

1937

## Book Reviews

University of New Mexico Press

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq>

---

### Recommended Citation

University of New Mexico Press. "Book Reviews." *New Mexico Quarterly* 7, 2 (1937). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol7/iss2/17>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University of New Mexico Press at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Mexico Quarterly by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [disc@unm.edu](mailto:disc@unm.edu).

## Book Reviews

*Guatemala*—Erna Ferguson—Alfred Knopf—\$3.00.

"I was conscious of a direct chain, worn very thin, perhaps, but somehow, link by link, connecting these people with their antiquity. I felt what I was told many times by those closest to the Guatemalan Indians, that they know their ancient power, and hold what they can of their ancestral beliefs."

So says Erna Fergusson in *Guatemala*, her latest book, and through her descriptive powers, so she conveys to her readers the sense of time, of the continuity of the past and the present with the possibilities of the future, in the ancient-modern republic to the south of Mexico.

Her journey and the telling of it leads from modern Guatemala, the capital, the tourist's view of the city and little republic through all phases of Guatemalan life, to Antigua, the ancient capital, aristocratic in its olden splendor and in its isolation.

The story of coffee and of bananas, main exports of this country, of costumes and textiles, of fiestas and of archæology is told in some of the best interpretive description in modern books.

Guatemala today becomes imbued with the spirit of the ancient country, and its future is suggested at the end of the volume. In Guatemala, as in Mexico, Miss Ferguson finds the pressing problem to be the Indians. In a chapter headed "These Indians" she achieves a masterpiece of composite reporting on the subject from a native *finquero*, which roughly is a coffee plantation owner, a hotel operator, a young Guatemalan educated in the States, Protestant Missionary, city woman, German storekeeper, Ladino storekeeper, and padre.

If the Indians and their dark unknown past overshadow all Guatemala outside the cities, the "ladinos" color the town

life. Ladino is a word heard every day in Guatemala and often misunderstood. It derives from Latino, and originally meant Spaniard, but has been extended to include all town-dwellers. Ladinos are privileged classes, and Indians are country-dwellers and unprivileged.

Ladinos do no manual service; they own the stores, cantinas, and are quick to exploit the Indians. Life in the modern Mayan tribes in Guatemala contains many threads which run far back into the old culture. By searching out the villages in the hinterland, Miss Ferguson gathered much material and presents it here for the first time.

In her description of Mayan archæology, the science becomes as exciting as any outdoor sport in the world, a keen absorbing interest, and the solution of the origin of the Mayas as fascinating as the latest mystery story.

Miss Fergusson has in *Guatemala* continued the high standard set in *Dancing Gods* and *Fiesta in Mexico* and has produced a book both authoritative and colorful. Furthermore it is an adult and interesting volume of travel, a refreshing change from the super-adolescent Halliburton type.

IRENE FISHER.

*Albuquerque, N. M.*

*The Sea of Grass*—Conrad Richter—A. A. Knopf—\$2.50.

Conrad Richter's latest book, *The Sea of Grass*, has been likened by many reviewers to Willa Cather's *Lost Lady*. The similarity of theme reminds me of a talk with Miss Cather several years ago. I told her that I knew of a New Mexico story much like her *Lost Lady*, but in real life more melodramatic. Miss Cather said: "That's interesting. People have told me of *Lost Lady* stories in Colorado, Nebraska, Arizona and California. This makes me feel that I have recorded a story that would be true anywhere in the West."

Conrad Richter spent several years in Albuquerque reading old newspapers, books, archives and talking to old timers to get the true values of the New Mexican setting. Like Miss Cather, he came upon the universal theme of the emo-

tional conflict between a man and woman heightened by their adjustment to the desert environment. The prairie "Sea of Grass" becomes the third person in this triangle situation, holding the man who seeks to subdue it and driving the woman away. The woman is as evanescent as a desert mirage, beckoning, disappearing, returning. The man is the finite human being struggling against the elemental forces of nature, boasting that he has subdued his eye-reaching plains only to find that their life has subdued him.

