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## Book Reviews

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## Book Reviews

*The Big Bend Country of Texas.* By Virginia Madison. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1955. Pp. xiv, 263. \$4.50.

The Big Bend of the Rio Grande encloses a region which is still frontier. It is a sparsely settled area of flaming deserts and lofty mountains, difficult of access and hostile to all but the hardiest plants, animals and men. Across the river in Mexico lies a still wilder wasteland. Virginia Madison, a Texas girl transplanted to New York State, calls the country a *tierra desconocida*—an unknown land—and tries to analyze the spell which this wilderness casts over the imaginations of natives and visitors alike. The essence of it, she thinks, is the fact that the realities of the Big Bend live up to the “staggering lies” which have been told about it.

Its history begins with the Indians. A subdivision of the Mescalero Apache tribe made it their home and held it against all comers until fairly recent times. Mexican settlers maintained a precarious existence in small communities along the river after the early years of the nineteenth century, but their lot was a hard one. A few tough Americans like trader Ben Leaton and cattleman Milton Faver took root there before the Civil War, assisted by the military when Fort Davis was established in 1854.

The railroad came in 1882, bringing more settlers—cattlemen, sheepmen, and miners—but life was not made any easier. Early-day outlaws were succeeded by *contrabandistas* and *Villistas*, and when wicked human beings ceased from troubling, there were always panthers, golden eagles, and long dry spells to put the ranchmen out of business.

The best thing about such a country, where heroism and endurance had to be the rule rather than the exception, was its legendry. Mrs. Madison has gathered all the stories and delights in telling them, from the tale of the Lost Nigger Mine to the steer branded MURDER. At the same time she has dug into all the available source material, has an impressive bibliography, and quotes from all manner of letters, documents, and interviews.

She tells the story of the great mercury mines at Terlingua, tries to analyze the peculiar relations between Mexicans and Anglos, goes thoroughly into the characteristics of cattlemen and sheepmen, studies the flora and fauna of the region, and concludes with an account of the birth and development of the Big Bend National Park. If she has missed anything, this reviewer has not noticed it.

Mrs. Madison is a competent historian and she writes well, though her Spanish needs occasional correction and though she is perhaps a little lengthy in her transcription of letters, documents, and newspaper accounts. Her book would be better if she had a little poetry in her—if she sometimes could find language to match the ruggedness and vastness of her subject. As a ground breaker, however, she has done very well; and perhaps it is too early for West Texas to produce its Homer.

Texas Western College—El Paso, Texas C. L. SONNICHSEN

*Anselm Weber, O. F. M.: Missionary to the Navaho 1898-1921.* By Robert L. Wilken, O. F. M. Milwaukee, Wis.: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1955. Pp. xiv, 255, illustrations, index.

Father Robert L. Wilken has written a book for many readers. He who loves the Southwest will find great interest in this biography of a twentieth century Franciscan missionary to the Indians, for it deals with a man who lived close to the people and the soil of this region. Historians concerned with the westward movement, the Indian, religious activities, and social history can discover here grist for their various mills. For anthropologists, too, this study contains material on the Navaho and Zuni tribes and a case study of an attempt at acculturation.

Father Anselm Weber, born 1862 in Michigan, was at heart a student and teacher. He left his scholarly pursuits among the Cincinnati Franciscans to recover from illness induced by an excessive academic load. So in 1898 he was one of the three friars who initiated the Navaho mission for

which Mother Katharine Drexel had long worked and which she largely financed.

St. Michaels Mission in Arizona is some sixty miles west of Gallup, New Mexico, in the southeastern corner of the Navaho reservation. As the author indicates in his early chapters, Mother Katharine was reviving the Roman Church's sporadic and unsuccessful attempts over more than two centuries to christianize this proud tribe. The stubborn devotion, inspiring optimism, and discouraging rebuffs of this modern effort and the remarkable character of the man who chiefly led it are clearly and carefully presented by Father Robert.

