

# New Mexico Historical Review

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Volume 39 | Number 3

Article 5

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7-1-1964

## Book Reviews

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### Recommended Citation

. "Book Reviews." *New Mexico Historical Review* 39, 3 (1964). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol39/iss3/5>

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## Book Reviews

*Mansfield on the Condition of Western Forts 1853-54.* By Joseph K. F. Mansfield. Edited by Robert W. Frazer. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963. Pp. xxxi, 254, Illus., bibliog., index. \$4.95.

Except for the "Outline Descriptions" of military posts issued by the Inspector General's Department, and the reports on the hygiene of the United States Army, with descriptions of military posts, published by the Surgeon General's Office, there is scarcely anything in print or out-of-print that provides full information on army forts, posts and stations. The historian of the West, or for that matter any part of the United States, has to dig for the basic information on military establishments, and the digging is both difficult and unrewarding for the most part. A few of the major forts have been pinned down in pamphlets or books; others are written about in historical journals, and too many have been the subject of historical day-dreams in Sunday supplements.

It is, therefore, a special pleasure and relief to find Colonel Joseph Mansfield's reports covering the Department of New Mexico in 1853 and the Department of the Pacific in 1854 in print, well edited, and published with the usual distinction associated with the University of Oklahoma Press. Attached to the Inspector General's Department, Mansfield was engaged in a series of inspection tours from 1853 to 1861, tours that covered installations on the Pacific Coast, southeast to Texas, and in Utah. At least one (Texas, 1856) of Mansfield's reports has been published, in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*. This book includes the first two such tours and reports.

Mansfield's reports are source material, period pieces, not very exciting to read unless one is in search of a fact, a name, a vignette in time and place. This is not to say that the reports are useful only for the years in question. Time

marched more slowly in 1853 and 1854, and the general condition of military affairs in the areas covered was much the same until the Civil War, and had been much the same for at least four years prior to the reports. The general military picture here afforded held true, then, for about a decade.

To clothe the official reports in historical raiment, the editor has written a careful introduction, an "estimate of the situation," in which the military policy of the United States is described for the West in general and the West Coast in particular. The purpose of the forts thus becomes apparent. In addition, the editor has added footnote information about the subsequent history of each establishment. In his contributions, the editor has had the advantage of hindsight, but does not take undue liberties with it.

Military inspection reports are, of course, notoriously uncritical. The fact that an inspection was imminent undoubtedly led to much spit and polish at each post, repair of equipment, drill, hiding of refuse, bursts of sobriety. Nor was an inspector likely to be over-critical of his fellow officers, among whom were old friends, West Point classmates, and comrades-in-arms. To that extent, the "Condition of Western Forts" falls short of veracity.

Plans of each fort accompanying the original report are well reproduced in one section. A complete index and a list of military personnel add to the value of the book as source material. One may hope that the sale of the title will be encouraging enough to warrant publication of additional reports of this nature.

University of Oregon

MARTIN SCHMITT

*The Matador Land and Cattle Company.* By W. M. Pearce. Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1964. Pp. xiv, 244. Illust., bibliog., appendixes, index. \$5.95.

In the 1870's and early 1880's, the fantastic profits realized from cattle on free grass brought an influx of foreign

capital to the American livestock industry. Much of the money came from the British isles and among the combines formed to exploit the beef bonanza was the Matador Land and Cattle Company, Ltd. of Dundee, Scotland. For sixty years—from 1882 through 1951—the Scotch directors exercised tight control over their American venture and, for that reason, the company's records are particularly complete. These records—the Matador Papers—have been assembled in the Southwest Collection at Texas Technological College and Dr. William M. Pearce has used them as a principal source in writing a history of the operation.

*The Matador Land and Cattle Company* is a business history; it contains few references to the sort of happenings that made the Wild West wild. Ranching is a way of life as well as a business and it is impossible to separate the two but Dr. Pearce has centered his attention on the policies and decisions made by the directors in Dundee and implemented by a succession of managers in America. In this way, he tells a fascinating story, tracing the development of the Matador into a cattle empire that reached from Texas into Canada. The writing is clear and factual and the skillful use of well-selected excerpts taken from correspondence, annual reports and board meeting minutes aids in presenting an authentic picture of managerial and directoral reactions to such problems as financing, land acquisition, weather hazards, fluctuating cattle markets, the formation of livestock associations, and the industry's continuing battles with the Beef Ring and the railroads.

The use of excerpts provides other dividends. The images of Alexander Mackay, who began as the company's secretary and became chairman of the board, and of Murdo Mackenzie, greatest of the Matador's managers, come through clearly. Also of special value are the selections taken from surveys made in Texas, Kansas, South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana and Canada. These not only tell what a cowman looked for in

selecting new ranges, they also give a vivid picture of the West that was.

Dr. Pearce set himself a formidable task when he undertook to compress sixty years of the matador's operations into two hundred and forty-four pages. Of necessity, some details are omitted from the study and the informed reader will note their absence. As an example, the author does not mention that Texas reserved her public lands when she joined the Union and as a consequence, the acquisition of land in that state differed in detail from the methods used in acquiring Federal lands. This is not relatively important nor is it particularly important that, at times, some confusion exists in identifying personnel. No less than six Mackenzies are mentioned, there are three Robinsons, a number of Smiths and as not all of these are labeled consistently it is sometimes necessary to pause and sort them out.

These criticisms are minor. *The Matador Land and Cattle Company* is an excellent book, well written, well researched and documented, and with a number of fine and authentic photographs to add to its worth. Certainly it deserves a place on the Western shelf or any library, public or private.

Bennett Foster

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