The story begins in the open-range days when old Jim Brewton's word was law, not only on his own vast ranch but in all the western cattle country. A beautiful, fragile girl from St. Louis had come out to marry him, arriving just at the time when homesteaders swarmed in to take up land that Col. Brewton had imperiously controlled. Brewton fought stubbornly to save his cattle kingdom from the invaders, while Lutie Brewton felt that the homesteaders had a right to the land. Through the years Lutie made her home the one gay and gracious mansion in a lonely land, giving her children a memory of laughter and beauty in contrast to their father's ponderous seriousness. The conflict between the two was brought to a climax by the homesteaders' lawyer, Chamberlain, who tempted Lutie with urbane gallantry. Lutie fled from the terrifying Sea of Grass around her, leaving her husband, children and callow lover. After mysterious years she forced herself to return only because the black-sheep son had gotten into trouble.

The story is told by Col. Brewton's nephew, a lad who saw his uncle's forbidding sternness and Lutie's charm. I think the drama would have been heightened if it had been told directly, instead of through a superimposed viewpoint. But the breadth and force of the drama is as wide as the prairie, giving it a sweep of eternal verity.

I am always delighted to find that Mr. Richter has recreated the New Mexican scene with such truth and vividness. *The Sea of Grass* and his fine collection of short stories in *Early Americana* are some of the best things that have

been written about this country. Going back with his fifty years ago we relive the hardships and dangers of the early settlers. It is due to his sensitive imagination and skillful technique that we see this country in his fiction, not as the distance to the next filling station, but as the distance to saving the scalp in the nearest white settlement. When so many two-day visitors are dabbling in western romance I am grateful that Mr. Richter has lived in New Mexico and put the real feel of the country into his outstanding books. Let's hope that Hollywood won't grab him permanently.

RUTH A. LAUGHLIN.

*Santa Fe, N. M.*

*New Mexico's Own Chronicle*—Fulton and Horgan—Banks, Upshaw,  
Dallas—\$3.00.

Various anthologies of southwestern literature have appeared from time to time emphasizing the interest in and extent of writings devoted to this region. But it is with keen anticipation that we review the latest contribution along this line, *New Mexico's Own Chronicle* by Maurice G. Fulton and Paul Horgan. This volume is unique in that it is an anthology of history, based, for the most part, upon first-hand sources, journals, diaries, and letters. A most interesting collection of these materials has been utilized in presenting a chronologically arranged story of the fascinating history of New Mexico.

The contents of the book is divided into periods that more or less coincide with the usual historical presentation. But quite colorful titles add zest to what might otherwise seem dull chronology. Frankly the authors are making an appeal to the casual readers and are not setting out to present a work of erudition. Some of their technique might well become part of the equipment of the professional scholar. Such general headings as "Explorers from Spain," "Taming Indians and Bad Men," and "Ranch and Range" are bound to arouse the interest of those not primarily concerned with local historical sources.

A calendar of the chief events of the periods about to be chronicled appears upon a single page entitled "Milestones" preceding the discussion of the events. This is obviously helpful for anyone not sure of the thread of happening in the long story of New Mexico.

Following the "Milestones" comes a brief, often too brief, summarization of the period, introducing extracts from the sources which follow. This method does much to unify and consolidate what might otherwise prove rather disconnected and unrelated material. The editors have frankly paraphrased and modernized certain of the sources; it is, however, an adaptation for popular appeal retaining the flavor of the source.

The emphasis throughout is upon social rather than political history, and in that the anthology lies in the trend of the times.

In spite of all these admirable qualities, however, one wishes for a more careful piece of work, as there are numerous errors and omissions. The proof reading must have been hastily done to admit the misspellings that unfortunately occur. Even upon the jacket cover G. W. Kendall's name is in error, while the Introduction contains several wrongly spelled words, and the date of the Pueblo Revolt is given as 1648 instead of 1688. In the acknowledgments the second initial of Lummis' name is incorrectly given. This error persists rather consistently throughout the book; in only one place is it Charles F. Lummis (p. 7). In the Table of Contents we regret the misspelling of Coues (p. xix), and the title "Diary" occurs twice as *dairy* (p. xxi and p. xxv). Another error is in the citation of materials on the Pueblo Revolt of 1688 when C. W. Hackett is inadvertently recorded as J. J. Hackett (p. 352).