No treatment of such a subject is adequate without some understanding of the cultural problems involved. Father Robert has taken pains to present enough of this material to show his readers not only how difficult was the missionary's task but also how intelligently the friars under Father Anselm's leadership dealt with it.

Mission policy grew slowly and painfully, beginning with a determination to master the complicated Navaho language. So successfully was this accomplished that from the St. Michaels press has come an impressive stream of linguistic and anthropological works, which are basic to a study of the Navaho today. Father Anselm's efforts to uplift the tribe economically and to guide the people to a more settled existence in which "they may have an opportunity themselves to live the Christian life" never proved as successful. Essentially Father Anselm's greatest achievement was in winning the affection and trust of these Indians who had suffered so severely at the hands of the whites. This he did by devoting his life to their problems, fighting their battles even in the government buildings at Washington, and serving as spokesman, peacemaker, and guardian.

The biographer has done a scholarly job of research and synthesis, using secondary works in history and anthropology where necessary but relying most on such primary sources as diaries and the rich collections of Franciscan materials from Arizona to Washington. Nor were interviews and newspapers neglected. Footnotes, thank goodness, cluster

like barnacles on the *bottom* of each page. It is almost ungrateful, therefore, to point out shortcomings of this work. The necessary map at the beginning might have been fuller, and its type variations made no sense to this reviewer. Occasional misprints and a lengthy index that still lacked some obvious entries marred an otherwise fine job of book-making. But the pictures are useful and enlightening, while the chiefly chronological organization proved awkward only in Chapter VIII. These are minor matters, however, that cannot hide the thoughtful, intelligent whole.

Lincoln, Massachusetts

IRVING TELLING

*Trailing the Cowboy.* By Clifford P. Westermeier. Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1955. Pp. 398. \$5.00.

This work is an attempt pretty thoroughly to dissect, analyze and characterize the picturesque cow herdsman of the Western plains. This effort results in such chapter headings as: The Man On Horseback; All In The Day's Work; Law and Disorder; Foes on the Frontier; and so on to a total of eleven, each with an editorial introduction. The compiler-editor successfully carries out his undertaking.

This "trailing" of the cowpuncher is not the telling of a story as such. The reader will not find a thrilling love narrative or a gripping suspense in the usual romantic sense. And yet, this volume is chock full of interesting and pertinent material for anyone who cares to attain a better understanding of the cowboy.

The theme of the book is, of course, the American cowboy. What was his origin, who was he, what was he like, what did he do and how did he do it? By and large, Mr. Westermeier has done an excellent job in weaving together the significant material and in answering the foregoing and other appropriate questions. Was the cowpuncher wedded to his horse? Certainly, because without a horse you were not really a cowboy. Did he often sing his herd of cattle to sleep? Well, almost, for he gave them a feeling of security, conducive to sleep by singing as he rode slowly around the

outer circle of them at night. Was he brutal? No! Did he play poker? Yes. Was he a good shot? Well, yes and no. Did he drink plenty of "bug juice" or "Texas lightning"? You bet! And so on.

The hey-day of the cowboy was during approximately the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and this is the era covered by the material presented in this book. The editor's sources are chiefly Western newspapers; nevertheless, he has included enough books, documents, and magazines to give it a well-balanced effect. The quoted characterizations and descriptions of the cowboy are vivid and authentic, as they should be, because they were written, not by Gene Autry, but by those frontier neighbors and newspaper men who knew the cowpuncher best. True, some of the accounts differ as to detail, and perhaps certain facts vary, but not significantly when it comes to fundamentals.

The editor's sub-chapter and chapter introductions are unusually well written and useful in pointing up the material included. The quotations cover a wide range of interests involving the cowboy and his environment. The average reader, as well as the expert, will find few or no questions that go unanswered. This reviewer found only one, and that one was of no great significance. There is an eight page description of a cowboy strike in the Texas Panhandle. Did the strikers succeed or fail? One could infer that they failed, but perhaps the editor could have been more accurate by specifically saying so.

