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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

The Los Angeles Star, 1851-1864: The Beginnings of Journalism in Southern California. William B. Rice. Edited by John Walton Caughey. Pp. 315. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1947. \$5.00

“Nothing is so stale as yesterday’s newspaper.”

The fallacy of this commonly-accepted simile is conclusively established by William B. Rice in his documented, scholarly, and popularly-written story of *The Los Angeles Star*. This book shows the value of newspapers as historical sources—an appraisal we often shortsightedly overlook in our hasty and sometimes careless reading of the daily papers. Good newspapers are indeed the foremost recorders of the current story of man in a particular region and time.

As Caughey states in the foreword, this volume would have significance standing alone as a journalistic study of one of California’s first newspapers. Furthermore, since it devotes considerable attention to other outstanding California journals of the period (a device which enables the author to present an objective view of events as portrayed by different newspapers) and touches upon problems faced by the editors, it presents a clear cross-section of the whole field of early California journalism. The influence upon the *Star* of the pioneer *Daily Alta California*, San Francisco, and its editorial rivalry with other neighboring newspapers are portrayed. Such characteristics of frontier journalism as financial problems; importance of state printing subsidies; difficulties with news sources; the development of correspondents, and contributors; news, feature-story, and editorial policies are delineated or reflected in the analysis of the *Star*. The paper was an aggressive democratic leader and a potent voice in moulding the country’s destiny. Chapters discussing the war years when the *Star* was one of the papers which felt the touch of unorganized censorship are a contribution to the study of government regulation of the press.

But the newspaper is so inextricably a part of the community it serves, the heart-throb of communal life, that by its very nature it has greater significance beyond its own horizons, problems and methods. So this study necessarily does what the Los Angeles newspapers of the 1850's and 1860's did—namely, it pictures the economic, political, social, religious and cultural life of the community. The reader vividly sees the life of the people, experiences sympathetically the problems they faced, and feels the drama and importance, in the light of later years, of the sociological issues of the period as debated and portrayed in the *Star*. The book becomes an illuminating social history. The author states in evaluation: “. . . these editors were aware of much in life; they attempted to help their readers gain the same awareness. Their paper, therefore, was an educative and ameliorating influence. It also became, as its files bulked larger and larger, a prime historical source for the career of a colorful and important town.”

The *Star* was founded shortly after “Journalism . . . came to California with the Gold Rush” and within a year after Los Angeles (a town of about 1,500 persons, “the men outnumbering the women four to one”) was incorporated. In the cultural poverty of frontier life, Anglo-Saxon competed with Spanish. From this “somber setting for adventures in journalism,” the growth of the *Star* with its community is traced, step by step. During the early, unstable years, the paper was characterized by a succession of unimpressive editors, “adequate, but not distinguished service, and a conservatism that is always admired by many solvent subscribers.” Editorial subjects during the early period included improvement in mail service, articles on Indian conditions, local vigilantism, local government reform and community improvement, state and national policies affecting the Southern California area. Unfolding from the pages of the *Star* one sees the growth of manufacturing, industry, agriculture and commerce. Like other early journals, the *Star* was an outlet for literary efforts. Many of the feature articles and poems were above average in quality, Rice

says. The *Star's* interview with Olive Oatman after her rescue from the Apache and Mohave Indians was widely quoted at the time and is of such historical stature that Rice quotes it fully in the appendix. The chief literary contribution of the *Star* in its later years was the publication of Ina Donna Coolbrith's poems. A check list of these early poems also appears in the appendix.

Henry Hamilton's editorship of the *Star* after 1856 made it a positive, aggressive force at home and abroad. His influence was strong in making Southern California a Democratic pocket borough. He editorially quarreled with rival journals. In state and national politics, the Democrats and the colorful editor of the *Star* were equally successful. Finally, Hamilton's party loyalty was rewarded by his election to the state Senate. The Mormons, Indians, the Mail, and the Railroad furnished an inexhaustible supply of grist for Hamilton's mill before the issues of the Civil War occupied his attention. The fiery Hamilton remained democracy's champion, sharply criticized the war with the result that the use of the mails was temporarily denied the *Star* and Hamilton himself was arrested and held briefly for treason. The Unionist *Los Angeles News* commented that the *Star* had been perhaps the most treasonable sheet in the loyal United States, but was forced to admit that most of Los Angeles County was "double-dyed" in treason. In this respect the *Star* remained loyal to the views of its readers.