It is unnecessary to continue pointing out similar errors that careful reading soon discloses. But attention should be called to the date of the Gadsden Purchase, which is 1853 instead of 1854 as given both places it is mentioned (p. 158 and p. 190). Also on page 38 a question mark follows the

founding of Santa Fe which has been pretty well established as 1610 in an article by L. B. Bloom, "When Was Santa Fe Founded," in the *New Mexico Historical Review*, IV, p. 88.

From the viewpoint of the historian the reference to sources and the bibliographical material is inadequate. No definiteness in citation is attempted, so where a work of several volumes such as R. E. Twitchell's *Leading Facts* is used the possibility of consulting the original is made most difficult. At other times no specific mention is made of the source quoted and a consultation of the "Notes" reveals no reference. This is particularly annoying where the summarization refers to a periodical such as *The Boston Pearl* not found in usual historical bibliography.

Many of these things, as well as omission of recent articles, periodicals, and monographs, might be overlooked, but failure to include certain of the more distinguished series of books which are sources of the southwest is to be deplored. The Quivira Society publications are barely mentioned and *Overland to the Pacific* is not included in any way. The former contains a volume, the Villagr  *Historia* translated by Gilberto Espinosa, the only translation available in print, as the Curtis work has never been published. The same may be said of the *Mercurio Volante*. Also the omission of any reference to the recently edited journal of Z. M. Pike, and the most distinguished volume on the life of Father Kino by Herbert E. Bolton detracts materially from the value of the chronicle.

Thus in concept and spirit one can laud this unique historical anthology with the hope that a revision may correct the errors and include a more workable and comprehensive use of sources.

DOROTHY WOODWARD.

*University of New Mexico,  
Albuquerque.*

*A Lamp on the Plains*—Paul Horgan—Harper & Brothers, New York—\$2.50.

For this book Mr. Horgan has chosen what is perhaps the most appealing of all themes; that of the waif who arouses the interest of everyone he meets, and who is put on the road to a promising future. This story, in fact, has persisted from the beginnings of our literature, with no lessening of its perennial charm.

Toward the end of the war, Danny Milford, after his mother's death at the hands of a mob, is driven by hunger from a box car at the embryonic town of Vrain, New Mexico. He hides on the outskirts, stealing his food, until he is rescued by Newt Jimson, a young garage mechanic. Soon a pleasing and polished "professor," who turns up in Vrain with no explanation, takes Danny in hand, giving him his first taste of literature and the determination to better himself. The "professor's" past catches up with him, and he is arrested. Loyally, Danny engineers his escape, and gets him out on a train. Arrested himself, he is salvaged by Wade McGraw, the community's first citizen, who takes him to live on his ranch with his own children, Hank, Stephen, and Kitty. Danny and Kitty follow a precocious passion through; without knowing its full extent, McGraw realizes they had best be separated, and sends Danny (of whom he has become very fond) to the military school at Roswell with his sons. Kitty goes to her aunt in Chicago. Danny's treachery is surmised by Stephen, clever, charming, and spoiled, whose resentment and jealousy lead to serious trouble among the boys. Stephen is killed in a polo game after a fight with Danny. Hank, the "good citizen" and a Cadet Captain as well, in which capacity he has been forced to report Stephen's brutal hazing of Danny (a matter for expulsion) is confused and shattered by the whole affair. He loses his high standing in the school and turns against Danny, without suspecting the basis of his brother's shocking conduct. However, his natural fairness triumphs, he comes to realize the malicious destructive elements of the complex Stephen's



somewhat satanic nature, and takes Danny once more into his heart, with deepened respect for him, as Danny has never complained of Stephen's persecution. There is true pathos and penetration in this account of the emotional tangle between the three boys. The book ends before Kitty has returned, and before Danny's relation to his adopted family is worked out.

