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Book Reviews

BOOK REVIEWS

Western America: The Exploration, Settlement, and Development of the Region Beyond the Mississippi. By LeRoy R. Hafen and Carl Coke Rister. (Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1941. Pp. xxvi, 698, bibliography, illustrations, index.)

Professors Hafen and Rister have written a new textbook in Western history, one obviously intended to accompany a course specializing in the history of the western United States. There are thirty-five chapters, each followed by a select bibliography, and there is an index. The whole volume includes more than seven hundred pages.

The authors state that it was their purpose to treat primarily the "exploration, settlement, and development of the trans-Mississippi West," and this plan should be borne in mind in evaluating their work. For example, the first four chapters are "concerned with the achievements of the Spaniards and the French in establishing themselves in the Southwest, on the Pacific Coast, and in the Mississippi Valley," but, of course, no one would expect a very complete study of the beginnings of Spanish and French exploration and colonization in America in such limited space, in addition to the later achievements of these nations in the trans-Mississippi West. As a consequence, the volume contains only the most cursory reference to the early Spanish and French activities in the New World, and, in fact, the same is true of the exploration and colonization by the English along the Atlantic seaboard. In this latter case, the authors assume that their readers are already familiar with English settlement in America before 1763, and therefore their story emphasizes the period of expansion across the United States beginning with the settlement of the trans-Appalachian region.

From this point on, the authors follow consistently the

path of westward expansion, dealing with the Old Southwest, the Old Northwest, the Louisiana region, the fur trade, Oregon, Santa Fé trail, Texas, the Mexican war, California, Mormon settlement, and, in the period following the Civil war, the sod-house frontier, mining frontier, overland communication and transportation, the Indian question, coming of the railroads, range cattle and sheep industries, new states, outlawry and vigilance committees, and evolution of Western culture.

It is clear that Professors Hafen and Rister have attempted to bring the story to about 1890, when the frontier had, in a sense, ceased to exist.

It is difficult to criticize a text book, for individual needs and points of view differ where such a great variety of subject matter is concerned. Bearing in mind the limitations set by the author, the book is well proportioned, the style is good, and the format excellent. It is written in narrative form, without the familiar box heads common to text books, and, as a matter of Western American history, is a contribution to the literature of the subject.

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Colorado, The Centennial State. By Percy Stanley Fritz. (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1941. 518 pp., maps and illustrations. $5.00.)

This publishing house has given us another of their excellent series of State histories. The press work is very commendable with one exception: why must we be imposed upon by books which are needlessly *heavy?* The stock used in this volume is so thick that it balances Caughey's *California* (by the same house), although the latter is a third larger. Either is a burden which consciously irritates the reader.

For a one-volume history, Dr. Fritz has made a very reasonable allotment of his space. Statehood (from 1876)

occupies the last half, following three much shorter "Parts" devoted to background, the pioneer period (1581-61), and the territorial period (1861-76). On the whole, the selected bibliographies at the end of the chapters seem very satisfactory, although some important titles of the last few years are not found. Nevertheless there are various mistakes as to fact or interpretation which suggest a lack of acquaintance with studies of much longer standing. When shall we learn to avail ourselves of friendly criticism *before* we rush into print?

In other reviews of this book we have seen corrections offered, touching the territorial and statehood periods, e. g., by Geo. L. Anderson in *The Colorado Magazine* of last March, pp. 77-78. We offer some observations as to earlier times. The chapter on "The Indians" is a good portrayal of that subject, but we might expect at least reference to "Folsom Man" (p. 19), while the suggestion that any of Coronado's army saw, or heard of the cliff ruins is absurd (p. 20). The "Army of the West" under Kearny in 1846 numbered, not 250, but 1,558 men; and Price was not with him but followed with a second division of 1,700 men (pp. 48-49).

We are told (p. 53) that "Indian names slightly overshadow the Spanish in Colorado," seven counties, e. g., have Indian names. But the names of the state itself and of *nineteen* counties are Spanish! And why should the some 60,000 Spanish-American citizens of Colorado be affronted by the term "Mexicans" (p. 69)? It would be on a par for them to call Dr. Fritz a "German."

The brief section on "Spanish Exploration" (pp. 58-69) is perhaps the most mediocre of the book. The author repeats the old mistake that the "land of Cíbola" was named from the buffalo; he is unfamiliar with the terms of the contract given to Soto; the alleged quotation (59-60) is not found in Castañeda's account, nor was the review of Coronado's army held on Easter Sunday. Coronado was traveling southeast (not northeast) prior to sending his main

army back to Tiguex; Santa Fé was not founded in 1609 nor by Oñate, nor did Oñate secure "129 soldiers to protect the colonists"—the heads of families themselves were the soldiers. Neither Coronado nor Oñate was the complete failure indicated: the one laid the foundation of vast Spanish territorial rights, the other began permanent occupation. As to Vargas, we have the remarkable statement that he "regained the land but not the Indians." The Escalante expedition is not understood as one detail of the Spanish plan to integrate the widely separated parts of the enormous Spanish borderlands, also the Anza route of 1774 from Sonora to California is overlooked. Spanish names are misspelled (Melgares, Alencaster) and a petty officer at Santa Fé is confused with Salcedo in Chihuahua (p. 77). As to poor old Lalande, it was shown years ago that he asked leave to depart but was restrained by the Spanish authorities.

Fortunately, as the author carries his narrative into the nineteenth century he is on historical ground which has been well worked, and his text is rich, informative and well presented. The illustrations are very good, but for some reason there is no list of them.—L. B. B.

