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Book Reviews

Hubert Howe Bancroft. By John Walton Caughey. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946. vii, 422 pp.

At last the long awaited and very much needed biography of Hubert Howe Bancroft has appeared. The reason for its long delay is expressed by the author in his preface: "In common with most of us, Bancroft fell short of perfection. Some of his defects were seized upon, and it came to be the fashion to disparage him not only for these shortcomings but in all that he had done. The result was to becloud his eligibility for biographical attention. An even greater deterrent was the bulk of his published works . . . which tended to ward off prospective biographers."

Today, fifty years after his comprehensive *History of the Pacific States* in thirty-nine ponderous volumes first appeared, it is possible to view the over-all work of Bancroft somewhat objectively. And since the University of California purchased the Bancroft Library in 1905, hundreds of students have had access to his magnificent collection, and this institution, largely as a result of it, has won merited distinction in the fields of Latin American and West American History. Bancroft was the first determined collector of materials on western North America and the first to undertake to chronicle its history comprehensively and exhaustively. That he did his work well, despite his critics, is attested from the fact that his *History of the Pacific States* stands today, a half-century after its publication, as the fundamental reference on this vast subject and, generally speaking, each of his state histories remains today, even though out-moded, the best of such histories yet to appear. The late Professor Charles E. Chapman, recognized authority on California History, has this to say: "Bancroft's works constitute the greatest single achievement in the history of American Historiography and as concerns California history, particularly, there can be no doubt that he had

decided the form it has taken" (p. 386). And Bernard de Voto, interpreter of the American West, adds: "I cannot imagine anyone writing about the history of the West without constantly referring to Bancroft. His prejudices are open, well known, and easily adjustable. A generation ago it was easy for historians to reject much of what he wrote; in the light of all research since done, it is not easy now. . . . I have found that you had better not decide that Bancroft was wrong until you have rigorously tested what you think you know" (p. 387).

Dr. Caughey recognizes the difficulty of his undertaking for Bancroft was indeed a many-sided figure. In his eighty-five years, the Ohio-Californian among other things was "businessman, publisher, collector, historian, essayist and philosopher." Therefore, he says, the purpose of this volume is not to exhaust the subject or to pretend to present a definitive biography, but "to perform (merely) an introduction, after which readers who wish to develop the acquaintance further may do so by turning to Bancroft's own volumes and by contemplating the Bancroft Library in its continual functioning." But the author has succeeded in presenting much more than an introductory study. He not only most adequately presents Bancroft in his true light, after giving due consideration to the caustic criticisms of his contemporaries (see especially pp. 331-337, 348, 380-381), but introduces the reader intimately to the content of Bancroft's ponderous volumes. Bancroft's role, as a businessman, as a collector and as an historian are each scholarly appraised. "In collecting as in business, he exhibited a wisdom and energy approaching the inspiration of genius" (p. 388). Speaking of Bancroft in the role of historian, where his lack of training and experience made the chances of success appear more remote, Mr. Caughey writes: "He chose to deal with his grand subject in its entirety rather than to be satisfied with the annals of some minor locality" (p. 389). And because the task obviously outreached his individual capacity, he chose to surround himself with a staff, the members of which, he freely admitted, did much of the

work. "Disparities in style remind readers that he was not the sole author, yet his was the idea, his the compelling force that kept the project alive, and his the directing hand throughout. Increasingly, with the passing of the years, his is the credit" (p. 389). Unfortunately, Bancroft made the professional mistake of withholding credit for the work done by his collaborators, and hence incurred a great deal of unnecessary criticism. But his original decision "to use only his own name was a commercial one and reflects his unfamiliarity with the ways of scholars" (p. 336).

Hubert Howe Bancroft was born May 5, 1832, at Granville, Ohio, the son of Azariah and Lucy Howe Bancroft, both of New England stock. After an unsuccessful venture as an apprentice in a book bindery, owned by his brother-in-law, he came to California in 1848 on a contract to sell a consignment of books from his brother-in-law's firm. Here he was successful in almost everything he turned his hands to,—teamster, miner, clerk, finally proprietor of a business firm at Crescent City. In 1858 he opened his first book store on Montgomery Street in San Francisco. In this new enterprise the industrious Bancroft prospered. And it was not long before the proprietor was operating the largest and most exclusive establishment of its kind on the Pacific Coast.

