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Book Reviews

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The late Walter Prescott Webb was the most distinguished historian this state has produced. A native of Mississippi, Webb grew up in West Texas and spent his entire professional career teaching and writing at the University of Texas in Austin. His The Great Plains published in 1931 was hailed as a classic study of the relationship between environmental factors and the historical evolution of a geographic region. His The Great Frontier published in 1952 brought him international acclaim. In 1958 he was chosen president of the American Historical Association, the only person ever so elected while teaching in a Southern institution.

In this series of essays, most of them presented as speeches to historical and educational societies and previously unpublished, Webb expresses his viewpoint on a variety of subjects. Included are his famous address to the American Historical Association entitled "History as High Adventure," in which Webb summarized his own highly unorthodox academic career. Although this address was published in the American Historical Review, its inclusion here will be welcomed by readers who do not receive the Review. The same may be said of his presidential address to the Mississippi Valley Historical Association entitled "The Historical Seminar: Its Outer Shell and Inner Spirit." Its inclusion here will reach some readers who did not take the Journal of that association.

Several of the included articles summarize Webb's views on writing. Much of his success and recognition resulted from his careful attention to writing as a literary art. He often boasted that he wrote for people, not scholars. The sale of his books and articles illustrate how well he succeeded in this art. His essay "The Art of Historical Writing" would serve well as primer to any scholar interested in history as a literary art.

Although he was most successful as a writer, Webb was vitally concerned with the teaching of history. He regretted that greater rewards were not given to outstanding teachers of history and admonished professional historians on the university level for their failure to work more closely with public school teachers. As he points out in essays in this volume, he was instrumental in narrowing this gap between Texas university and public school teachers in the late 1950's. If living today he would undoubtedly be disappointed that more had not been accomplished in this area.

The Jenkins Garrett Foundation which made this volume possible is to be commended. The volume is attractively designed, clearly printed, and carefully indexed. His close friend, E. C. Barksdale of the University of Texas at Arlington, contributed the introductory essay. The volume is a good companion to An Honest Preface, another collection of Webb essays published several years earlier. While several essays are included in both, the two volumes are by no means the same. Rather they complement one another.

Ralph A. Wooster
Lamar State College
On a pleasant spring day in 1964 this reviewer drove, with his colleague Dr. C. K. Chamberlain, to Center, Texas, for a rendezvous with people who had come from literally everywhere to observe the centennial recognition of the Battle of Mansfield. Mansfield, of course, is in Louisiana but the Texas faction, at least, wished to concentrate for a ceremony at Center before invading Louisiana via an automobile cortege in the afternoon.

On the battleground park itself, after a parade into Mansfield, a large crowd assembled to hear dignitaries and politicians from Louisiana and Texas expound on topics related, and unrelated, to the subject at hand — that is, honor to the men confronting each other on the ground one-hundred years before. After much demagoguery, there at last arose the man who saved the day for many of us, the charming Prince de Polignac, son of the European Count whose adventures with Texas troops in the Civil War gives title to Mr. Barr's fine monograph. The present prince of the small state on the Riviera, explained that it was possible for a son to be present at the centennial observance because his father "had his family" late in life. He could recall sitting as a little boy in his elderly father's lap listening wide-eyed to tales of charges by wild Texans in some faraway forest in Louisiana. "'My boy, follow your Polignac!'" was his father's battle cry. What a contrast — rural provincial Texans and the exotic soldier brought together by fortune under a rebel banner in the dense forests of Louisiana! The Texas boys, giving up hope of pronouncing their new leader's name, called him in broad good humor "'General Polecat.'"

The brigade under review herein consisted of the 22nd Texas Cavalry, the 31st Texas Cavalry, and the 34th Texas Cavalry, units which originated in north Texas counties in 1862. These regiments saw service in Arkansas, Missouri, Indian Territory, and Louisiana, 1862 to 1865.

The author was inspired to write a history of this colorful brigade when he encountered in the University of Texas library a series of letters between James E. Harrison and William Pitt Ballinger. The Ballinger letters unlocked the story of Polignac's Brigade, a story somewhat dimmed by the passage of time.

