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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

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MINING IN THE NEW WORLD. By Carlos Prieto. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973. Pp. xvii, 239. Illus., tables, bibliog., index. \$8.95.

IN THIS vigorous and provocative essay the main theme is the importance of gold and silver mining in bringing into being the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the New World, and in determining the subsequent character of those colonies up to the time that they achieved independence. The author, a distinguished gentleman-scholar who has wide intellectual interests, has been for many years the head of a large Mexican iron and steel company. With a firmness that stands in attractive contrast to the usual heavily qualified scholarly language, Carlos Prieto starts his book with the assertion: "The central thesis of this study is that mining was the creator of the peoples and nations of Ibero-America as they exist today."

To support his thesis Señor Prieto has written a remarkably comprehensive brief survey of the whole sweep of exploration, discovery, and development of precious metal deposits in Hispanic and Portuguese America. He has included chapters on technological innovation in the New World and on the growth of legal institutions relating to mining. But he has not limited himself to topics that are of immediate and obvious relevance. Instead, he has discussed the direct and indirect influence of mining upon the economy and upon such unexpected fields as architecture, education, music, and liberal support for the political revolutions of the post-Napoleonic era.

The result is an interpretive essay that will be rewarding to Hispanists, who will be interested in the point of view, and to specialists in United States mining history, who will find this book a convenient overview of the several centuries of Spanish-American experience that preceded the discovery of gold in California. Further, in an age that often criticizes mining because of its unquestioned sins of damaging the natural environment and using natural resources wastefully, it is a helpful corrective to read so confident and comprehensive an assertion of the beneficial effects of seeking gold and silver. Any modern reader will note the inadequate attention given to the disastrous effect of the mining booms on the aboriginal population,

which was enslaved or drafted for forced labor, and on the subsequent mixed-blood peasantry that provided the working force and yet received small return from their dangerous and unhealthy labor. One may also regret that Señor Prieto did not set aside space for reflective comments on the question of just how transitory were the mining societies that he is discussing. To a North American reader it would appear that Ibero-American mining communities often lasted much longer than their compeers in the United States, and sometimes left a more substantial heritage. But specific information is needed.

The value of the book has been increased by including well-chosen illustrations, a good bibliography 52 pages long, and a chronological outline.

California Institute of Technology

RODMAN W. PAUL

TRAVELERS ON THE WESTERN FRONTIER. Ed. by John Francis McDermott. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970. Pp. xii, 351. Illus., maps, index. \$10.95.

THE THIRTEEN essays which comprise this volume were inspired by a conference on travelers on the western frontier held in 1968 at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. The major theme of all the papers is that many collections of travelers' accounts to be found in major libraries, government files, newspapers and magazines still remain to be exploited. The obvious purpose of the book, then, is to provide both a general guide to these numerous sources and well-written examples of the various kinds of information that can be found in these neglected accounts. Thanks to the careful editing of Professor McDermott and the high quality of the essays a strong case is made for further study of travel diaries and journals.

Professor McDermott's own essay: "Up the Wide Missouri: Travelers and Their Diaries, 1794-1861," vividly contrasts Jean Baptiste Truteau's grueling ascension of the river in 1794 with John Mason Brown's comfortable trip to Fort Union in 1861 on the luxury steamer, *Spreadeagle*. But his chief contribution is a useful checklist of some ninety-five Missouri travel accounts which he has located.

The next three essays supplement the first by describing travel collections to be found in major libraries. Archibald Hanna's outline of the rich holdings in the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale University is valuable since that collection has not been fully catalogued. Hanna's theme that many materials remain unused is echoed in Dwight L. Smith's essay on the Newberry Library holdings and in Dale L. Morgan's enthusiastic description of the resources in the Bancroft Library. In a similar vein Herman R. Friis

argues that the documents, reports and maps of the U.S. Congress between 1783 and 1861 constitute a major font on Western travel. In another paper William B. Baker maintains that such mundane documents as the Missouri county and municipal files on roadbuilding can be used to verify routes and to check on the conditions of Western travel.

John T. Flanagan's excellent article on "Western Sportsmen Travelers in the New York *Spirit of the Times*" (a sporting magazine which thrived between 1831 and 1856 under the auspices of William T. Porter) notes that both travelers and western residents wrote up their adventures in such a way that they provided a contemporary romantic and heroic image of Indian fights, bouts with weather, fights with grizzlies, exaggerated Crockett-style tales and dialect humor. Flanagan's point that writers then, as now, deliberately cast the frontier image in half-legendary terms is deftly reconfirmed in Richard Oglesby's fine essay on the way western boatmen, whom he defines as "Half Horse, Half Myth," were treated in print in their own day. John Porter Bloom's analysis of travel accounts in *The American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine* supplements both Flanagan and Oglesby while concluding that there was an overriding frontier preoccupation with horse breeding and racing.