William B. Rice, the author, died in 1942 at the age of 26 while on a mountain-climbing expedition in Wyoming. Although his other research was unusually extensive for one so young, *The Los Angeles Star* was his largest achievement. It was his dissertation offered as requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of California at Los Angeles. He had served as lecturer in history at the University and as associate editor of the *Pacific Historical Review*. John Walton Caughey, professor of history, has edited the book for his friend and former student.

Besides the files of the *Star*, the author draws generously from the Bancroft and Benjamin L. Hayes Scrapbooks

in the Bancroft Library; the manuscripts of Abel Stearns and Benjamin D. Wilson in the Huntington Library; and from the state, county and city records.

JAMES W. MARKHAM

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Uncovered Wagon. Hart Stilwell. New York, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1947. Pp. 309. \$3.00

Portrait of a character against a background of lesser lights, told in the first person and in the salty language of a newspaperman who was raised tough. The book should be read in one sitting, just as a picture must be seen in its entirety.

Hart Stilwell has done a good job of writing for, although the book is fiction, that element is forgotten while reading. Stilwell has concerned himself with one person, "My Old Man," and does not deviate. The other characters, Mother, brother Duke, blind brother Richard, the daughters who worked for Bell Telephone and for Woolworth's, all nine children of the union, and even the horses, Buck, Sonny and the old white horse, move in the shadow of "My Old Man." They do move, however, and vividly on occasion.

Frank Endicott, "My Old Man," is a prototype of those restless primitives who form a hard nucleus for the migratory ne'er-do-wells of the rural communities. Ignorant, profane, untruthful, able to work himself into towering tantrums, able also to turn charm on and off as water is regulated by a spiggot, cowardly at times, at other times bold as a lion, "My Old Man" emerges as exactly what he calls himself in his rages: ". . . a no good son-of-a-bitch that's just in the way and would be better off dead."

There are times in the story when the reader's credulity is a trifle strained. It is difficult to believe that the narrator could be so naive as he shows himself at first and still come out the tolerant, if cynical, person that concludes the story. Some of the incident seems repetitious, and the mother's continuous obstinacy, coupled with her eternal equilibrium, is a little hard to take. Stilwell might have allowed her one uprising against her husband to some advantage. As it

stands she simply feeds "My Old Man" baking powder biscuits, concerning which he has a definite fixation, and grows morning glories on the front porch despite "My Old Man's" constant battle against them.

The writing is flatly factual, without interjection of the narrator's self save where such interjection adds to character portrayal. There is no crusade on the author's part, no social evil to set right, no personal ax to grind, and this is a relief after Steinbeck and others. *Uncovered Wagon* is just what it sets out to be: a picture of one character, unlovely truly, but very real for the most part. The setting is agricultural Texas in the 1900's. It is quite apparent that Stilwell writes of things he knows and that he has reached into his experience rather than into a source book for his color and incident. To this reviewer it seemed that *Uncovered Wagon* was worth the money.

BENNETT FOSTER

Albuquerque, New Mexico

The Pueblo Indians of San Ildefonso: A Changing Culture.

William Whitman, 3rd. New York, Columbia University Press, 1947. Pp. vii, 164. \$2.75 (Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology, No. 34).