At the end of each chapter, there is accurate and full footnoting, and there is a separate bibliography at the end of the book.

Mr. Westermeier and his publishers must regret the typographical error on page 17: ". . . in the middle eighties, the cattlemen's frontier embraced an area of some 13,500,000 square miles and totaled almost 44% of the United States!" The total area of the United States is about 3,000,000 square miles. This is, of course, a very slight mar on a book that is otherwise apparently quite accurate.

"The legend of the American Cowboy is the greatest symbol of America," said Will Rogers, Jr., at the dedication of

the projected Cowball Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City in November, 1955. Surely Mr. Westermeier's work as a useful and lasting contribution to the history of the West deserves a place in that hall.

University of California, Santa Barbara College;  
and Arizona State College

H. EDWARD NETTLES

*Six Gun and Silver Star.* By Glenn Shirley. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1955. Pp. vii, 235. Bibliography, map, and index. \$4.50.

The rather solid character of this book distinguishes it from the title—*Six Gun and Silver Star*. To be sure this is another of many volumes on bad men of the Southwest. But the author, Glenn Shirley, has given distinction to his work by making a conscientious effort to tell an accurate, un glossed, and unromanticized story. Moreover, he has documented his account. At times he goes to considerable length to give reasons for some of his statements and conclusions. One therefore reads with considerable assurance that the exploits narrated in this book come within the realm of history rather than fiction.

He begins with a graphic account of the opening of part of Indian Territory to white settlers on April 22, 1889. In the midst of the great mass of land hungry "Boomers" and "Sooners" on hand for the land grab was the lawless element which was soon to terrorize and cast a frightful blight upon, not only Oklahoma Territory, but the entire Southwest. Beginning with the Dalton brothers, there was a succession of not unrelated gangs which have here been subjected to the scrutiny of a person who combines authorship with the profession of law enforcement.

Mr. Shirley has a penchant for details which to some readers may be wearisome. So when, for example, he describes the Dalton's ill-fated simultaneous hold-up of two Coffeyville, Kansas, banks, it is possible to visualize the intricate series of bloody events which occurred in this small frontier town.

It is not surprising that Mr. Shirley, a police captain at Stillwater, Oklahoma, looks with considerable admiration and sympathy upon such frontier marshals as John Hixon, Jim Masterson, Bill Tilghman and the Dane, Chris Madsen. And appropriately enough, the author views with contempt and scorn the Dalton, Doolin, and other outlaw gangs. In the extensive and repeated gunplay between the forces of law and of outlaw, one cannot but observe that on both sides the record exhibits an amazing disparity between rounds fired and shots which found their mark. But in almost Hollywood fashion, it is comforting to learn that even in those days crime did not pay. The final chapter of the book tells the story of how the last of the Oklahoma Territorial outlaws "bit the dust."

Indiana University

OSCAR OSBURN WINTHER

*Snow of Kansas: The Life of Francis Huntington Snow with Extracts from his Journals and Letters.* By Clyde Kenneth Hyder. Foreword by Deane W. Malott. Pp. xi, 296. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1953. Appendices A and B. Index. Illustrations. \$5.00.

The career of Francis Huntington Snow was long and varied. From a New England family steeped in the reform movements of the 1840's, Frank went to Williams College and studied under Mark Hopkins. During the Civil War he served on the Christian Commission, and in 1866 he was named one of the three original professors at the University of Kansas. From 1890 to 1901 Snow served as chancellor of the University, and lived for seven years after his retirement.

Snow's great service to learning was in science. A botanist and entomologist, he was, like most of the scientists of his day, a collector and classifier more than a laboratory scholar. The subjects of his many books and periodicals range widely, and deal with problems of applied science rather than pure.

The eleven years of Snow's service as chancellor saw considerable physical growth of the University of Kansas and the doubling of the enrollment. Stout Republican that he was,

Snow succeeded in holding the line, during that stormy decade, against the efforts of the Populists to make over the University to their own designs. He was successful in preventing his institution from coming under the sway of radicals to the extent that Kansas State College at Manhattan did.

