BOOK REVIEWS


Judge John Powers' The First Texas Navy is a remarkable compilation of data on the fabled first Texas Navy, which plied the waters of the Gulf of Mexico from 1835 to 1837. Told from the perspective of a sixth-generation Texan who held the rank of captain in the U.S. Navy, The First Texas Navy contains a wealth of detailed information, all woven into a fascinating story that most Texans have never known - the story of the fight for Texas independence at sea.

The First Texas Navy sets the backdrop with an overview of the influence of the sea on a region known for its large, dry land area. Highlighting the importance of maritime commerce to the struggling Texas colonists, First Texas Navy brings colorful naval captains, privateers, amateur admirals, and hard-driving seamen into the picture of the Texas Revolution with the smooth deliberation of a Texas marine launch gliding onto a sandy Gulf shore. Powers' explanations of naval procedure and warfare during the twilight of the Age of Sail give the scholar and general reader a level of detail unmatched in any previous work.

What sets The First Texas Navy apart from all other narratives of the Republic of Texas is its principle focus on the first four warships of Texas -- the flagship Independence, the former privateer Liberty, and the two schooners of war Brutus and Invincible -- and the crews who manned them. Judge Powers, a long-time Texas court of appeals jurist, bring to modern scholarship the critical eye of a man familiar with the process of piecing together fragmentary evidence into a story that will appeal to a lay audience. The result is an indispensable record of the wooden walls that protected the fledgling republic during its darkest, most uncertain years.

Jonathan W. Jordan
Atlanta, Georgia


The Anglo-Texan Creation Myth has long held that, in the beginning, it was enterprising American yeomen-farmers and intrepid frontiersmen who settled and civilized the Lone Star State. Texans have always proudly professed a simple faith that their antecedents from the United States were the true covenant people who wrested this wilderness Zion from the clutches of Mexican tyrants and in the process anointed the land with liberty. If only the Gospel truth could be revealed as easily as such legends are born and cultivated.
For the serious historian of the American Southwest, and specifically those willing to commit heresy, few tasks are more daunting than stripping away the mystique of the Texan Genesis story. But in a study that is both biography and border history, Joseph E. Chance does just that. And he does it well. As the title suggests, in *Jose Maria de Jesus Carvajal: The Life and Times of a Mexican Revolutionary*, Chance provides scholars and laymen alike the compelling tale of a remarkable man and the political movements he helped to inspire along the Rio Grande frontier.

Chance skillfully traverses the life and career of the little known and long neglected figure of Jose Maria de Jesus Carvajal. From his obscure beginnings in the Spanish village of San Antonio de Bejar, through his formative years on the Texas and Kentucky frontiers, through the tempests of war and revolution, Carvajal emerges here from the shadows of a cultural conflict as a complex, even enigmatic figure, almost as elusive to the biographer as he was to his enemies on the U.S.-Mexican border. American educated, a convert to the Protestant faith, a passionate champion of democratic ideals and land reform, soldier, rebel, filibuster, intellectual, dreamer, protégé of none other than Stephen F. Austin, and later a devoted Juarista dedicated to the liberation of the Mexican nation from the clutches of French imperialists: Carvajal was a man of many dimensions, and one whose life is bound up in the greater historical struggle for human freedom and equality.

Chance is at his best in telling the unlikely story of Carvajal’s quixotic quest to establish a buffer Republic of the Sierra Madre. With a balanced and unbiased view he recounts how Carvajal, with the help of Texan soldiers of fortune and a prominent Anglo power elite, incited the so-called Merchant’s War in the autumn of 1851. And he brings the reader to the astonishing reality that Carvajal and other separatists (most of the Anglos being defenders of slavery), nearly succeeded in their bold venture.

While this work is both aptly documented and well crafted, maps and illustrations would have enhanced the narrative. That said, the author should still be commended as he succeeded in filling a notable void in the literature of the Lone Star State as well as Mexico. For, although no known photograph or painting of Carvajal has survived, and even a good physical of the man is lacking, we now have a portrait of one of the most influential leaders that the Lower Rio Grande border country ever knew. And that portrait bears little likeness to the Anglo icons of popular imagination.

Michael L. Collins
Midwestern State University

Eliseo Torres and Timothy Sawyer have provided a personal look at the practice of curanderismo in the publication. They convey narratives, or cuentas, of famous and lesser-known curanderos in northern Mexico and South Texas, thus placing their subject matter appropriately in a transnational context. Torres recounted many of his own experiences with folk healing, including his self-defined “spiritual awakening” in Espinazo, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, as well as childhood encounters with South Texas curanderos. The authors delved beyond these personal vignettes, recounting the histories of legendary folk healers such as Don Pedrito Jaramillo. The authors successfully explained the syncretic nature of curanderismo, tracing how both indigenous and Christian traditions have influenced its development and practice.

Torres and Sawyer, both of whom hold doctorates, claimed that they “set aside” their academic training when writing this book and relied on personal observations rather than dispassionate analytical observations. This is a weakness in the preparation of the manuscript. The absence of endnotes made it difficult to determine the sources of their information. In other cases, reliance on oral interviews from a single source to convey information about historical folk healers weakened their contentions. Certainly oral histories constitute important sources for anyone dealing with the subject of curanderismo, but one should be reluctant to accept information without corroboration.

Readers seeking an introduction to the topic of folk healing in South Texas will enjoy reading Curandero: A Life in Mexican Folk Healing for the anecdotes it provides and the passion its authors convey. Those interested in more advanced studies should refer to other works.

Shannon L. Baker
Texas A&M University, Kingsville


What happened to the descendants of the first African Americans who lived in a British North American colony? This is the question Tim Hashaw tackled in Children of Perdition: Melungeons and the Struggle of Mixed America. The first Africans in North America arrived in 1619 at the Jamestown settlement in Virginia. Until 1690 the British government classified some of these immigrants as indentured servants, not slaves. Upon completing their contract these Africans were set free. Some of the males married into local families, both Indian and English, and settled in the Tidewater region. Most
fled Virginia and settled the remote areas of the Appalachian Mountains. To avoid enslavement these peoples re-invented themselves as Melungeons, a mysterious people of white ancestors who descended from the Portuguese, or the Phoenicians, or the Welsh, or the Black Dutch, or the Black Irish, depending on the situation.

Melungeons escaped enslavement by constantly moving to the western edge of the American frontier. The first Melungeons entered East Texas early in the 1830s and settled near present day Orange. Their arrival effected Texas history in two ways. According to the author, Melungeons, not Spaniards, developed, "Innovations such as cattle drives on horseback, open ranges, corrals, summer and winter pastures, bulldogging and steer wrestling," while residing in South Carolina, and introduced them to Texas, (p. 42). They invented the bullwhip and coined the words "buckaroo" and "corral." In 1856, due to racial unrest, Melungeons in Orange organized a Regulator company for self-protection. Whites in the area formed the Moderators. The groups clashed and the result was a total victory by the Moderators in what the author called, "The Orange County War of 1856." Most Melungeons fled East Texas and resettled in Louisiana. Students of American racial history will enjoy this book. Students of East Texas history probably will not.