Bancroft became interested in collecting rare books and manuscripts in 1859. Ten years later he had collected about 10,000 volumes and in 1870, "thanks largely to the Andrade auction, he had 16,000" (p. 78). Ultimately he was to reckon his holdings at not less than 60,000 volumes. Given these three advantages—a professional bookman, ample money, and a diligent researcher—the Bancroft collection still might not have attained much significance. "Had Bancroft veered off, as some collectors have, in the direction of fine bindings, first editions, or some restricted specialty, his library might have had little more than curiosity value. His wisdom in seeking beyond state and national limits and his brashness in taking in the entire western half of North America were basic contributions. Similarly, his policy of collecting everything that bore on western history, whether

it was prose or poetry, book or pamphlet, broadside or newspaper, authoritative or partisan was worth much to the ultimate importance of his library" (p. 83).

The urge to write a comprehensive history of western North America became first manifest in 1870. During the next twenty years, more than six hundred persons were employed in his literary workshop engaged in this task. Several of these, for their day, were well trained specialists in their chosen fields such as Frances Fuller Victor, Enrique Cerruti, Walter F. Fisher, T. Arundel Harcourt, J. G. Peatfield, Ivan Petroff, Henry L. Oak, Thomas Savage, William Nemos, Albert Goldschmidt and Alfred Bates. While the history of each western state is comprehensively reviewed, it was California naturally which received major emphasis. His seven volume treatise of this state is by far its largest and most comprehensive history; "it offers the most lavish assortment of entries, the largest array of facts and the most generous provisions of detail" (p. 199). Modern scholars with their superior scientific training, writing on California history, have supplemented Bancroft; however, their cumulative efforts have not matched, let alone surpassed, his contribution, recognized even today as the standard history of that state.

In 1886, the Bancroft book store was burned to the ground in what has been described as "San Francisco's worst fire in a decade" (p. 306). Bancroft's total loss was almost \$1,000,000. Less than half of this amount was covered by insurance. Fortunately the library, securely housed in another section of the city, was saved. Partly as a result of this disaster, Bancroft decided to sell his library. It was purchased in 1905 by the University of California, at a price of \$250,000, of which amount Bancroft contributed \$100,000. Referring to this important transaction, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, President of the University of California, remarked: "The purchase of the Bancroft Library marks a great day in the history of the University. It means the inevitable establishment at Berkeley of the center for future research in the history of Western America; it

means the creation of a school of historical study at the University of California; it means the emergence of the real University of study and research out of the midst of the colleges of elementary teaching and training" (p. 364). And subsequent events have more than borne out this prediction.

Bancroft lived for more than a decade after the sale of his great historical collection, happy in the knowledge that it would be well taken care of and used to the advantage of his beloved state. He died at San Francisco, March 2, 1918. In his later years, the great western historiographer found satisfaction "in writing, in reading, and above all in quiet association with his family" (p. 381).

Dr. Caughey's book is exceedingly well written. His style is clear, yet direct and forceful. His treatment of a highly complex subject is scholarly and objective. Nowhere is there evidence of bias or a misuse of the sources. His *study* is stimulating and thought-provoking. The book is beautifully printed and bound. There are nineteen illustrations. One of these is a photostatic copy containing one of Bancroft's statements which is well worth reproducing here: "My conception of the province of history is a clear and concise statement of facts bearing upon the welfare of the human race in regard to men and events, leaving the reader to make his own deductions and form his own opinions" (p. 384).

University of Utah

L. H. CREER

The Navaho. By Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946, xx, 258 pp. 20 pls., 12 figs., 2 tables.) \$4.50.

Although intended primarily as background reading for teachers and administrators in the Navajo Service, this book should have a special appeal for all Southwestern readers. We are neighbors of the Navajo—see them daily, rub elbows in Woolworth's, hear the pro and con arguments on government administration methods, live in a land much like the reservation country—yet know them not. The gay skirts,

clinking jewelry and rich blankets are but public trimmings—the visible leaves on an ancient tree whose real life flows in the unseen interior of its sturdy trunk. It is this heartwood of Navajo culture which Kluckhohn and Leighton expose, impartially and unromantically, for our enlightenment.

Family life, social prejudices and ideals, religious preoccupations, as well as the daily struggle for livelihood, are described in terms which indicate why many of these cultural features unwittingly and inevitably prove stumbling blocks to an administrative service which seeks only to improve their health and economy. Especially interesting is Chapter Four wherein the Navajo view of the White world is shown to be not the one of uncritical admiration which we so complacently expect. In short, this is a book of interpretation; the authors serve as translators of culture between the Navajo and the Indian Service, and any intelligent reader should achieve a new and sympathetic attitude toward both well-meaning but baffled factions. The authors might well have spent more effort in explaining why cultural habits and a "Navajo point of view" persist, since the nature of culture which is clear to them as anthropologist and psychiatrist, is far from comprehensible to the average layman. A few pertinent examples of residual taboos, social prejudices, and religious attitudes from our own society, to parallel the Navajo cases, would have been illuminating.