Professor Hyder's eulogistic biography has value. It contains a useful list of Snow's many writings, and the chancellor's strong character is well drawn. The biographer had access to his subject's lengthy and self-analytical journals, and used Snow's other manuscripts as well. It would have been more useful if the author had familiarized himself more with the nature of those activities that touched Snow's life. The account of the chancellor's encounters with the Populist group, for instance, would have been enriched had the biographer stated more clearly what that party was really working for. Although his history of Kansas University in the late nineteenth century is thorough, he considers it too much apart from contemporary developments in higher education generally.

Such careless errors as Hyder's reference to "the diary of Richard Byrd of Westover" (p. 11) are rare. The notes are useful even though they are at the rear of the book. The index appears to be well done.

University of New Mexico

WILLIAM M. DABNEY

*Comanche Bondage*: Dr. John Charles Beale's settlement of La Villa de Dolores on Las Moras Creek in Southern Texas of the 1830's [by Carl Coke Rister] with an annotated reprint of Sarah Ann Horn's Narrative of her captivity among the Comanches her ransom by traders in New Mexico and return via the Santa Fe Trail. Edited by Carl Coke Rister. Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1955. Pp. 210. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$7.50.

This title indicates the comprehensive character of the book. The late Dr. Rister planned the "Introduction" to merge smoothly into the story of Indian captivity, not merely

as a background but as portentous of the horrors of the captivity.

The story begins with Dr. John Charles Beale, an English physician in Mexico, who married a Mexican woman, widow of another Englishman, who had obtained an interest in a grant of 45,000,000 acres in the *Llano Estacado*. Beale took this interest along with the widow. He sent Major A. Le-Grand of Santa Fe to explore the area. Dr. Rister points out that this was nearly twenty years before Captain R. B. Marcy, "who has worn the honor of first explorer." Beale finally had the grant confirmed for only a few million acres, along the upper Nueces and south to the Rio Grande. He then organized the Rio Grande and Texas Land Company in New York to finance colonization. He did not appreciate the difficulties of the undertaking: soil and climate, remoteness from markets, hostility of the Mexicans, which soon broke out in war, and the ferocity of the Comanches, whose war trail ran through his grant.

The colonists numbered fifty-nine persons, mostly men, but including John Horn, his wife Sarah Ann, with two young sons, and a Mr. and Mrs. Harris and "a babe." The party landed in December, 1833, on Copango Beach, near Bayside, Texas, in a drenching rain. A hard trip overland brought it, three months later, to the site of the colony on Las Moras Creek. The short history of the colony was full of privations and turmoil; rough weather, crop failures, extortionate prices for supplies charged by the company store and by Mexicans, and raids by the Comanches. Dr. Beale left for New York and soon the colony broke up. The leaders took their movable equipment and sought refuge in San Fernando where their property was seized and they were arrested as rebels. A group of men started down the Rio Grande to Matamoras where passage might be found on a boat bound for civilization. Another group went to join Houston's army, fighting Santa Anna. The Horn and Harris families with others started overland to Copango. The Comanches soon attacked them and killed all except Mrs. Horn and her two sons, and Mrs. Harris and her "babe."

With the other colonists in limbo, Mrs. Horn takes up the

story of the remaining five. Privations and dread were succeeded by horrors inflicted upon the captives. Long fast rides on wild ponies, often days without food, hard work in camps, and many indignities were their lot. The "babe" was soon murdered and Mrs. Harris, weak and sick, remained a slave until finally sold to Mexican traders. The Comanches would not sell Mrs. Horn until 1838. Her portrait reveals a handsome and strong woman who could work. Her sons were separated from her but she saw them occasionally until they finally disappeared. She was taken far into New Mexico where the tribe made its home. On a trip to Texas, she was finally purchased by some Americans who sent her to Missouri, where she was cared for while writing this book in order to obtain money with which to pay her passage to her home in England.