Donald Willett
Texas A&M University at Galveston


In this slim volume, Stephen A. Townsend provides an informative and richly detailed narrative of Union efforts to establish a military presence in Texas and curtail trade between Texas and Mexico. President Abraham Lincoln viewed the war west of the Mississippi River as central to Union efforts to crush the Confederacy. The revenue provided by the exporting of cotton through Texas to Mexican ports was central to sustaining the Confederate war effort. The author's account includes detailed analysis of the reaction of the populace, including leading business, military, and political leaders, to Union troops in Texas.

In 1863 Union forces led by Major General Nathaniel Banks launched the Rio Grande expedition from New Orleans. Union forces captured Brownsville and occupied territory along the Texas coast and lower Rio Grande River. Advances by Union forces against Confederate positions were often short-lived or unsuccessful. Union officers complained bitterly of the lack of reinforcements and supplies to troops stationed in Texas.
Townsend’s narrative includes thoughtful analysis of the relationship between the Union, the Confederacy, and Mexico. The author demonstrates the tenuous nature of politics in Mexico during the Civil War. Lincoln and General Ulysses S. Grant viewed the precarious political situation in Mexico with concern, believing that the French occupation of Mexico held dangerous implications for the Union war effort.

The author utilizes a wide range of archival sources to support his analysis of the military situation in Texas. The book’s only weakness is its lack of adequate campaign maps. Periodic campaign maps would have provided the reader with a better understanding of troop movements during the Rio Grande expedition. Nevertheless, Townsend’s book is an invaluable addition to the study of Confederate Texas.

Melanie Kirkland
Texas Christian University


One of the most complex command relationships in the Civil War took place in the Confederate Department of the Trans-Mississippi, based in Shreveport. Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith ran this immense area. This westernmost of the Confederate commands was so remote that Smith was able to run it almost as an independent country. Of the three district commanders under his direction, the most contentious relationship involved Major General Richard Taylor, who led the District of Western Louisiana.

Smith, a West Point graduate, was in his late thirties during the war, but his leadership style resembled that of someone a generation older. He loved fortifications and large command staffs. Smith loved to plan and ponder situations until action necessitated movement.

Richard Taylor was only slightly younger, but of a completely different mindset. The son of President Zachary Taylor and a graduate of Yale, he was not a West Pointer. He was an aristocrat and a plantation owner. Taylor received his military training under General T.J. "Stonewall" Jackson in Virginia. He was aggressive, hyper, and mercurial. Taylor was also the brother of Jefferson Davis’ first wife, Sarah Knox Taylor, and the two men remained close personal friends.

Smith and Taylor mixed like oil and water. After the Red River Campaign, Taylor, justifiably, was so upset over Smith’s ponderous actions that his complaints got him fired. The Confederate Congress gave him its thanks and promoted him almost simultaneously.
No one has analyzed this complex relationship better than Jeffery Prushankin. He has explored the depths of this conflict and possesses, without a doubt, the best understanding of it. His writing style is clear and his prose is superb. This raises the benchmark on all such studies.

Gary D. Joiner
Louisiana State University—Shreveport


This book presents a historical narrative discussing the treaty-making process between the governments of the United States and the Republic of Texas with the Indians of the central Great Plains from 1815 to 1871. Stan Hoig, a renowned scholar of journalism and American Indian history, defines the Central Plains as the area extending between Texas and the Dakotas. Many different Indian tribes lived in this vast expanse of bison rangeland and Hoig provides a unique "interrelated overview" of the numerous diplomatic discussions and agreements these tribes had with U.S. and Texas government officials. Hoig employs the narrative of these events to reflect upon the legalities and ethics associated with general American Indian policy as it relates to the issues of national conquest and Indian sovereignty.

Americans' inheritance of a tradition of basing land claims on European discovery and exploration along with one that recognized innate tribal ownership of lands and political sovereignty contributed to a contradictory approach towards the continent's original inhabitants. The conflicting nature of this relationship played a large role in the various tragedies associated with the submission of the Plains tribes and the forfeiture of their territory. The situation in the Republic of Texas, for example, epitomized the inconsistencies associated with the general American approach to Indian land claims, treaties, and sovereignty. Although the sympathetic Indian diplomacy of President Sam Houston contrasted sharply with the unforgiving military action of his successor, Mirabeau Lamar, it nevertheless represented the two sides of the general American approach to Indians. According to Hoig, this conflicted historical heritage ultimately contributed to political deception and dishonesty, empty promises, and the physical removal of Comanches, Kiowas, Cherokees, Wichitas, and Caddos from the state.

Although the author acknowledges that the American treaty-making process did offer Indian tribes more than "outright oppression," he concludes that the social injustices associated with the treaty process stemmed from the "majority-accepted attitude of white male superiority" existing during that time (p. 184). This conclusion may be a bit trite, but Hoig's narrative overview
of this process on the Central Plains is informative and will be appreciated by those who have desired such a précis.

Gerald Betty
Angelo State University


During the Republic Era, the Texas frontier and southern border was vulnerable to depredations from Indians and Mexican rebels. Stephen L. Moore examines how Texans defended themselves and exacted revenge on these perpetrators. Moore, author of five books on Texas and World War II history, provides a well researched, highly detailed, and well organized chronicle "of the expeditions, battles, and leaders of the Texas frontier defense system" (p. xi), from 1838-1839. This book is the second installment of a three-volume series examining Texas frontier defense during the Republic Era.

Though *Savage Frontier* chronicles the events and people involved in frontier defense, the book also provides a description of a major change in the Texas frontier defense system. This change occurred when the Texas presidency transitioned from Sam Houston to Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar. Houston proposed to settle hostilities with Indians through treaties. Wanting to demonstrate his peaceful intentions, his strategy motivated him to cut funding to the Texas army, forcing Texans to rely on volunteer militia. When Lamar took the office, he reversed Houston's strategy and established an aggressive Indian policy with the formation of a permanent Texas Army and Ranger units.

Moore does an excellent job using primary sources, including muster rolls, letters, diaries, and memoirs of the Texans. Another strength of the book is that the author gives a modern description of where the battles and depredations occurred, allowing the reader to locate them easily. Overall, this is a sound book and is useful as a reference source.

Charles D. Grear
Prairie View A & M University


The historical ancestors of the modern constable were arguably present in the English Royal System as early as 871 A.D. Article 45 of *Magna Charta* explicitly mentions the office. The constable was an important office in the
thirteen original American colonies from the 1640s. The office is provided in every Texas constitution and was Texas’ most active law enforcement officer until the 1870s. In the twentieth century, the county sheriff displaced the constable as preeminent agent of local law enforcement. Hatley convincingly shows that the Constable still plays a vital role in local Texas government.