Nicholas Joost's exploration of the travelers' reports in the *St. Louis Weekly Reveille*, 1844-50, and Nicholas Canaday's survey of letters in the *New Orleans Times Picayune* from such famous reporters as George W. Kendall and James L. Freaner again demonstrate how Americans got their first and often lasting images of the West in the heyday of Manifest Destiny. On the whole, however, these essays tend to support rather than revise Henry Nash Smith's oft-stated point that the West as we know it was as much a creation of the mind as it was a real place.

The problem this creates for the historian is nicely explored in Donald B. Miner's "Western Travelers in Quest of the Indian." Using the writings of Charles Augustus Murray, Rudolph F. Kurz, Henry A. Boller, and others, Miner shows how each writer, initially engulfed in a romantic view of the Indian, gave totally different and often contradictory descriptions of the same Plains tribes. He wonders if any traveler ever perceived the real Indian. John C. Ewers partly answers Miner's pessimistic question by evaluating the observations which the young scientist, Jean Louis Berlandier, made about the Comanches of Texas in 1828. By interviewing Colonel José Francisco Ruiz of San Antonio, who had lived among the Comanches for years, and by using a scientific approach, Berlandier was able to produce such a worthwhile report that Ewers ranks him as "one of the best amateur ethnographers of the American West during the frontier period."

It seems to this reviewer that Ewers points up a double weakness in this otherwise useful volume; namely, that there is little or no distinction between the superficial traveler and the serious inquisitive one; and second, that the conference produced no new methodology whereby a historian might extract valuable information from the most ignorant and biased account. The presence of someone trained in social anthropology, demography or quantification might have suggested ways in which these accounts could be used more effectively. It is also disappointing that more attention was not paid to the reaction of women to the frontier and that travelers in the Pacific Northwest were not really covered. Despite these omissions this handsomely printed and copiously illustrated volume is a valuable guide to materials not found in Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, and other editions of travel accounts.

Yale University

HOWARD R. LAMAR

THE MYSTIC WARRIORS OF THE PLAINS. By Thomas E. Mails. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972. Pp. xx, 618. Illus., bibliog., index. \$25.00

THIS is a sympathetic and superbly illustrated account of Plains Indian life during its epic period from 1750 to 1850. The Rev. Thomas E. Mails is both author and illustrator. His desire to present an "organized and systematized overview of the Plains culture with an emphasis upon the male warrior" (xii) was kindled during childhood by a grandfather's Indian tales, and continually reinforced by the drama of that life commonly portrayed in literature, movies, and television. The Rev. Mr. Mails is a Lutheran minister, and he found a natural interest in Plains Indian religion, especially as he discovered that religious belief and practice intruded into many aspects of their lives, including ceremony, war, and the manufacture and use of tools and weapons.

The Mystic Warriors of the Plains is a layman's work, and reflects a layman's interests. This is demonstrated by an irrepressible romanticism in Mails's portrayal of the warrior culture, and the heavy concentration on arts and crafts that stems from a collector's interests. Nonetheless, this special attention to artifacts and their manufacture may commend the work to artist, historian, and ethnographer. The details of manufacture are often skillfully and aesthetically portrayed in sketches that range over cooking, fire-making, clothing, weapons, and the preparation of "medicine" shields. At other times, leaving aside attention to details, the author has

employed his sketches to bring to the reader a sensitive appreciation of daily and critical experiences faced by Plains warriors. One sees the youth in characteristic pose practicing his skills and strengthening his hardiness. There is also the craftsman drawing sinew through his mouth to soften it for use in wrapping a point to an arrowshaft—and of course, the exciting vistas of the buffalo chase and of a war party approaching camp.

Mails's sketches accent the dynamic movement so characteristic of Plains life, alternated with the calm discernment of the warrior secured by the confidence of success and public reputation. True to his avowed intent, Mails has depicted the warrior life with hardly a hint of the wife who shared his triumphs and sorrows, and created the quill and beadwork art through which the warrior could show off his reputation. Women do enter in a short description of daily life, but the vague and faceless sketches of women at their chores stand in sharp contrast to the robust vigor captured in the male countenance.