Historians, like most anthropologists, will feel that more space should have been devoted to the three hundred years of Navajo-White contact. Pre-Columbian, Spanish, and American periods of Navajo history are too casually compacted into a scant ten pages. Nevertheless, present-tense history may be seen in the contemporary situation of the Navajo and the cultural complications resulting from changes in a national life. Such changes have occurred repeatedly in the historic past and are seen the world over today. The authors point out that the Navajo case is—but a specific example of the general problem which results from cultural derangements. And I should like to refer any

doubters to a nearly identical case from the other side of the globe: the current attempt to convert nomadic Arab tribes into settled agriculturists as described by Afif A. Tannous in *The Arab Tribal Community in Nationalist State* (Middle East Journal, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 5-17, 1947).

The friction between the Navajo way of life and the government's administrative program is emphasized, necessarily, in this book which seeks to ease that friction with a better mutual understanding. But the "Navajo problem" should not be viewed as unnatural by the general public, rather, accepted by them, the Navajo, and the Indian Service as inevitable. There is no quick nor perfect solution to the human problems which arise during the long metamorphosis of a once majority culture, reduced to minority status, into a normal national sub-culture. Progress has been made in improving Navajo health, education, and economy, and, in a country where every man considers himself a cross-roads commentator, will continue to be made to the accompaniment of outspoken criticisms. This is, perhaps, an indication in itself that the Navajo are approximating our national norm.

Santa Cruz, Calif.

A. H. GAYTON

The Texas Republic: A Social and Economic History. By William Ransom Hogan. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946. Pp. xiii + 338. Illustrations.) \$3.00.

There was a time in the history of Texas when the large majority of the Anglo-American population of this great land consisted of very recent newcomers. They soon learned to love Texas so fervently that they fought for and won its independence from Mexico. The story related in *The Texas Republic* portrays the social and economic affairs of the people who inhabited the independent nation that sprang into being from their efforts on the field of battle. These Texans increased their love for and their "ebullient pride" in Texas during the ten years of its existence as an independent republic. Native-born Texans still have this love for and pride in

Texas, and those Texans who will read *The Texas Republic* cannot help but feel a justified increase in this love and pride.

Eleven main chapters carry the story of this excellent and accurate book. Throughout these chapters many persons appear and perform their parts in a very realistic way. To mention them would require much time and space. The twelfth or closing chapter entitled "Final Inspection" takes a last look and summarizes the story. The author has succeeded in hewing closely to his purpose of portraying the economic and social history of Texas in its republican era.

In "Gone to Texas," the opening chapter of this excellent treatise, the author explains why and how people went to Texas. The second chapter, "The Necessaries of Life," gives an account of how Texans provided themselves with food, raiment, and shelter. The difficulties which Texans had in getting about from place to place are discussed in the chapter, "Roads of Mud and Slush." "Times are Terribly Severe" portrays the hard times which Texans shared with the United States during the panic of 1837. "Fun and Frolic Were the Ruling Passions" contains a clear-cut portrayal of the ways in which Texans gave free rein to the pleasures of life. In "Education, Both Solid and Ornamental," the efforts of Texas to lay the groundwork of an educational system are ably discussed. "Tall Talk and Cultural Ferment" deals with the beginnings of literature in Texas, while "Fighting the Devil on His Own Ground" is an account of religious conditions in the young republic. In "These Racking Fever Chills" the author takes a look at health conditions and frontier medical practitioners. "Curses on the Law's Delay" provides the reader with an insight into the ways in which laws were enforced upon offenders against the public weal, while "Rampant Individualism" paints the Texans like their American neighbors as full of "the boundless impatience of restraint."

The twenty-four illustrations of this book are well chosen and enhance its usefulness. The format is good and the print is pleasing. The bibliography of twenty-eight pages with its listing of 638 items consists mostly of "con-

temporary sources—letters and diaries, governmental archives, newspapers, pamphlets, and books—” and of articles and studies based on some of these sources, many of which appeared in *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* and to which due credit is given. Professor Hogan found these source materials “in manuscript depositories and libraries not only in Texas but throughout the United States.” In other words, a tremendous amount of careful research was done by Professor Hogan preceding the writing of this highly interesting synthesis. Collectors of Texana, libraries, and persons interested in the history of Texas cannot and will not want to be without a copy of *The Texas Republic*, the definitive work for the period and subject which it covers.

The University of Texas.

RUDOLPH L. BIESELE