The merits of a poor book are seldom noticed and soon forgotten. The faults of a good book are doubly irritating, noticeable, and damaging to a man of exceptional talent and serious ambition, if he is no longer a novice. Mr. Horgan should be reminded of the fate peculiar to American writers who have got beyond "promise." He seems to be writing too fast. And he has earned the criticism of the most exacting possible standards.

This book will remain in the memory of its readers. It is imbued with Mr. Horgan's personal quality. If it is "regional" it is so in the best sense. His small world is not presented through a snobbish provincial emphasis on its difference. Mr. Horgan has so absorbed his environment that one feels it unconsciously in every sentence, yet Vrain belongs to the world we all live in. Nevertheless, the book has a tendency to softness.

Its worst fault is the uncertain grasp of narrative, which comes to a dead halt in the middle. The love-episode fails to set it in motion, and does not convince us on its own merits. Mr. Horgan seems to feel this himself, and attempts to establish through it a link with Danny's father, without, however, making this clear to a reader who does not know *Main Line West*. The pattern suggested is not carried out, and the episode remains implausible. After the tragic drama of Stephen's death the story again drifts to its inconclusive conclusion. There are many episodes which lack consequence in themselves, which lead us to expect developments, which do not develop.

Another flaw is a too-detailed, somewhat strained and obscure style, which however always disappears when some-

thing is happening. Then the language becomes smooth, expressive, and ripe. The characters are not wholly successful. It is clear that Mr. Horgan has charted them in his own mind, but they seldom get off the page. A triumphant exception to this is the "Professor," something new in fiction, who is done with a sympathetic irony, a subtle vivacity, which should keep him going for many years. The town of Vrain's first infatuation with him, and its final rejection, are acutely imagined; for it is not the common American distrust of intellect, nor the small town's hostility to "culture," though these are present. The "Professor," superior to any of them in charm, in perception, in scope, was still a rogue. Of this the instinct of Vrain was aware, but its motives and its reasoning could amuse even the disgraced "Professor," who had committed no sin in Vrain.

The dialogue could be more natural. Mr. Horgan has taken great pains to reproduce the illiterate speech of his locale, but the result is labored and fantastic:

"W' figg' warnt raght, sombitch. God-dayum' were dronk, boy haddi!" There is too much of this grotesque talk, a blemish in a book whose total effect is one of grave, luminous, and youthful beauty.

MARINA DASBURG.

*Taos, N. M.*

*The Kachinas Are Coming, Pueblo Indian Kachina Dolls With Related Folktales*—Gene Meany Hodge, with Foreword by Dr. Frederick Webb Hodge and with eighteen color plates of Kachina Dolls from original drawings by the author—Steller-Millar, Los Angeles—\$12.00.

A book delightful both in format and in content is *The Kachinas Are Coming*, by Mrs. Frederick W. Hodge. The soft two-toned tan cover is filled with cloud and rain symbols of Indian design, and the size of the book makes it possible to use easily-read, big type in the printing, suitable to the eyes of both the seven-year-old and the seventy-year-old, both of whom would enjoy reading it, and to illustrate with life-

sized drawings of the little kachina dolls, who invite a smile whenever one looks at them.

Who of us is not intrigued by the grotesque little wooden figurines of the Hopi Indians and the Indians of Zuni pueblo? When we are told that they represent figures of a multifold mythology, in which appear the Corn-Maidens, the Squirrel-Woman, the Beetle-Boy, the Deer-Man and many others, we immediately wonder in fascinated curiosity why the Duck-Woman? What do the marks upon her symbolize? What is her function in the creation of the Universe, etc., etc.?

In her beautifully illustrated book *The Kachinas Are Coming*, Mrs. Hodge answers some of these questions for us.

Indian mythology is esoteric. Much of it is shrouded in mysticism, which occasionally and surprisingly bursts into a simple tale, almost ludicrous by contrast—of why the tip of the turkey's tail is white, or the coyote has black lines running down from his eyes, or the "why" of some other everyday natural phenomenon.

