellently documented story of Colonel John Robert Baylor, a pioneer from Kentucky who came to Texas in 1839 and fought against the Comanches. Texas' entrance into the Confederacy he regarded as the long-hoped-for chance for action against the Indians with sufficient military forces, and, as he wrote in a letter to Thomas Helm, Captain of the "Arizona Guards," as a chance to exterminate them with brutality. President Jefferson Davis suspended Baylor from his command after this letter came to his attention in order to pursue a humane policy toward the Indians. But adverse developments of the war forced Davis to reinstate Baylor on March 25, 1865. Though this came too late to give Baylor a chance to carry out his policy of extermination, the author suggests that his restoration seemed to show that "... the frontiersman had ultimately won his case against the planter gentleman". (p. 72) A facsimile of the letter and Baylor's portrait illustrate this essay.

In the third essay, "The Civil War as an Institutionalizing Force," Frank E. Vandiver speculates on some general results of the Civil War. Was it an institution that has had an effect on existing institutions? In the author's judgement, the Civil War had, above all, a positive influence on the institutions of the North as well as the South. Although felt sooner in the North than in the South, the war produced changes throughout the nation. The change from an agricultural to an industrial country, the expense of traffic routes and a transformed self-assessment of the Americans were direct and positive results of the Civil War. The conflict transformed and toughened institutions so that they became ready for the challenge of world leadership.

Reinhard Lindert
Hanover, Germany
Dr. John Q. Anderson, a member of the English Department at the University of Houston, has compiled and edited a book which historians might classify as the letters of Henry G. Orr and his brothers, but whatever way one might describe this single volume it is a biography of archival holdings.

If Henry G. Orr, a young farmer from Ellis County, Texas, had not had literary ambitions and a sense of history, a significant addition to the story of the common soldier's life in the Trans-Mississippi Department during the Civil War would have been lost. Henry was the eldest of the four Orr Brothers. He was twenty-four years old; Robert, twenty-two; James, twenty; and Lafayette, seventeen.

Henry and Robert moved with the Ellis County Rangers of Parsons' Texas Cavalry, which was used as a highly mobile cavalry on the Texas Gulf Coast, in eastern Arkansas and in northern and central Louisiana. The Ranger's most serious battles with the Yankees were at Hughes Ferry and L'Anguille in Arkansas and Mansfield and Pleasant Hill in Louisiana.

James and Lafayette Orr were captured at the battle of Arkansas Post and spent several months in a Federal prisoner-of-war camp near Chicago before being exchanged. Upon returning to the South, James and Lafayette were assigned to General Pat Cleburne's Division in the Army of Tennessee. They fought in such major battles as Chickamanga, Missionary Ridge, the battles of the Atlanta campaign from Dalton to Jonesboro and at Franklin and Nashville in Hood's Tennessee Campaign.

Professor Anderson is a seasoned writer in this field. He has published fifty-five articles in scholarly journals devoted to American literature, folklore, and history. His five published books include Civil War Voices, Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone, 1861-1863 (1955) and A Texas Surgeon in the C.S.A. (1957).

The letters of the four Orr brothers in this work, Campaigning with Parsons' Texas Cavalry C.S.A. add significantly to the record of the American Civil War, especially to the relatively scarce materials concerning the Trans-Mississippi Department.

Alex E. Shaw, Jr.
Nacogdoches, Texas


It is appropriate that the story of the "Mother of East Texas missions" should be published at the time of Hemisfair, the 250th anniversary of the founding of San Antonio. This is the story of the Cross and the Sword fording the Rio Grande. It is the account of the devoted friars who saw mission opportunities in a new land and of mercenaries who saw trade opportunities in new overland
The perspective finds Texas to the North to be reached through the gateway of San Juan Bautista. The present-day sleepy village of Guerrero, Coahuila, was at one time the scene of the romance of the Frenchman Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, the prayers of Francisco Hidalgo, and the military movements of Diego Ramon. As Spaniard met Indian, the latter was discouraged by the former’s fickleness, appalled by his murdering, but sometimes gratified by his conversion.

The book is in three sections. Part I, “Frontier Outpost 1700-1716,” describes the establishment of San Juan at the Rio Grande under the leadership of Father Hidalgo. Hidalgo’s contact with the Tejas Indians fired in him a compulsion which led to the founding of the East Texas missions. Or was it Spanish concern that the French would establish themselves there first? Weddle presents all of the contributing factors leading both mystics and military northward in 1716, acknowledging the mutual interdependence of those influences. During these years Mission San Francisco Salano was born and bred for its departure in 1718 across the Rio Grande del Norte to become the Alamo.