Allen Hatley skillfully combines historical, legal, sociological, economic, regional, political, and anecdotal materials in a broad, graphic portrait of the office. As a twice-elected constable in Bandera County, Hatley adds gravitas to his illumination of what has always been an incomplete public picture of the Texas constable.

Hatley highlights the dynamics of the Texas Constable from the Austin colony to the present day. The factors shaping the office, from the individualities of its occupants, the nature of Texas governments, to the social, political, and economic forces of Texas history, are analyzed systematically.

Some of the most notorious characters of the American West are woven into the anecdotal materials for a lively perspective on the often-violent evolution of this office.

Appendices expand the scope of the book through a look at constables outside of Texas, insights into today’s Texas constables, and of Texas constables lost in the line of duty.

With thorough documentation and comprehensive bibliography, this book fills a serious gap in the literature of Texas law enforcement.

James G. Dickson
Stephen F. Austin State University


Eminent historian A.C. Greene has once again proven his literary prowess as he depicts in vivid and entertaining manner the saga of the impressive but short-lived Butterfield stage line. Using a “then and now” approach in 900 Miles on the Butterfield Trail, Greene brings the famous Overland Mail Route to life. This interesting story of the 3,134-mile Butterfield Trail, 700 miles of which traversed Texas, is told largely through the eyes of Waterman Lily Ormsby, Jr., who traveled the entire route on the initial journey from Tipton, Missouri, to San Francisco, California, in 1858. Ormsby, a young reporter for the New York Herald, was invited by John Butterfield to make the trip free of charge in exchange for writing eyewitness accounts of his experiences and observations along the way for publication in the newspaper.

One hundred forty years later, A.C. and Judy Greene followed a 900-mile section of the famous mail route, beginning on the north bank of the Red River, through Texas, and into Arizona. With his usual expertise in documenting locations and pertinent information, Greene found that Ormsby’s account of the
trip "holds up almost point by point. As for accuracy and interpretation, the years have proved him also to be a good historian."

Especially interesting to East Texas historians is the passage of the overland mail bill by the United States Congress in 1857. According to Greene, the world’s demand to reach the West in a timely fashion with mail and news occurred “mainly through the efforts of Senator Thomas J. Rusk of Texas, Senator W.M. Gwin of California, and Congressman John S. Phelps of Missouri—each of whom represented a state with potential to benefit from the bill.”

Early passengers on the Butterfield stage line enjoyed the opulence of the coach’s leather interiors, original oil paintings on outside doors, and candle lamps both inside and out. Greene leaves no stone unturned as he leads the reader through both the pleasantries and rigors of the twenty-four-day odyssey. Tedium of the journey was broken by the blast of the driver’s brass bugle as he approached each of the 200 way-stations along the route.

Greene’s notes at the end of each section are as informative as the book itself, and the detailed maps are helpful in picturing the entire route. I certainly recommend *900 Miles on the Butterfield Trail* as a welcome addition to the serious historian’s library.

Betty Oglesbee
San Augustine, Texas


In this edited work, Sara R. Massey presents the lives of sixteen Texas women who traveled the cattle trails from Texas during the late nineteenth century. Their experiences were as varied as their backgrounds and motivations for embarking on such journeys. While some of these women had no choice but to join their husbands on cattle drives, others relished the opportunity to break free from the proper Victorian lady norm of the period. Instead of walking beside a mule or riding sidesaddle, as many early women in the West had, these Texas women rode just like the men, alongside the men, and in some cases, even wore pants. In one case, the shock of a woman on horseback wearing such attire caused one man to exclaim, “My God! I knew she’d do it! Here she comes wearin’ them britches!” (p. 225).

Over the past several decades, historians have acknowledged women’s contributions to the history of the west and to cattle drives across the United States. But what separates this book from other publications is that it offers specific names, faces, and stories of an assortment of women who took to the Texas cattle trails between 1868 and 1889. Some enjoyed great financial success as a result of their time on the cattle trails (Bettie Matthews Reynolds),
while others met with failure (Catherine Malone Medlin). Many were native
Texans (Anna M. Slaughter), while others hailed from as far away as New
York (Cornelia Adair). Some of the women married quite young (Viola P.
Anderson at fifteen), while others entered matrimony much later in life (Lizzie
Johnson Williams at thirty-nine). From Victoria to San Angelo (Alma Bailey
Miles), from Clarendon to Cotulla (Amanda Burks), the adventures of these
women took them across and outside Texas, exemplifying the pluck and
ruggedness that life on the cattle trails demanded. American society decided
early on that the West was no place for women. But as Massey and these arti-
cles prove, each of these women earned the right to be called “cattle queens”
(p. 7).

Dana Cooper
Collin County Community College

A *Texas Cowboy’s* Journal: *Up the Trail to Kansas in 1868*, Jack Bailey, David
Dary, editor (University of Oklahoma Press, 2800 Venture Dr., Norman,

There is much to be thankful for in the tenacity of Jack Bailey, dirt farmer
from East Texas turned drover, because without his fine journal the (so far)
earliest record of a trail drive from Texas to Kansas would be undocumented.
And Bailey told it all, too, the good times and the bad, the fun and the sad, the
easy and the hard, of life on the trail.

Written in a “mottled green and black cardboard” (p. xiii) copybook, sec-
tions of the cover of which “were missing, as were the first eighteen pages of
the notebook” (p. xiii), and mostly written in ink, which means a steel-nib pen
and an inkwell of some kind, this little book is a day-to-day journal of a trail
drive before even the term *trail drive* had come into common usage. And the
journal lay around from 1868 in a variety of places until October 9, 2001,
when it was brought to the attention of officials at the National Cowboy &
Western Heritage Museum. They jumped on this journal like a dog on a bone,
not just because of its rarity but also because of its clarity of description, full-
ness of detail, terseness of verbiage – in short, all those things that make it, like
any work of Charley Siringo’s, ring true.

Bailey must have had more than a rudimentary education because he uses
good grammar in most places, although the occasional bad bit of spelling does
creep in, especially with place names and other proper nouns. It is difficult to
imagine in this throwaway Bic pen age the troubles he went through to write
his journal, which he kept current on an almost daily basis, even finding sub-
stitute materials out of which to make ink. He also says that he would have
written more but this journal contained all the paper he had so he had to make
do. And well did he make do. How he “wrote in his journal throughout the
day” (p. xxviii) while herding the beeves is a mystery, and how he wrote at
night when dog-tired is nothing short of amazing! And his penmanship is outstanding!

One peculiar locution of Bailey is his use of the word *strike*. As a veteran of the War Between the States, he had to know that when he says "we struck camp" (p. xv) the meaning would be taken that camp was moved, yet such is not his meaning; he is using the definition that means they came upon or reached camp. He uses this word in this manner throughout the journal, which can be a bit confusing until one gets used to it.

Bailey's Southern upbringing is shown throughout the journal, which begins on Tuesday, August 5, 1868 and goes through November 8, 1868. He mentions Negro cowboys and also the Buffalo Soldiers and is not seemingly impressed with either body of men.