The Pueblo Indians of San Ildefonso is a study of a Tewa speaking group located on the northern Rio Grande in New Mexico. The work follows the conventional organization of most ethnologies. The first section deals with a general presentation of the political, social and religious divisions and organizations of the Pueblo. It contains little material that is new but does serve to orient the reader. Chapters two and three, *The Individual*, and *The Family*, give information on the socialization processes and the individual life cycle. They comprise the bulk of work and represent a real contribution to our knowledge of the Rio Grande Tewa. In these two sections numerous examples of concrete situations embodied in case histories give mathematical validity for the analysis of the social implications. The chapter on *Work* gives some information on the accul-

turated economic scene but contains little on the techniques employed in making a livelihood. The section, Religion, deals with witchcraft, and to all practical purposes, nothing else. Some supplementary material on religion appears under Dances and Games. The final chapter, Conformance, two and a half pages, discusses cultural norms, stability, and breakdown and contains some psychological inferences.

The book is disappointing. In part, this is attributable to the untimely death of Whitman, which prevented continuation of field work, and in part to the inordinate secrecy which is characteristic of Pueblo Indians. However, discounting these factors, as an ethnology it still leaves much to be desired. The cultural picture presented is essentially one dimensional and without historic perspective. The work adds little to what is already recorded for this people. It contains no photographs or other illustrative material.

The principal value of the volume stems from the fact that it highlights the disadvantages of an over-dependence upon the participant-observer technique in ethnologic work. Dr. Florence Kluckhohn in her excellent paper, "The Participant-Observer Technique in Small Communities," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 331-343 (1940), has outlined the strengths and limitations of the use of this field method in cultures having the same or historically related cultural antecedents and has pointed out the dangers of employing it in situations where the cultural "distance" is great. Whitman's work is an exemplification of the direct relationship between paucity of results and the use of participant-observer technique in the study of Indian cultures whose way of life is even partially intact.

W. W. HILL

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Franciscan Explorations in California. Herbert Ingram Priestley. Edited by Lillian Estelle Fisher. With Illustrations by Frederic W. Corson. Glendale, California, The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1946. Pp. 189. \$5.00

This is a posthumous publication of one of the unfinished manuscripts left by Professor Herbert Ingram

Priestly. The manuscript was entitled "Franciscan Exploration in California," and one is at a loss to know why the title was changed. The purpose of the manuscript seems to have been to name many towns, rivers, mountains, valleys, and other places in California; to sketch rapidly the founding of the Franciscan missions there; and to show how Upper California was opened to geographical knowledge.

About a fourth of the manuscript was published in *The Catholic Historical Review* of July, 1920. The *Review* had planned to run the remaining part, but it was never finished.

After sketching briefly and skilfully the colonization work of the Spaniards in Lower California and northwestern Mexico prior to the occupation of Upper California, Priestly embarks immediately on his main theme. The story of the first journey to Monterey and the "East Bay Penetration" is followed in rapid succession by an account of the problem of maintaining the missions and presidios, the discoveries of Father Garcés, and the first and second Anza expeditions. From these the author appropriately turns to the problem of consolidating the new settlements and the need to explore and settle part of the inland valleys (in which efforts the work of Fray Pedro Muñoz receives emphasis).

After a brief (perhaps too brief) discussion of the exploration of the river valleys, Priestly turns to the period of decline. Although the titles of the main headings and sub-headings may not indicate it, the rest of the book deals with the decline and brings in the establishment of San Rafael and the intrusion of the Russians.

It is surprising how many expeditions and itineraries are given in some detail in this comparatively short book printed in large readable type in the usual excellent format used by the Arthur H. Clark Company. Priestly relied mostly on manuscripts, and the large number of manuscripts cited is also surprising. The main reason why Priestly could put so much into so little a book is the fact that he stuck to his purpose, which may best be explained in his own words:

"Missionaries and neophytes alike are gone, but the Californian of today rejoices when he finds that his home lies on some pathway trod by the friars of a bygone day on their errands of faith." It is historians like Priestly and publishers like the Arthur H. Clark Company that stimulate interest in local history. Priestly has written again on a subject already frequently treated, but he has done an essential job of consolidating and abbreviating his subject matter into what might become a ready reference work on Spanish and Mexican colonization in California from 1769 to 1823.

Dr. Fisher made some minor additions to the work from the original manuscripts "for the sake of clarity," and added several footnotes as well as the excellent bibliography and index.

FRITZ L. HOFFMANN

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