Government Handout: A Study in the Administration of the Public Lands, 1875-1891. By Harold Hathaway Dunham (Edwards Bros., Inc., Ann Arbor, Mich. 1941. Index and Bibliography. 364 pp.)

The title indicates that the author approached his subject with a definite slant. He sets out to prove that what other historians might designate as development was in fact exploitation; that, in the main, the growth and progress of the West was rooted in disregard of public rights and welfare. What others might ascribe to inefficiency and mistakes in administration which under our form of government are often unavoidable, to the author becomes the evidence of bribery and perversion.

In analyzing the actions and motives of high officials, from the Supreme Court and members of Congress, down to the employes of the General Land Office, the author follows a trail which to him proves iniquity in the application of the federal land laws. Of the late U. S. Senator Teller, while he was secretary of the interior, it is written, for instance: "Unfortunately he had aligned himself with the predatory interests which did not care for the proper solution for those needs." and again: "He adopted some of the most pernicious rules and practices ever credited to a Secretary." Yet the writer admits: "In all fairness to the Secretary, however, it should be observed that many of his reports sound sincere in seeking revision of particular laws," and again: "Secretary Teller should be credited for urging a solution of survey and forfeiture problems."

The most flagrant exhibit of the author's apparent bias is his treatment of the Maxwell Land Grant litigation. An entire chapter is devoted to it under the heading "The Maxwell Land Grant Fraud." In it, Dunham sets his opinion against the judgment of the United States Supreme Court and reflects upon the character of men who were the soul of honor and to whom New Mexico, in fact the entire Southwest and even the entire Nation, owes a debt of gratitude. He credits the Democrats with reforms resulting "from their efforts to check corruption in New Mexico," although he admits that "one effort for improvement was undertaken by President Hayes when he appointed General Lew Wallace governor with instructions to leave no stone unturned in achieving order." He disputes Historian Ralph E. Twitchell's account of partisan machinations in New Mexico during the Cleveland administration, and upholds the record of Surveyor General Julian who, because of his prejudices, newspaper reports, and actions, "helped to make New Mexico a by-word for land law violations." Of these Twitchell in his *Leading Facts of New Mexican History* remarked: "An assault on land titles to lands in New Mexico was inaugurated which, for virulence of action and incapa-

city of management," had never been equaled. It can be further stated that the government could not convict the alleged guilty. One of the most noted of these cases was that brought against the late Colonel Max Frost, proprietor and editor of the *Santa Fe New Mexican,* whose criticism of Julian and the administration subjected him to the fury of partisan persecution.

Dunham's approach to the discussion of the Maxwell Land Grant matter is as follows: "Influence in the land department is evident in Secretary Teller's rulings and in Commissioner Williamson's action for the Maxwell grant patent. On the whole, bribery at least in a direct form, seems to have been unnecessary for obtaining favorable action. Lax enforcement, liberal interpretations and biased and reversed rulings gave predatory interests all they could wish." In a biographical sketch of Lucien Maxwell, the founder and first president of the First National Bank of Santa Fé, the author says that Maxwell bought out the interest of the Beaubien children by "paying not more than $3,500 for each share," and "a close friend of Maxwell's reported that in 1866 the latter was willing to sell the entire 'rancho' for $75,000." Maxwell finally sold for ten times that amount. The author further impugns the motives of Stephen B. Elkins, and of W. W. Griffin, both of whom succeeded Maxwell as presidents of the First National Bank, Griffin having surveyed the grant and John Elkins, brother of Stephen, having been on Griffin's bond. Chief Justice L. Bradford Prince, later governor and president of New Mexico Historical Society, is referred to as "a member of the Santa Fe Ring," who "three seconds before midnight . . . signed the decree of foreclosure to complete what seemed like a rascally piece of judicial legerdemain."

Despite the decision of Judge Brewer in favor of the Maxwell Grant claimants, the case was taken up to the United States Supreme Court. Judge Brewer had said in concluding his opinion: "I leave the case with the final observation by the government with all the means and facili-

ties at its command, the officers of the Government (deputy surveyors and the surveyor general) and the claimants stand without a stain upon the rectitude of their conduct, and the boundaries of the grant as finally surveyed and patented, if not absolutely accurate and correct are at least shown to be as nearly so as any known testimony can determine."

Reprehensible to the last degree is the author's dictum that the Hon. Frank Springer, as upright, unselfish and patriotic a citizen as New Mexico has ever honored, "was guilty of false statements, that he contradicted himself materially, ignored important points and skillfully confused the question of boundaries." Yet, Dunham admits: "Mr. Frank Springer of New Mexico, presented the main argument for the Maxwell Company. He denied that there had been any fraud; he upheld the accuracy of the surveys, defended the claim against limitations of the Mexican law and made a strong plea for a finality to attacks on the company's rights and property. His points were careful, clever and bold to a high degree—thoroughly able. It is said that he received the thanks of the Court for the ability with which he presented his case." The U. S. Supreme Court denied a rehearing and from then on, began an era of development of the grant which had cost the owners an estimated $12,000,000, that ushered in the growth and prosperity of what is now Colfax county, a development otherwise unattainable. There was more litigation but the Maxwell Grant company won in every instance.

Dunham has brought together a mass of official data and current comments on federal land matters which prove his indefatigable industry as a research student. His literary style runs easily and makes the formidable volume quite readable. While recognizing his bias and his evident eagerness to prove his theme that the disposal of the public lands was a scandalous "Government Handout," the volume may be considered a noteworthy exposition of a very important but controversial historical subject.—P. A. F. W.