The health of both men and women on the drive (sounds like *The Covered Wagon* at times, come to think of it) are duly noted, as are all geographic and topographic irregularities and landmarks. Visitors are registered by name in the journal if the name is known; if not, a description is given. Friends from Texas who have settled along the trail are tallied as well.

This is a fine little book, fun to read, rollicking and packed with information. And it could be wondered if Bailey had ever read Shakespeare because of the ending words he penned:

> Now you have my travels to Kansas + back home. I have left out some things that I wish I had put in but my paper run short before I got to Kansas. I don't force you to read this so if you don't like it, just lay it down + don't criticize me for I make no pretentions [sic] toward writeing [sic] or any thing of the kind. Hope it will interest some people.

> And so it will, friends; and so it will.

H.C. Arbuckle III
Corpus Christi, Texas

*Leavin' a Testimony: Portraits from Rural Texas*. Patsy Cravens (University of Texas Press, P. O. Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819) 2006. Contents. B&W Photos. P. 303. $34.95. Hardcover.

Stories and images help our minds make sense of history. They give us a voice and a face to connect with the facts about economic depression, wars, and racial violence, and reveal the dignity with which working people meet life's challenges. Stories and images also lead us to self-discovery, as Patsy Cravens testifies about her experience in creating *Leavin' a Testimony: Portraits from Rural Texas*. While working on the project, Cravens discovered her talent for black-and-white photography, developed an admiration for the elegant self-expression of plain people, and became conscious of the impact of racial bigotry on individuals and families.
Set in Colorado County, *Leavin' a Testimony* presents the human side of a history shared between Central Texas and East Texas. Colorado County lies about halfway between Austin and Matagorda Bay along the river for which it was named. There, as in the surrounding region, Texans with Anglo, African, German, Eastern European, and Mexican roots cultivated cotton and corn, raised cattle, and related to one another on the basis of racial, ethnic, and economic differences.

In compelling duotone photographs and unforgettable oral history narratives collected during the 1980s and 1990s, Cravens documented everyday places and ordinary lives in Colorado County. Inspired by her first interviewee, a local black farmer, Cravens continued soliciting memories from women and men, middle-aged and older, representing an array of backgrounds, occupations, and viewpoints for twenty years. The resulting "folk history" (p. xii) has an effect akin to the narratives and photographs created in the 1930s and 1940s by the Federal Writers' Project and the Farm Security Administration.

*Leavin' a Testimony* is a valuable interdisciplinary resource for students and researchers of twentieth-century Southern and Western U.S. history, as well as a model for the layperson interested in preserving community memory.

Lois E. Myers  
Baylor University

"*Catch 'em Alive Jack:* The Life and Adventures of an American Pioneer,"  


The capture of dangerous animals is the basic story line of both of these books. "*Catch 'em Alive Jack*" is the autobiography of John Abernathy (1876-1941). A turning point in Abernathy's life came when he was fifteen years old. During a desperate battle between his dogs and a wolf, Jack dismounted to assist the dogs and the wolf sprang for his throat. Abernathy raised his right arm to push the beast away and his hand went deep inside the wolf's mouth beyond the sharp canine teeth. While the lower jaw was clasped with Jack's knuckles in the roof of the wolf's mouth, the wolf could not bite effectively. Having learned this enabling secret, Abernathy captured over a thousand wolves and become a national celebrity, performing his daring feat before many audiences and President Teddy Roosevelt. Although he was also successful as a cowboy, musician, lawman, rancher, and wildcat oil driller, Abernathy chose to be remembered for his ability to subdue wolves. An excellent Foreword by Jon Coleman summarizes Abernathy's life and places it in the context of his time.
Texas Rattlesnake Tales is a blend of rattlesnake lore and the adventures of Tom Wideman and his friends while pursuing their quarry. The author has long been associated with the Sweetwater Rattlesnake Roundup, and his skill at capturing snakes has been featured on the television program “National Geographic Explorer.” This entertaining collection of stories occasionally comes up short on facts. Rattlesnakes do not sense vibrations through the holes between their eyes, and there is no scientific evidence that electrical shock treatment of a bite “neutralizes the venom” (p. 29). Animal protectionists will be dismayed to find that the author advocates the use of gasoline vapor to drive rattlers from their hideaways despite its adverse effects on harmless snakes and other den inhabitants such as lizards and toads.

Stanley D. Casto
Seguin, Texas

Texas Monthly on Texas Women. Editors of Texas Monthly (University of Texas Press, P.O. Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819) 2006. Intro. Contents. P. 229. $18.95. Paperback.

“Nowhere but Texas,” you hear and perhaps nowhere but in the 2006 Texas Monthly publication of fourteen of its articles featuring Texas women can you encounter a more diverse compilation of life stories of influential individuals.

Some of these personalities are well-known: First Ladies Lady Bird Johnson and Laura Bush; Senators Barbara Jordan and Kay Bailey Hutchinson; legendary pioneer captive Cynthia Ann Parker; infamous stripper Candy Barr; gifted but tragic vocalists Janis Joplin and SELENA Quintanilla Perez; Ponce Kian Marchella HELOISE Cruse Evans, the household hint guru; and even twentieth-century witness of political and financial history Nellie Connally.

Two women are less famous, but nonetheless significant and intriguing in their own spheres of influence. One of them is Neiman Marcus’ world-recognized “Grand Dame” of cosmetics, Christina Gilbert, whom Leonard Lauder has deemed responsible for making Dallas “a bellwether market for cosmetics ... from a per capita standpoint [beating] New York and Los Angeles hands down.” Another lesser-known personality is naturalized Hispanic-American Antonia Hinojosa, whose own journalist daughter Cecilia Ballí contributed the essay on her.

Who better to communicate life experiences than a writer? Thus, Texas Women contains accounts of versatile West Texan Hallie Stillwell as well as nationally known provocative columnist Molly Ivins.

Readers will appreciate the fourteen talented authors of the articles, especially such regulars a Paul Burka, writing “The Education of Laura Bush;” and Skip Hollingsworth, whose article “What Does Kay Want?” is on Senator Hutchinson.
“Texas Women” was chosen as the first in a series of thematic compilations of *Texas Monthly* articles. Evan Smith, who edits the magazine, declares that “there is a Texas woman . . . independent and courageous, comfortable in her skin, possessed of both frontier survival skills and urban sophistication, fun-loving, forward-thinking, rich in spirit.”

Ouida Whitaker Dean
Nacogdoches, Texas


This book is about Miriam Ferguson and her husband, Jim Ferguson. It tells the story of how he was elected governor of Texas, served in that position, and was then impeached in 1917. Since he could not be governor again, he encouraged his wife, Miriam, to run in 1924. She campaigned and won, but while she was governor Jim shared her office, talked with legislators, and gave many speeches. It seemed that Jim and Miriam were both acting as governor. After her first term she ran for reelection but lost to Attorney General Dan Moody.