Mr. Barr's narrative rescues the brigade most competently. As Barr puts it in his preface:

This then is not the story of another all-victorious command of superb fighting men or of another band of heroes defeated by fantastic odds. Fewer of these commands exist in actual combat than are found in the pages of history books. This is an account of the widely varied experiences of some men, Texans, in the army of the Confederate States of America.

James L. Nichols
Stephen F. Austin State University
Place Names of Northeast Texas. By Fred Tarpley. Commerce (East Texas State University. 1969. Illustrations, index, appendices. xxi + pp. 245. $2.50.

Mr. Fred Tarpley's Place Names of Northeast Texas lists the origins of almost 2,700 names of cities, towns, unincorporated hamlets, and geographical features in twenty-six counties in the northeastern corner of Texas. It is the first volume of a projected series that when completed will encompass the toponymy of all of Texas and will place historians, genealogists, and the general public very much in the debt of Mr. Tarpley and his assistants who have already visited countless places and conducted innumerable interviews to trace the always interesting and often surprising (how many people think Harrison County was named for a president?) origins of place names.

Place names are fascinating in their own right, and anyone familiar with the counties in this volume will enjoy browsing through it, but perhaps it will be most appreciated by readers interested in the expansion of the American frontier. Memories of the first inhabitants of this area are preserved by several names of Indian origin; the transferral of cultural institutions from the East is revealed by the several towns named for pioneers' homes on the other side of the Mississippi; and the preservation of cultural ties to European civilization and the maintenance of religious values even under the stress of settling in an uncivilized area is indicated by such names as Paris, Elysian Fields, Macedonia, Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and St. Mark. The paramount importance of railroads in the late nineteenth century when northeast Texas was growing toward maturity is clearly shown by the several communities named for railroad executives or their relatives. The more recent oil fields have also marked the map, although not as thoroughly as the railroads did; for, as one would expect, the nineteenth century had more opportunities to label the map than this century has had. Since over a third of the names listed are derived from individuals, genealogists and students of migration patterns will have occasion to utilize this book.

One very serious omission, which it is hoped Mr. Tarpley will remedy in the volumes to come, is the failure to indicate for each entry the date on which its name was assigned or the earliest year in which the name is known to have been used. Since dates are provided for some of the names, perhaps 10 per cent of them (such as Pulaskia, Francis, and Garden City), it is puzzling that this information is not provided for all the names. The listing of, for instance, "Red River Arsenal" without indicating whether the name dates from the Korean War or World War II or earlier, is bound to cause frustration for readers. Newspaper files, land records, and county archives should provide the necessary dates. Future volumes might be further improved if the name of each community were followed by a symbol indicating approximate population.

The index facilitates finding names, and the appendices catalog the place names according to derivation. The book is enhanced by thirty-eight well-chosen black and white illustrations. The counties covered are: Bowie, Camp, Cass, Collin, Dallas, Delta, Ellis, Fannin, Franklin, Grayson, Gregg, Harrison, Hopkins, Hunt, Kaufman, Lamar, Marion, Morris, Rains, Red River, Rockwall, Smith, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt, Wood.

Joseph A. Devine, Jr.
Stephen F. Austin State University

This volume of three essays on facets of contemporary southern politics represents the fourth annual Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures which were held in Texas Hall of the University of Texas at Arlington on April 10, 1969. Obviously, as editor Hollingsworth says, "W. P. Webb is not dead. His personality motivates friends who knew and loved him; his ideas live in books and articles; and his spirit of critical inquiry is manifest in these essays." (p. 8)

In his "The Power Structure and Southern Gubernatorial Conservatism," Professor E. C. Barksdale, head of the Department of History at the University of Texas at Arlington, finds that much of the substantial leadership of the South has cast its vote for the more progressive candidates, even though the grass-roots conservatives have often won in recent years. He seems to detect a ray of hope for the future in this factor. However, Barksdale concludes the "moderate and enlightened power structure" must be heard from even more emphatically in the future if the South would discard forever the image of being led by "corn pone Claghorn." (p 52)

George Norris Green, also of Arlington, traces the rise of right-wing extremism in textbook censorship in Texas in the early 1960's. All to the good, of course, but in the present atmosphere of ultra excitement on the New Left, one suspects that we should widen our peripheral vision in that direction also.