The second major segment, “Mother of Missions 1716-1772,” speaks of the growth of Spanish movements into Texas through the strategic passageway of San Juan. Populating, instructing, and controlling a new land is an arduous task, precipitating notable accomplishments from some such as the determined Hidalgo and confounding others who were faced with rugged terrain and hostile Apaches and Comanches. But these were years of solid advance in terms of missions begun and territory surveyed.

The twilight years of San Juan are sketched in the final portion of the book. With Eagle Pass to the North and Laredo to the South, the former entrance to Texas was circumvented. Still San Juan’s streets were host to the traffic of the Mexican rebellion, Santa Anna’s forces marching on the Alamo, and the Army of Chihuahua led by John E. Wool. However with the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed on February 2, 1848, the Rio Grande was named the international boundary, effectively closing the gate.

Although there is fuel for hundreds of imaginative accounts of this village on the rugged frontier of Mexico, Weddle has not indulged in speculation. One may question the extent of the detail of his reporting, but the reader will have no doubt as to the care and validity of the research involved. The author displays a sympathy for the religious concerns of the Spanish clerics and the political aspirations of others, as well as an awareness of both the gains and losses which accrue to those peoples who take upon themselves civilizations. Weddle comments,

The Indians, not understanding the full import of what was being told them, responded with enthusiasm. How could they understand that two alien cultures were meeting, and that their own could be the loser?

For those who have an interest in the history of Spanish East Texas, San Juan Bautista should be considered an authoritative source.

Jerry M. Self
Fort Worth, Texas

As President, Grover Cleveland's reputation rested largely on honesty, integrity, and courage. In this short but complete biography, Professor Rexford G. Tugwell, onetime New Deal Brains Trustee, develops the thesis that these admirable characteristics, narrowly conceived by the twenty-fourth President, contributed to his failure to meet the crises brought on by the Panic of 1893. Devoted as he was to constitutional principles, Cleveland found himself bound by a rigidity which prevented him from taking effective action in the face of widespread unemployment, labor unrest, and revolution in Cuba.

There is much that is excellent in this study. Cleveland's childhood and youth are well described and his problems during these years probed and analyzed. Without devoting excessive space to his early years in Buffalo, Tugwell successfully brings to life the rising young lawyer and traces his progress from "Big Steve" to Grover Cleveland. He also examines the two controversial episodes of his early life that later plagued his public career: his purchase of a draft substitute during the Civil War and his irregular relationship with Maria Halpin. Tugwell does not excuse or defend Cleveland's actions in these incidents but by placing them in the context of his environment, the author presents the rising young attorney as a sympathetic, though rough-hewn, character.

After serving a term as sheriff of Erie County, Cleveland devoted himself to his law practice and gained a reputation for honesty and integrity which made him one of the most prominent lawyers in western New York. Between 1881 and 1884 Cleveland successively won election as Mayor of Buffalo, Governor of New York, and President of the United States. In each campaign the voters turned to Cleveland for the same reason: his standing as an incorruptible public official in contrast to the cheapness and venality that were all too common among the politicians of the day.

Tugwell applauds Cleveland's honesty as President but criticizes his narrow horizons and lack of vision. The treasury surplus could have provided the means to expand public services; instead Cleveland sought to reduce revenues. During the panic of 1893, Cleveland devoted much of his attention to maintaining the gold reserve. Tugwell points out that the President had higher devotion and obligation than merely to the integrity of the dollar. In the face of Coxey's march on Washington, Cleveland could respond only by arresting the hungry and unemployed men. Confronted by the Pullman strike Cleveland could only break it in defense of property and the movement of the United States mails. In short, Tugwell implicitly faults Cleveland for not behaving like Franklin D. Roosevelt, who, in a later economic crisis and depression, boldly turned to expert social planners and pragmatic experimentation to cope with the nation's ills. But Cleveland was not FDR and the America of the eighteen nineties was far removed from the thirties. In this reviewer's opinion, it is not very realistic or useful to judge a public figure by contemporary standards rather than those of his own day. Had the man from Buffalo acted on other principles than those he upheld, he would not have been Grover Cleveland.

Robert S. Maxwell
Stephen F. Austin State College