In 1930 Jim Ferguson persuaded his wife to run again, but she lost in the Democratic primary to Ross Sterling. In 1932 they tried again. This time, Miriam won the primary, a run-off, and the general election. Mrs. Ferguson was governor again.

During her second term, Jim again had a desk in her office. The Great Depression meant that Texans were “out of work, hungry, and desperate” (p.58). Miriam’s second term was hard. She left office in 1935, ran again with Jim’s encouragement in 1940 but was defeated, and then retired from politics.

Jim had a stroke in February 1944, and died on September 21 of that year. Miriam went back to her life with her grandchildren and one of her favorite gardens, but also continued to follow politics. She read the newspaper and kept up with old political friends. In 1961 Miriam had a heart attack and could no longer leave her house or work in her garden. Miriam Ferguson died on June 25, 1961. She had lived for eighty-six years. People say her last words were, “Jim! Jim! Jim!”

I liked this book because I thought it explained things clearly. The author taught me how important things happened and how it really was back then. The pictures helped me imagine what it probably really looked like in Texas during those years. This book also showed how the people running for important jobs felt and what they had to do to get to that goal of being whatever they wanted to be. I think this book will encourage people to keep on trying, just like Miriam Ferguson did.

I think this book should be read by students in the fourth grade or above.

Emma Barringer
Raguet Elementary School, Nacogdoches

Dr. Archie P. McDonald, Regent’s Professor of History, Stephen F. Austin, writes elsewhere that Gary Borders’ A Hanging in Nacogdoches is not uniquely Texan, that “The purpose of the author’s presentation is to show life—race relations, politics, the economy—in a typical...Southern town at the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century” ... “and demonstrates, that Nacogdoches was, indeed, typical for its time and place.”

In October 1902, James Buchanan murdered a farm family of three near Chireno, apparently also raping the teenage daughter. Sheriff Andrew Jackson Spradley of Nacogdoches apprehended the black man after a chase of a few days. With the presence and assistance of several companies of state militia-men, the accused barely escaped lynching and finally was smuggled into the Nacogdoches jail. The next day, he was tried without counsel, convicted, condemned to hang, and executed— within a space of three hours. The reason for the perversion of justice was quite horrifyingly simple: a large white mob had that morning been digging a barbecue pit on the city square’s northwest corner in preparation for roasting the condemned. A quick exchange of judicial violence in place of mob barbarism was the tradeoff that ended the killer’s life.

The gripping strength of continuity that threads this work rests not as much on murderer James Buchanan as on the man who caught and brought him to a final distortion of justice. Sheriff Spradley served the community and surrounding region as lawman, marshal, and man hunter for more than thirty years. Borders’ history of Spradley threads the book. As a Democrat, then Populist, then Democrat again, a lawman, businessman, and editor, Spradley’s story allows the writer to weave a narrative that plunks the main storyline into time and place in such a manner that the reader can begin to grip the social dynamics that fuse the community and its people into a macabre drama of race and politics.

I agree with Dr. McDonald’s comments above, and suggest a caveat that this story’s elements are not exclusive to our regional history—the characters’ stories, good and bad, must singularly interact with each reader. It reveals a perversion of legal integrity and a sheriff caught between conflicting requirements in law and of culture.

The context of Borders’ well-written, forceful, and disturbing history compels us to dialogue with the secret chambers of our own inner selves. I recommend it without qualification to anyone interested in Texas history and the mystery of humanity.

Melvin C. Johnson
Angelina College

As the writing of Texas history has grown increasingly sophisticated in recent years, relatively little of this new scholarship has been directed at the history of Texas cities. Michael Phillips addresses this shortcoming in White Metropolis, his study of Dallas from its founding to 2001. Phillips' focus is race, but not as it is usually conceptualized. This is not a history of African Americans in Dallas, or a study of Dallas race relations. Instead, Phillips organizes his study around the concept of race in all of its complexity. Influenced in part by Neil Foley's tri-racial study of black, Mexican American, and poor white workers in Texas agriculture, Phillips broadens our usually narrow concept of race to include blacks, Mexican Americans, immigrants (especially those from southern and eastern Europe), the white working class, Jews, Catholics, and even women. These otherwise disparate groups share the fate of having been marginalized and oppressed - sometimes violently - by the white power elite that dominated Dallas' political and economic development and controlled its history and its image of itself.

Central to Phillip's analysis of Dallas history is the theory of "whiteness," which the author defines as much as an attitude as a complexion. "Whiteness rested on a steadfast belief in racial differences, support of capitalism, faith in rule by the wealthy, certitude that competition and inequity arose from nature, and rejection of an activist government that redistributed political or economic power" (p. 12). It was more an economic and political ideology than a biological or anthropological construct. It was anti-socialist and anti-collectivist. Using "whiteness," Phillips presents Dallas history as the largely successful struggle of Dallas elites to establish and maintain their power over the vast majority of Dallas citizens through the use of racism and violence. Challenges occur and they are largely defeated; even the civil rights revolution did not radically alter power relationships.

Phillips concludes his history with the observation that Dallas escaped the violent urban riots and decay of cities such as Detroit, not because it enjoyed a more dynamic leadership than those failed cities, "but because a self-induced paralysis left the structures of oppression soundly intact. Under the influence of whiteness, Dallas learned to forget the past, regret the present, and dread the future" (p. 178).

White Metropolis will not please all readers. It is a highly ideological and sharply critical study of Dallas, and by implication, all of urban Texas and the urban South. Its focus is clearly on oppression and injustice, not success and accomplishment. It is thoroughly researched and documented, although hardly balanced in its approach or its tone. Like it or not, this book needs to be read by anyone interested in Texas history.

Cary D. Wintz
Texas Southern University

Race and the Houston Police Department, 1930-1990: A Change Did Come examines the racial history of the Houston Police Department in the context of social change during rapid economic and demographic growth. Dwight Watson, an associate professor of history, found that Houston's growth in the 1930s spawned transitional forces that challenged the established racial order. Those forces evolved into direct confrontations in the 1950s and were aggravated by the activism of the 1960s before achieving substantial transformation following a series of high-profile events in the 1960s and 1970s. Watson concludes that the Houston police offered such stiff opposition that change occurred only as result of external pressures, the benefits of which first reached salient proportions in the administration of Chief Lee P. Brown.

Race and the Houston Police began as Watson’s dissertation and it reflects the expected qualities, including impressive research relying heavily on archives with secondary sources intertwined. The style is workmanlike if not refined, the thesis well grounded if not radical, and Watson deserves credit for staying on message in an expansive contribution to a field that suffers from underachievement.

Complaints are few and relatively minor. At times Watson’s passion out-runs logic, especially in his high regard for Chief Brown, which is perhaps too evident, and he may have offered a contradiction by calling 1944 to 1959 an era of great change for the department, then writing that it “dug in” to maintain its tradition (p. 61). In addition, the sharpness of the before-and-after contrast would have been heightened by covering the World War I riot that began with the beating of a black soldier by a Houston police officer. Criticisms notwithstanding, Watson has produced a scholarly study that achieves its purpose and is well grounded.