The third essay is a sympathetic account of "Huey Long and the Politics of Realism" by Long's distinguished biographer, Professor T. Harry Williams of Louisiana State University. Professor Williams finds the colorful Long to have been neither demagogue nor dictator, nor boss; he was, rather, a "mass leader." Long had a genuine concern for the poor and for the social problems of his time. He understood his power, enjoyed it, and waxed full of great ambition for the future.

As another of Webb’s students and friends, the present reviewer is confident the Professor would have been pleased with the work herein. He wanted his New South history to be replete with optimism and pragmatic concern for the present and future — I know, he told me so himself.

James L. Nichols
Stephen F. Austin State University

Linguistic patterns that result from changes and evolutions in language occurring from one generation to the next, and from region to region reveal much about an area's economy, ethnic origins, and mode of thought. The best way to study linguistic patterns is to concentrate on the spoken word rather than the written language of books or periodicals because these tend to follow formal standards not always used in everyday speech. For this reason Fred Tarpley has gathered his information about word patterns in twenty-six counties of Northeastern Texas from person-to-person interviews with 200 residents of that section. The 200 informants were not selected at random; instead, Tarpley sought those who had never established permanent residency outside the area and who were over sixty-five. In this way he avoided or at least reduced foreign speech influences from other locales, radio, and television. However, a few middle-aged and youthful persons were included in the survey to provide a standard of comparison.

The book contains a clear explanation of the method by which the information was gathered and classified, there is a brief outline of the history of the region, the conclusions resulting from the study are well summarized in the last chapter, but the bulk of the book — 254 of its 350 pages — is devoted to word atlases and tables for each of 127 questions answered by the informants. Each informant was asked what word he used for 127 different items or situations, such as the name for milk at the point of going sour. (Some readers will have guessed that the book's title comes from this particular question.) The responses were charted on 127 maps of the twenty-six counties by means of ten symbols denoting the popularity of the various responses. By examining the symbols the reader can visualize vocabulary variations within the region. In the case of some lexical expressions, definite geographic boundaries, called 'isoglosses,' mark off one choice of words from another. Each of the maps for the 127 questions is accompanied by a table indicating vocabulary preferences by age, sex, and amount of formal education. The tables do not distinguish the respondents by race because only three of the informants were Negroes. It should be noted that the absence of a more representative number of Negroes — twenty per-cent of this area are Negro — means this study does not tell us whether or not there are any linguistic differences between Whites and Negroes in this area.

The author has produced a piece of intense, scholarly research that will be most appealing to the linguistic specialist, but the general reader will enjoy browsing in it. The twenty-six counties covered are: Bowie, Camp, Cass, Collin, Dallas, Delta, Ellis, Fannin, Franklin, Grayson, Gregg, Harrison, Hopkins, Hunt, Kaufman, Lamar, Marion, Morris, Rains, Red River, Rockwall, Smith, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt, and Wood.

Joseph A. Devine, Jr.
Stephen F. Austin State University

Eminently successful politician, target for impeachment trial, and removal from the Louisiana Governorship, potential presidential candidate, Huey Pierce Long during his whirlwind career so projected himself onto the national scene as to merit a fuller, more complete, and a more accurately researched treatment than had been given him up to this magnificent effort by the distinguished historian of the Louisiana State University faculty.

T. Harry Williams, our author, has been on the LSU teaching staff for some years now, thus having had ample time, which he combined with a determined inclination to do the intensive research that enabled him to produce what seems to be the only definitive (complete, that is) biography of Huey Pierce Long to date. Surely such a biography was long overdue because Long was indeed one of the most colorful figures ever spawned by the American political milieu.