Radical differences in the style of Dr. Rister's presentation from that of Mrs. Horn broadens the interest. Mrs. Horn writes clearly and simply, without emotional adjectives, except in matters of religion. She relates her experiences sincerely and objectively which reveals the horrors of the captivity more vividly than could a lurid recital. Dr. Rister's "Introduction" is illuminated by use of all available documents. His narrative is concise and details are presented effectively. In no other writings does he show himself more a master of his subject.

The seven illustrations are good and not otherwise easily available. The book is printed on fine paper and well bound.

Montana State University

PAUL C. PHILLIPS

*The Missions of New Mexico, 1776*: A description by Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez with other contemporary documents. Edited by Eleanor B. Adams and Fray Angelico Chavez. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1956. Pp. xxi, 387. Illustrations, glossary and index. \$15.00.

The name of Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez has long been a byword in the history of New Mexico due to his

participation in an expedition that traveled from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Utah and across the Grand Canyon of the Colorado in 1776. The journal of that exploration has been published more than once. This book presents for the first time, and in translation, the remarkable report on the missions of New Mexico in 1776. They are described in great detail, both buildings and furnishings, with bits of information on the work done by missionaries in building, maintaining and remodeling the structures, including both church and convent. Fray Francisco's inventory is so thorough that I am sure he would not have missed even the proverbial poor church mouse if there had been one.

The author also discussed briefly the way of life of the settlers, thereby strengthening his account as a source of information for the general history of eighteenth century New Mexico. To one familiar with the scene and area through other writings, much can be read between the lines.

The Editors have prepared a separate list of the names of settlers mentioned in the text with biographical data drawn from other sources, principally from Fray Angelico Chavez' *Origins of New Mexico Families in the Spanish Colonial Period*. This should be of especial value to readers interested in genealogy. They have also listed separately the names of ninety-five missionaries (eighteenth century workers with rare exception), with dates and places of assignments. Some of the biographical data in these respects remains yet to be assembled by additional research.

A number of supplementary documents have been incorporated which add to the story of New Mexico, both ecclesiastical and civil.

The frontispiece is a reproduction of the Reredos of Our Lady of Light now in the church of Cristo Rey, Santa Fe. Working from a photograph provided by Laura Gilpin, the Reredos is restored in the picture as of 1776 and printed in color.

The twenty-six mission churches with convents as originally built are illustrated by Horace T. Pierce in line drawings in perspective. They add very much to the attractiveness of the book. Three eighteenth century maps are

reproduced, two for the province in general and a ground plan of Santa Fe. The Miera y Pacheco map of 1779, prepared by order of Governor Anza, is divided and enlarged for distribution throughout the volume. The details are thereby magnified and become more alluring to a reader who is not inclined to squint his eyes in order to study a map.

The inclusion of a glossary was an excellent idea. For instance, the meaning of such words as *maese* (or *maestre*) *de campo*, *genízaro*, *Fray*, and *convento* is clarified for many who otherwise might have trouble with them in documents or printed works. English-speaking Franciscans today, the Editors point out, tend to favor the old English term of *Friary* for *Convent* in order to avoid confusion with the latter term which is popularly associated with the dwellings of female religious.

The Editors did not use the accent on *Abiquiu*. This is in step with the growing practice to drop the accent on *Santa Fe*. *Fray Angelico's* name is here printed without accents (*Angélico Chávez*) which I believe is in keeping with his own wishes and should be followed by other writers when the occasion permits. A brief historical introduction and an index round out the volume.

One more comment, and by far not the least, is the scholarly annotation that accompanies the report and supplementary documents. The *Missions of New Mexico* will not be a popular book for light reading, but it will serve the interests of a variety of readers, and not necessarily those whose range is limited to the Southwest. For serious students especially, text and annotations can be read with profit.

The Press did an excellent job. For a moment I found one typographical error in the spelling of *Cojnina*, but on second glance it was not so.

F. D. R.