Two dangers accompany attempts to give a general account of life shared by some thirty-one tribes. First, there is overgeneralization stemming from the fact that not all facets of life have been covered equally well for any single tribe. Mails has not always guarded his readers from generalizations about dress, ceremonial practice, belief, and habit drawn from a single tribe and then applied to the whole of the Plains. It is also up to the interpreter of a way of life to present as objective a description and assessment as possible. Mails's romantic enthusiasm for the Plains warrior not infrequently traps him into statements that are over-laudatory. Thus, "Plains Indian taxidermy was the highest, being not in the least excelled by modern methods." With regard to art and decoration, the "Indian mind [proves] . . . incapable of unharmonious relationships, and balance always resulted." What the reader needs in such instances are not superlatives but specific analyses to show in what ways Plains Indian art was harmonious and balanced. Only in this way can criteria for an independent experience and assessment be conveyed to the reader. Mails's conviction that nothing in Plains culture was without religious meaning also leads to overgeneralization. Thus, he is inclined to attribute the quality of traditional art to the spiritual inspiration that suffused their lives, and to see present-day beadwork and art as a deterioration traceable to spiritual flatness. In like fashion he tends to draw the Plains Indian as conceptualizing his relations with nature and spirits with the aid of a rather abstruse symbolism. To some degree this was true of ceremonialism practiced by village Indians of the Prairie, but for the most part, symbolism in the Plains tended to be direct and coordinate with its sign (e.g., horse tracks for horses).

The second danger of the general account is a reduction of description to such a bland stage that it fails to draw the reader into imaginative involvement. What should have been one of the high points of the description, notably the war raid, turns out to be relatively ineffective because of generality. The introduction of Indian narratives of war raids and exploits is needed to bring this dimension of warrior culture to life.

In any work, errors are bound to enter, some deriving from interpretation, others from inaccuracies in fact. Ethnologic critics undoubtedly will fault Mails more often on points of interpretation than of fact. For example, a reader of the discussion of clan exogamy may draw the impression that this practice was initiated because Indians were aware of the malign effects of inbreeding. Again, transvestitism is depicted as the sole product of cowardice, whereas it was connected with homosexuality. The Omaha are listed as possessing the Sun Dance ceremony, and the drawing opposite p. 173 may lead to the inference that the Mandan practiced the ceremony. Admittedly the Okipa ceremony of the latter included features found in the Sun Dance ceremonies among northern Plains tribes. However, the Okipa ceremony usually is not considered to be a Sun Dance. Most readers will recognize that sinew is not a muscle, as Mails states, but a kind of tendon.

One would also like to see more precision in defining the Plains Indian Tribes. The list on p. 12 includes several tribes that do not properly belong. For example, the Sauk and Fox are better viewed as representatives of the woodlands and prairie-oriented culture of the Midwest. The Shoshone (Wind River Shoshone?) is too loose a term, and the Ute, Nez Percé, Flathead, and Apache groups—with exception of the Kiowa Apache—usually are treated as marginal participants in Plains culture. Though included on the list, the Gros Ventre or Atsina are omitted from the map of the Plains culture area.

The bibliography is substantial, but does not draw heavily on the substance of anthropological descriptions and comparisons of Plains Indian culture. Mails seems far more at home with the accounts of those who knew the Indians firsthand, produced personal narratives of outstanding warriors, or concentrated on Indian arts and crafts. Had he engaged in anything other than a general description of Plains Indian life, the ethnological literature would have proved indispensable.

Southern Illinois University
Edwardsville

FRED W. VOGET

ECHOES OF THE PAST: NEW MEXICO'S GHOST TOWNS. By Patricia F. Meleski. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1972. Pp. xii, 254. Illus., bibliog., index. \$15.00.

THOSE who have peered into long-abandoned tunnels, climbed over rusting mining machinery, or tried to read the names on weathered tombstones will appreciate this book. The author describes her family's visits to forty-three New Mexico ghost towns and includes a brief history of each. Most were former homes of men lured to isolated valleys by dreams of quick wealth.

Patricia Meleski's book is a guide for those she hopes will find the same enjoyment as her own family in discovering history's artifacts. She provides a map depicting a series of deserted towns for each chapter. The pictures of the ghost towns today, taken by husband Richard, Director of the University of New Mexico's Photo Service, are superb and worth the price of the book. Along with her capsuled history, the author often adds long quotes from old newspapers that not only describe the daily happenings of the communities, but capture the optimism that was a part of every mining camp's history.

This beautiful book will be most helpful to anyone who enjoys poking through ghost towns. But the research is casual. Mrs. Meleski generally wrote her historical sketches from a small number of secondary sources and a smattering of newspapers. Too many more accurate studies are missing from her bibliography. For instance, she does not include even one of the three books that trace the history of the Elizabethtown area. The story of Colonel Albert J. Fountain's disappearance is inaccurate because she did not use A. M. Gibson's excellent book.