Demagogue or not, radical of the right or left, whatever he was, Long assuredly was brash and boisterous, and, withal, most successful. Nonetheless, even Williams has not managed to pinpoint the origin or beginnings, nor yet the reasons, for Long's radicalism, if that it truly be. This certainly leads one to observe that, as is so often the case, a book's weaknesses are due, usually, to the sources from which its information is drawn. In many instances Williams has depended upon badly biased, questionable, and sometimes totally unreliable sources for his data, difficult though it might have been to obtain. An instance of just how confusing information — even from diverse sources — may become is reflected in Williams' description of the so-called 'murder plot' at New Orleans' DeSoto Hotel. As a one-time resident of Louisiana (during the Long era), and as a participant in the DeSoto fiasco, the writer knows first hand that there were then and later numerous stories about the versions of what actually occurred. As one who was present, we doubt very much the veracity and dependability of Mr. Williams' sources, for we question whether he has written the whole or the right story at all. However, this is but one of countless incidents in a full and most interesting life. Suffice it to say just here that Williams seems to place far more credence in Long's version of the affair than authenticated information would seem to justify.

It is true that before Long's appearance on the Louisiana political stage, those who have been termed 'conservatives' — certainly New Orleans' Old Regulars — had been guilty of using the spoils systems with a vengeance. But their conduct in this respect was mild when compared with Long's 'program.' Whatever benefits accrued to Louisiana a result of Long's doings — in the eyes of many impartial observers — were far too costly. Maybe Mr. Williams accords less validity to the old cliche that says, 'two wrongs do not make a right' than we do.

Even though the book does have its shortcomings, this ought not to beggar the fact that it is a biography of immense magnitude. It might even be called a detailed study that is at once laudable, scholarly, and worthy of our trust. I rather like Williams' propensity for delineating Long's faults and foibles, instead of becoming so enamored with his subject as to play up the 'good' and soft pedal the 'bad.' This is all too often the case with contemporary biographers. The life and death of Huey Long furnish plenty of provocative
material and Williams has been successful in converting it into interesting, informative reading. A "Kingfish" in Louisiana — often called a clown nationally — Long was also an astute public figure, whose unique approach to politics had already earned for him a national reputation, ere an assassin's bullet slew him in the marbled halls of his ornate state capitol in Baton Rouge. All this and more comes to life in a well-written, painstakingly prepared, thoroughly readable biography which we are happy to recommend to all who are interested in U.S. history in general, and the "juicy" Louisiana variety in particular.

Finally, I would add that T. Harry Williams is deserving of our praise and gratitude for a "job well done." His most excellent biography is far and away the best ever written on the stormy life and depression-ridden times of Huey Pierce Long. We liked the volume, and you will, too.

Edwin W. Rice
Instructor, Government-History
Tarrant County Junior College
Fort Worth, Texas 76119

Looking at California, it is hard to believe that it was ever anything but concrete, steel and wall-to-wall people. Roske’s Everyman’s Eden dispels any such myth. Everyman’s Eden is a colorful history of our most populous state. The dusty adventurers of Spain who first set foot on California lose their musty historical odor and take on a realistic quality that is so lacking in many state histories. Roske traces the arrival of temporal missionaries and the establishment of churches and church-related schools, ranches and governments. Roske discusses the arrival of military governors who become overly ambitious and greedy; they became the actors in the dark ages of California. In the late eighteenth century Russian, British, French and American explorers and traders came to California both by sea and by land seeking the wealth of timber and tradeable fruits and grain. The tales of the visits spread through the infant America and many of the “Manifest Destiny” people saw an area ripe to pick from the ailing Spanish. The new Mexican government sent various governments, each one outdoing itself in jealousy and repression. The arrival of Americans and their desire to link California to the United States brought to an end the Mexican era.

These chapters, like those on the booming gold rush, statehood, the Civil War, society, and the boom times after World Wars I and II, are well researched and contain a liveliness that is needed to read this work. At times the book bogs down and the story becomes difficult to follow. The lack of footnotes leaves much unexplained as to the validity of many of the stories. A much shorter and more concise book could have said the same thing. It does, however, redeem itself because it is a definitive work deserving the attention of any historian on California.