Harold Rich
Fort Worth, Texas


This volume is a fine reflection that the Lone Star State’s pride and joy – especially for those who enjoy Friday Night Lights, and understand that the great variety of high school activities are vital to community fellowship and student dreams of future success – often are gathered around athletics.

These pages offer enjoyable opportunities to understand how many of the team titles were selected at more than 1500 high schools, with 227 different
names – not including the varieties among some in spelling, and/or descriptive adjectives. The most popular of these often-legendary trademarks is Eagle at 159 schools, more than ten percent of the state’s total. The ten most popular mascots are Eagles, Bulldogs, Tigers, Lions, Panthers, Mustangs, Wildcats, Cougars, Indians, and Hornets, at 706 locations. More than 100 schools “have names unique to themselves,” such as Polytechnic (Fort Worth) Parrots - “the Poly Parrots.” Other “one-of-a-kind” include the Frost Polar Bears, Taylor Ducks, Itasca Wampus Cats, Hutto Hippos, Dumas Demons, Winters Blizzards, Robert E. Lee (Goose Creek ISD) Ganders. Cuero Gobblers, Progresso Red Ants, Masonic Home (Fort Worth) Mighty Mites, Tom Bean Tomcats, and Trent Gorillas.

In each chapter, anecdotes describe how many of the mascots seemed appropriate for a particular community, such as in “Storm Warnings,” when the new coach at Amarillo yelled at his team being bothered by a heavy Panhandle wind in 1922, “Come on, you golden sandstormers, bear down.” Later, he officially named them at a civic luncheon – placing a truly unique title in a proud place. Similarly, there are the Lamesa Tornadoes and Floydada Whirlwinds – with their JV team, Breezers, and the elementary boys are Twisters and Dusters.

These comprehensive and always joyfully written chapters extend across twenty-four topics such as Canines, Felines, Exotics, Soldiers, Ranch Life, Indians, Royalty and Working Folk, Looking into the Heavens, and “Whatchamacallits and Como se Llamas.” Each section offers stories and memories to explain that school’s special choice of the mascot that is now so special to them.

These are only samplings of the hundreds of details about how Texas attitudes, enjoyments, life-style, and traditions are reflected in our schools. Anyone seeking specific information about their favorite high school will be particularly grateful for three appendices: Alphabetical Index by Mascot; Alphabetical Index by School; and Mascot-Related School Addresses by the Numbers. This volume is highly informative and thoroughly enjoyable – a true Texas victory on the scoreboard of quality.

Haskell Monroe
College Station, Texas


In 1984 Oxford University Press published Ty Cobb, the first biography of the baseball superstar written by a professional historian. Professor Charles Alexander of Ohio University already had established himself as an authority on cultural and intellectual history before focusing his training and talents on
baseball. A native of the southeastern corner of Texas, Alexander grew up watching the Beaumont Exporters of the Texas League and he became a life-long baseball fan. As an historian he recognized the possibilities inherent in the statement of Jacques Barzaun that "whoever would know the mind and heart of America had better learn baseball."

Alexander’s exploration of Cobb was compelling and multifaceted. I repeatedly have read his lively descriptions of “dead ball” play (pp. 53-56 and 89-92, for example), while being impressed by his perceptive observations on relations between white Southerners and African Americans and on the role of the National Pastime early in the twentieth century. Alexander’s startling conclusions on the ghastly death of Cobb’s father provide a key to the complex, difficult personality of the controversial star. Georgia and Detroit and other scenes of Cobb’s time are brought back to life by thorough research and artful writing.

Ty Cobb remained in print for twenty years, and during that time Alexander produced biographies of baseball greats John J. McGraw and Rogers Hornsby, as well as Our Game: An American Baseball History and Breaking the Slump: Baseball in the Depression Era. While some professional historians have devoted a single book of their output to sports history, Alexander has probed baseball with several excellent volumes during a period of more than two decades. His next book will be a biography of Tris Speaker, a Hall of Fame outfielder from Texas and Cobb’s contemporary.

The Speaker biography will be published by Southern Methodist University Press, which has issued a reprint of Ty Cobb. In addition to keeping a valuable book in print, this edition features an afterword in which the author discussed his approach to biography and further reflections on Cobb. Highly recommended for baseball fans and those who “would know the mind and heart of America.”

Bill O’Neal
Carthage, Texas


Professor Joe E. Early, Jr., has presented in A Texas Baptist Power Struggle: The Hayden Controversy the full and insightful story of an important struggle among Texas Baptists late in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This was a religious struggle, not just between strong, opinionated individuals, but also between competing visions, virtues, and vices. Early presents a balanced view of both sides.
Early sets the struggle involving Samuel Augustus Hayden and the powerful leaders of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. This was a struggle involving two newspapers—the Texas Baptist and Herald and Baptist Standard. The author explains how this was similar to controversies among the Methodists over holiness and perfectionist theology, and the Churches of Christ and Christian Churches splitting over mission strategy, musical instruments, and biblical interpretation. Early establishes the historical and religious setting for the controversy involving Baptists in East Texas.

The story of how the Hayden controversy developed involves a number of different individuals, incidents, institutions, influences, and churches. Early details the significant role of the First Baptist Church of Dallas in this conflict. He explains the rivalry among Baptist leaders and institutions in Texas and both the constructive and destructive actions and attitudes of these strong personalities and powerful institutions. The role of Baylor University, the two important newspapers, and various individuals such as B.H. Carroll, J.B. Gambrell, and J.B. Cranfill are analyzed and explained.

The focus of the conflict was more than strong, opinionated leaders. It was about the nature of the church, how churches relate to one another and how they associate, particularly in missions and conflict. The thread that runs through Early’s narrative is how these two views of the church and conventions shaped the controversy, ultimately resulting in the creation of the Baptist Missionary Association in East Texas. In presenting this interesting story of theological, ecclesiological, and personal disagreement, Early draws lessons for analysis and consideration regarding the conflict that has come to the Southern Baptist Convention in the last twenty years and recently in another "parting of the ways" in the creation of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

Early explains how this movement related to other elements in Baptist life, such as the Landmark movement; Baptist editorials and news reporting (including personal attacks and accusations); the Whitsitt controversy at Southern Seminary; the handling of convention money and resources in the Texas Convention; the role of messengers or delegates in a convention; the Gospel Mission Movement and how missionaries should be sent and supported.

Early has presented a readable, accurate, balanced story of an important controversy shaping two different Baptist movements. The book has two documents in the Appendix that give interesting insights into the story. Extensive endnotes confirm in primary and secondary sources what the author has presented in a readable and engaging narrative. The bibliography of the sources used include primary, secondary, periodical, annuals, minutes, proceedings of meetings, and archived collections of personal papers. This scholarly work concludes with a good index of topics. This is a book worth reading and certainly valuable for those interested in the religious development of Texas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Jerry Hopkins
East Texas Baptist University
In this attractive book we see many examples of the settings in which Texans practice their religious faith. We hear, as well, the ways many of them understand the faith they practice. Roy Spence, an Austin advertising and marketing executive, is listed as the author of "The Amazing Faith," but it appears that he is more properly the producer or coordinator of a group project.