The book must be used with caution by historians because of other inaccuracies. For example, the author states that Virginia City was the central camp on Willow Creek. Actually, it was no more than a promotion scheme that failed. Founded after Elizabethtown and too far from the mines, it only lasted a few months with a maximum of fifteen partially completed cabins and forty people. The Moreno Hotel was not first called the E-Town Hotel; Henri Lambert opened the E-Town Hotel later in the summer of 1868. Elizabethtown's namesake was not the town's first baby; she was born in Ft. Union. The author omits Captain N. S. Davis as one of the Moreno Water and Mining Company founders. It is not possible to determine the source of these and other errors because the author uses no footnotes.

Yet the book does give a glimpse of life in the towns' heydays. And despite its shortcomings as history, it reveals why there are ghost towns today. Most of the camps were isolated, and the high cost of transporta-

tion closed many mining operations. When rich pockets pinched out, the mines could not operate expensive machinery at a profit on the low grade ores. The towns suffered from water shortages for mining, and too often from Indian depredations. And the Great Depression of the 1930's provided the crowning blow to a number of towns. The mines closed and the communities died.

Perhaps this book will encourage more research in New Mexico mining by historians as well as interested laymen. Other families, like the Meleskis, might sharpen their tools for historical research and add to the story with the same enthusiasm as this author, indeed, the same enthusiasm that drove the hardy gold-seekers in their never-ending search for the rainbow's treasures.

North Texas State University

JIM B. PEARSON

THE SEARCH FOR THE WELL-DRESSED SOLDIER, 1865-1890: DEVELOPMENTS AND INNOVATIONS IN UNITED STATES ARMY UNIFORMS OF THE WESTERN FRONTIER. Museum Monograph No. 5. By Gordon Chappell. Tucson, Arizona: Arizona Historical Society, 1972. Pp. iv, 52. Illus. \$2.50.

THE DEVELOPMENT of U.S. Army uniforms in the American West between the Civil War and the turn of the century is the subject of Gordon Chappell's monograph. The author shows just how much variation and non-compliance there was in attempting to follow uniform regulations among soldiers at various Western posts. This was found not only among the enlisted men but even among the officers, some of whom completely ignored all uniform regulations. Although there are a number of photographs supporting the text, the reader does yearn for additional visual aids, even if a number of sketches or photographs were used for each plate. His references are most adequate, allowing the reader to study in greater depth the subject he wishes to pursue. The author draws attention to, as in the case of the cork helmet, the European influence on the manufacture and adoption of uniforms. The foreign influence and its practical applications to uniforms and equipment on the Western frontier give the reader a rare insight into a little-told story of the fighting men in the trans-Mississippi West. This book is a must for the student of Western military history.

Western New Mexico University, Silver City

DALE F. GIESE

RED POWER ON THE RIO GRANDE: THE NATIVE AMERICAN REVOLUTION OF 1680. By Franklin Folsom. Introduction by Alfonso Ortiz. Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1973. Pp. 144. Illus., maps, gloss., bibliog., index. \$5.95.

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the Indian revolt of 1680 is undisputed, and the story of its success has been told often. However, the author feels that most accounts have been "history seen only through Spanish eyes." None has seemed "to make clear how great was the achievement of Native Americans when they [temporarily] ended Spanish imperial control in New Mexico." Thus, Mr. Folsom has sought to reinterpret events "from the Indian point of view."

The introduction by Alfonso Ortiz stresses that the Native Americans were engaged in a "fight for freedom." This is not a new idea. Others have also characterized the Indian revolt from this orientation rather than from the viewpoint of Spanish defeat. In his multivolume *History of New Mexico*, Professor Frank Reeve did precisely this in the chapter entitled "The War for Independence." In the introduction Ortiz also compares the revolt of 1680 to the American Revolution of 1776. The parallel is interesting in this period of the bicentennial of American independence. However, any extended comparison can easily be overdrawn as the two were literally worlds apart.

To construct an Indian view of the events of 1680 Mr. Folsom has consulted a number of published studies. The result is a readable account based partially upon surviving Spanish records. A significant portion of the narrative is supposition derived from anthropological fieldwork of later centuries.

The process of revision in history is continual and certainly valuable. However, this study is not serious history. The author has made a career of writing juvenile books. While this particular endeavor is not described as such, it certainly belongs in that classification.

University of Albuquerque

GERALD THEISEN