Kent M. Herrick
Nacogdoches, Texas

As the study of and interest in black history develops, important contributions will be made not only to black history but also to the history of white America. William F. Cheek's new book, Black Resistance Before the Civil War, studies a subject which for the most part has been largely ignored, specifically, resistance by Negroes, both free and slave, to slavery prior to the Civil War. The book is clearly not intended to be a definitive study of black resistance, for it is too short to cover all the material concerning what is evidently an extensive resistance. However, in spite of its length, it is a fascinating study that leads the reader into further investigation.

The book is divided into two unequal parts, an introductory essay and a collection of primary source material. The primary source material deals with such subjects as the African Slave Trade, the Afro-American Culture, Day-to-day resistance in the Slave South, slave insurrections in both the North and the South and the culmination of northern black resistance. The sources are preceded by a brief explanation describing their authors and the circumstances surrounding the writing of the quoted material.

The introductory essay is the most valuable and in some ways the most interesting aspect of the book. The essay is divided into three major subjects, the condition of slavery; the runaways, resisters, and revolutionaries; and resistance in the North. One of the most interesting parts of the introductory essay is the discussion of the day-to-day resistance of the slaves. The day-to-day resistance to slavery involved not only running away, but for those who could not escape, more subtle forms of resistance. Stupidity, incompetence and slowness were part of the slave's attempt to retaliate against his master. Feigned illness earned lighter work loads for the slaves. The most desperate slaves turned to acts of self-violence, petty thievery, arson and even murder. The fear of open insurrection kept the slaveowners unified in their desire to retain control of the slaves. Professor Cheek points out that in black history, as in all history, true revolutionaries are rare but that resistance is rather a matter of the spirit, a daily fight against an intolerable condition.

Janet Jelen
Nacogdoches, Texas

Captains Without Eyes is the product of original and secondary source material written by a former intelligence officer. As an amateur historian, he has attempted to capture some of the “fascination” of the intelligence service. Kirkpatrick has not, however, written about the successes but rather, the utter failures. The title denotes that the commanders in World War II, the Captains, were without eyes; that is, they were without correct intelligence information. Kirkpatrick chose five cases which he felt epitomized negligence and misvaluation on the part of the gathering and analyzing intelligence agencies. He found that the invasion of Russia, Dieppe, Pearl Harbor, Arnhem, and The Bulge were the most obvious examples.

Kirkpatrick found that the disaster at Pearl Harbor was directly attributable to faulty communications, misvaluation of information, and negligence on the part of high ranking commanders, radar operators, and even the President of the United States. Likewise, failures in the intelligence agencies of both Germany and Russia were responsible in part for the disasters which befell both sides of that conflict. At Dieppe the British underestimated the strength of the opposing German forces. The Americans at The Bulge believed wrongly that the Germans were incapable of threatening serious offensive action in the Ardennes. The blood bath of Arnhem was the responsibility of the Allied High Command when they parachuted their troops into two panzer divisions. These five cases, thus represent hundreds of smaller examples where both sides, sometimes repeatedly warned of trouble, launched attacks upon the readied enemy or were unprepared for surprise attack.

As a historian of mistakes Kirkpatrick has put together a remarkable, but not startlingly revealing, book. Most of the information is available in other sources. The approach, though, is new. Kirkpatrick has taken a neutral stance between the historians of unobjective glory, laying blame, denunciation and praise on friend and foe alike. Revelations, historical theories and high intellectual thought are wasted on the average reader and Kirkpatrick has written this fresh approach for the interested military reader whatever his level of education. However, this outlook does not toss historical thoroughness out. The book is well-documented with unpublished materials and with an ample bibliography. Even with this, he has written an exciting, almost “action-packed” book. It is a brilliant analysis of the mistakes of war by Captains Without Eyes.

Kent M. Herrick
Stephen F. Austin State University