Randall Ford drove all around Texas making photographs. Out of what must have been thousands of exposures, 110 are reproduced in these pages. Almost without exception these beautiful photos attract our attention and stretch our curiosity. It would be a mistake simply to page from photo to photo to photo. Mike Blair recorded interviews with forty-five Texans of faith and provides us with some of their comments to complement the photos. These interviews and photos are divided into three sections: common ground found in faith; common ground found in the Golden Rule; and common ground found in values.

In the three sections we see and hear from entertainers, politicians, clergy, street workers, near-hermits, missionaries, and others. Some are highly educated in religion and theology; others have learned in less formal ways. Taken together, Blair's interviews and Ford's photographs provide a view of the faith of individuals in Texas at the beginning of the century.

Nelin Hudani, a Muslim, talks about ways to embrace our differences (p. 15). Garland Robertson, a Viet Nam veteran turned Mennonite peace activist, says that the Golden Rule requires us to move the boundaries of our concern outward until we include the whole created order (p. 87). Rabbi Samuel Karff reminds us that faith is trust in the presence of God to discern the will of God (p. 53). Sara Hickman is the only person interviewed who challenges the pervasive use of masculine pronouns to refer to God (p. 141).

In only one case does an interview invite us to participate in her faith community. Bertha Sadler Means asks, "Would you like to come to our church?" St. James Episcopal, in Austin, (p. 85). In this single invitation we see, perhaps, a hint of a real problem with "The Amazing Faith." Focused so completely on individual faith expressions, Spence and company seem to have missed the community which is the heart of religious faith practice for most Texan Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Community is a significant factor in Buddhist and Hindu faith practices as well. Several of those interviewed show little interest in common ground. In fact, they proclaim their faith individualistic and separated from common connections with other Texans of faith. Sometimes instead of common ground the crew seems to have found the least common denominator.

Photos of faith communities in action would help. Interfaith service projects, the delightful experience of a congregational dinner on the grounds,
and/or a synagogue assembled for community worship were surely available. Group interviews to accompany these group photographs would more clearly picture common ground for Texans of faith.

We can begin to learn something about religious faith in Texas from this book and enjoy doing so. A full and accurate picture, though, will demand several other sources, not the least of which could be participation in a faith community.

Milton S. Jordan
Georgetown, Texas

*The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, editor

The Old Southwest humorists, white, male, and well-to-do, disdained lower class whites, women, blacks, and Yankees. They defended *antebellum* Southern institutions, the genteel way of life, slavery, and the good old days. Those nineteenth-century Southern backwoods humorists included Joseph Glover Baldwin, George Washington Harris, and Augustus Baldwin Longstreet. That their legacy continues today, in a supposedly more sophisticated society, is ironic, yet it does, as editor Ed Piacentino and an articulate group of literary critics argue in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor.*


Though the three popular culture essays come at the end of the book and seemed on the surface to be more of a reach, the authors pointed out the relationship between this genre and the Old Southwest humorists. Particularly appealing, perhaps because it covered the role of women in Southern, rural
humor skillfully, was Jan Whitt's "American Life Is Rich in Lunacy": The Unsettling Social Commentary of The Beverly Hillbillies."

Overall this book accomplished what its title and goals suggested, that is, to portray the varied ways in which Southern humorists of past (and current) decades continued the storytelling tradition established in the years before the Civil War by the Old Southwest humorists. The essays are enjoyable, well written, and well documented.

Bruce A. Glasrud  
Seguin, Texas

Engineering the World: Stories from the First 75 Years of Texas Instruments,  
Caleb Pirtle III (Southern Methodist University Press, P.O. Box 750415,  

This handsomely illustrated volume is a celebration of the pioneering spirit that allowed a small, geophysical exploration company from Dallas to emerge as one of the world's leading firms in the area of advanced technology. The bulk of the narrative is framed by the research, design, and production of Texas Instrument's advancements in technology that changed our world. A few of these inventions include the Magnetic Anomaly Detector (MAD) used for radars, the transistor used for radios and a host of other household devices, the microchip for calculators and personal computers, and Digital Light Processors for super high-definition televisions.

Pirtle creates a number of important themes that are particularly relevant in understanding the history of Texas Instruments (TI). The Depression led Geophysical Services, Inc., the predecessor to TI, to establish field operations around the globe from the Middle East to Southeast Asia to Latin America. The pursuit of a global strategy remains a cornerstone of the company as it maintains a global sales force and research and production facilities. Similarly, the decision to focus on the personal consumer electronics market late in the 1940s put TI at the forefront of developing technologies that made portable and affordable end use electronic devices a reality. Most important,

Pirtle chronicles the leaders of TI who sought to create a culture of innovation that could support the best minds in the fields of math, science, and engineering to seek the next great technology constantly.

Six earlier attempts to produce a history of Texas Instruments provided Pirtle with abundant source material for this volume. Intelligently written using materials contained in the TI Corporate Archives department, along with hundreds of interviews of past and present employees, make this an important contribution in the field of the history of technology.

Marshall Schott  
Katy, Texas

This book is about how the University of Texas at Austin by its 125th anniversary became a "university of the first class" in spite of politics, Civil War, governors, the board of regents, the legislature, faculty, student protests, segregation, and a Tower sniper. What could have been an orange and white flag waver is so skillfully organized by editor Holland, who was a bibliographer in the University of Texas General Libraries for sixteen years. The readable text should appeal not only to Longhorn alumni but be required reading for any Texas politician or future politician. As Holland points out, the University of Texas reflects the state of Texas, and that can be complicated.

For example, the Frank Erwin years as regent, Holland wrote the chapter titled "Thirteen Ways of Looking at Chairman Frank," a detailed, balanced evaluation with information shared at the time only with the university's inner circle. There is so much here — Joe Franz's tribute to Richard Fleming, James Magnuson on James Michener, the early feuding regents — George W. Brackenridge, a former officer in the Union Army, and George W. Littlefield, who fought for the Confederacy with Terry's Texas Rangers. Brackenridge and Littlefield became the university’s most generous donors in its first hundred years and their legacy continues in the controversy over UT's statues of Confederate heroes.

David Dettmer records "A Requiem for B. Hall - When the Poor Boys Ruled the Campus." A chapter on campus architecture is illustrated with original architectural drawings. (J. Frank Dobie is said to have called the Tower a "vertical outhouse.") Other chapters include Harry Ransom's acquisition of the T.E. Hanley collection, one of the most significant block purchases in the recent history of American research libraries, and the speculation UT still is paying for some of Ransom's purchases; segregation, integration, and reminiscences from Walter Prescott Webb, Willie Morris, Betty Sue Flowers and Barbara Jordan -- UT history recorded in the style of a long visit from a very intellectual neighbor.

Cissy Stewart Lale
Fort Worth, Texas


With the exception of a few private locales, I have seen most of the sites where Laurence Parent burned his 4x5 Tri-X black & white film for Timeless Texas. As it turns out, I didn't really "see," at least in the creative sense, in the way
an artistic genius views the world about him. More incriminating yet, I have lived for years nearby most of these landscapes, so I can’t blame lack of opportunity!

Once the possessor of an ancient 4x5 Speed Graphic, rudimentary dark-room, and Tri-X, I can dimly sense the incredible effort, patience, persistence, and talent it took to capture these images. Parent gives us insights into what it takes, photo by photo. If you are up for a fine visual treat, buy this book. As a bonus, a few significant “humanscapes” are blended in, each stopping time to give us a glimpse of Texas history.

Elmer Kelton, whose “Introduction” eloquently leads us to Parent’s photo essays, reminds us that “Nothing is literally timeless,” but also that Texas, in its vastness still has places where “change has been gentle and easy to abide.” This is true, and for the majority of the images, twelve millennia slip by rather timelessly. When one begins to imagine the critters that you do not see in these habitats, we begin to understand why our area of the United States is one of the most biodiverse.

Deliberately, Parent has banished some twenty million resident Texans, not to mention the other millions who visit our state annually. One wonders if, thirty years from now, Parent or any one else can keep forty million of us out of the frame. My guess is that many of the landscapes will still be intact, as they are conserved by Texas Parks & Wildlife, the National Park Service, the USDA, Forest Service, private land conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, and most important of all, individual private landowners and corporations such as Temple-Inland.

Texas is at the epicenter of a 12,000-year-old experiment in human consumption of nature’s ecological services, the natural capital, which supports all life on Earth. We have overdrawn the interest on this capital and are now consuming the corpus. Outside the depth of field of Parent’s best lens is a Texas that is living beyond its natural means, especially its water, but also its soils, air quality, wildlife, and all biodiversity.

This brilliant black & white study is evocative of a Texas worth conserving, challenging us to husband some of our natural capital for the future. Someone should send a copy of Timeless Texas to every member of the Texas Legislature, where important votes for our parks, wildlife, water, and our great grandchildren will be taken.

Dick Bartlett
Uncertain and Ft. Davis, Texas


This book boasts one of the better titles of the year and many of us wish we had thought of it first. David Murph has written about growing up in Fort
Worth in the 1950s, a time when the term “gang” brought images of Spanky and Alfalfa, when “gay” was an accepted synonym for light-hearted, and parents still clung, perhaps desperately, to the philosophy that “boys will be boys.”

The Murph family – geologist father, mother, second grader David, and younger brother Jim – moved to the Texas Christian University neighborhood from Tyler in 1950 and found two boys in shorts and T-shirts in the front yard studying their new neighbor. The two became part of the neighborhood boys who made up David’s gang. They celebrated the arrival of black-and-white television with Maverick and Howdy Doody, spent Saturday mornings at TCU Theater watching cartoons and a continuing serial that left the hero or heroine dangling in peril from week to week. These also were the polio years, when friends were crippled or died.

As they matured, escapades became more daring: an experiment with flaming arrows burned the zoo hay barn; they were jailed by police sent to break up a fight between two high school classmates; one boy was shot in the foot during target practice. Murph and his limping friend tossed a sign through a teacher’s window and were suspended from school. Rather than face parents, they hitchhiked to Salina, Kansas, before, hungry and exhausted, they were picked up by police and bused home.

David Murph graduated from the University of Texas and eventually entered the ministry. His limping friend is an urologist. Others are doctors, lawyers, and real estate moguls. Boys will be boys.

Cissy Stewart Lale
Fort Worth, Texas


Paddling the Wild Neches is an adventure to read. One can take this grand and beautiful canoe trip down the Neches River without the discomfort of cold weather, mosquito bites, sand in a sleeping bag, mud on feet, and other natural conditions of a float trip. Additionally, writer Richard Donovan fills the rest stops with personal and historical anecdotes of people and happenings on the Neches back through time. Paddling is a good read throughout!

Describing the sunsets and sweet water and the deer and ‘coons and ‘gators in the Neches bottomlands, however, was not Donovan’s main purpose for writing. Richard Donovan, like most East Texas woodsmen and naturalists, is vitally concerned with the health and well being of the Neches bottomlands and the hardwoods and wildlife that it nurtures. And he is writing his message to keep the Neches bottomlands wild! On the other hand, it is the nature of Chambers of Commerce to dream about big tamed lakes and see big-spending water-sportpersons pouring dollars into their motel-and-hotel funds. Aye, there’s the rub!
Three catastrophic projects are now under discussion – building Fastrill Dam in Anderson and Cherokee counties and Rockland Dam in Angelina and Tyler counties and raising the height of the dam at Lake Steinhagen seven to twelve feet. Fastrill Dam would flood 32,000 acres of hardwood bottomland. Rockland would flood 126,000 acres. And if they raise the height of Dam B, Martin Dies State Park, the Angelina/Neches Wildlife Management Area, and The Forks all will go under water.

Donovan’s response to these impending ecological disasters is his proposal to put the Neches River between Lake Palestine and Dam B under the National Wild and Scenic River System. This will not interfere with private ownership and management and will not give the public access to private property, but will keep privately owned lands from being condemned and inundated so that the people of Dallas can water their San Augustin grass during a droughty summer.

Donovan’s trip down the Neches – which will be one of his lifetime’s great adventures – was to learn more about the river and to focus the media’s attention on a problem that, if it takes place, will deprive generations to come of the full beauty and grandeur of native, pristine hardwood bottomlands and will eliminate the animals – the squirrels, hogs, deer – that depend on these hardwoods.

Oaks and other hardwoods are the maintainers of our wildlife. The wildlife food chain is nurtured with acorns. Timber growers have clear-cut these hardwoods and planted pine plantations. They have gone through forests girdling every tree that was not a pine. Some have cut the trees right down to the river’s edge. If we do not save our hardwood bottomlands, we will find that East Texas has become a sterile pine plantation.

I join Richard Donovan in his effort to put the Neches under the National Wild and Scenic River System.

He heard no bullfrogs and saw only four snakes.

I thoroughly enjoyed Paddling the Wild Neches, and the week I received my review copy my daughter Maggie and I paddled ten miles down the Neches as part of the Lufkin Chamber of Commerce’s Neches River Rendezvous, Lufkin’s way of promoting the survival of the Neches bottomlands.

I have only two cavils with Dick Donovan. The Neches was not called the Snowy River because of its white sandbars; a Spanish explorer named it after Our Lady of the Snows, a miraculous appearance of the Virgin in Rome during a snow in August. And, more importantly, Dick needs to learn how to eat better on a float trip; his menus were really depressing.

F. E. Abernethy
Stephen F. Austin State University