It is often difficult for the White man to grasp the meaning of this mythology and to see its continuity. Mrs. Hodge has selected from this long involved creation myth of the village-dwelling Indians of New Mexico and Arizona, delightful bits each of which makes a complete tale in itself and each explaining in whole, or in part, the relationship of the Indian Kachinas and their representative effigies, the kachina dolls, to this great myth.

At the end of each story is a short explanatory sketch helping to clarify the story and to give its relationship to the life of the Indians and their elaborate ceremonies.

It is the first time that anything so elucidating and so delightful has been presented about the little Kachinas. And the charm of the book, of course, is greatly enhanced by the accurate drawings in true colors of the little snout-nosed creatures that are so endearing and so utterly "different."

Dr. Hodge, who has contributed so extensively to Pueblo archæology, says in part in his foreward: "There never was a time when interest in Indian subjects was so great as

at present, and, thanks to the progress made by serious students (one of whom is Dr. Hodge himself) in dispelling many of the fallacies pertaining to the aboriginal tribes of America, our young people have much less to unlearn than their elders." *The Coming of the Kachinas* will help to teach these young people much about their Indian neighbors, and make them realize that the little kachina dolls are not just "funny."

ELIZABETH W. DEHUFF.

*Santa Fe, N. M.*

*Brothers of Light*—The Penitentes of the Southwest—Alice Corbin Henderson, with illustrations by William Penhallow Henderson—Harcourt, Brace & Co.—\$2.50

There is no single topic which has been more exploited to make drama of this ancient state of New Mexico than Los Hermanos Penitentes. From the earliest accounts of nineteenth century Americanos down to the last Associated Press dispatch in Holy Week, the pageant of flagellation and the mimetic suffering of the Christ-path to Calvary has been surrounded with all that is thrill conveying and blood chilling. It is a sure theme to arrest the attention of a recent visitor or to center the interest of a gathering away from New Mexico. Yet very little of the real life of the Penitentes has been revealed by these news items or by the casual inspection of the rites.

Mrs. Alice Henderson's book is a friendly and picturing account of the Brothers of Light. She has not written to make melodrama of them nor to psycholalyze. Her intention is to present the folk-way of this very real experience by a vivid picture of it plus conclusions as to the European background and references to the developments of the cult in New Mexico. This she has done as only one living in New Mexico for many years can do—with respect and liking for the New Mexican scene and the life related to it.

Imagine as amphitheater a stretch of sun-bleached soil extending from the valley of the Rio

150 ] *The* NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

---

Grande to the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. The river itself is hidden by leafless, silvery-white cottonwoods, and from these the eye ranges across sandy hillocks up to a ridge of red cliffs cutting against blue snow-capped mountains. Over all is the bright clear light of an early spring day; and certainly nothing could be more open and free and remote from mystery than this level stretch of country bared to the candid light of the steady mountain sun.

So the writer sets the stage for the strange, unearthly procession which winds up the sandy ridge in the raw wintry air, the *pitiro* sounding thin reedy notes while black-veiled figures stagger under heavy crosses, and other men, bared to the waist, lift the yucca lashes at rhythmic intervals to come down across their flesh with a stinging thud. We go with the author to the morado and the ceremony of the *tinieblas*, the darkness and the rent veil of the temple during the hours of Calvary. We meet the Hermano Mayor at Abiqui. We learn of the fraternal and charitable services of the organization, and we learn that it is strongly inwrought in the life of the laity in the isolated parishes of New Mexico where the ministrations of priest or friar have never been as consistently performed as those of the brotherhood.

The author has not sentimentalized her report. She does not pretend to be or to have been part of this fellowship. Yet insofar as one not a Penitente can record the rites, Mrs. Henderson has succeeded and with appropriate deference to the initiates. William Penhallow Henderson is fellow to this interpretation with some unusual drawings in black and white which catch the play of light in scenes of dusk and day as light is always a factor of emphasis in this State which belongs to the Sun.

T. M. PEARCE.

Albuquerque, N. M.

*Pecos Bill*—James Cloyd Bowman, illustrated by Laura Bannon—Albert Whitman Co., Chicago, 1937—\$2.50.

With a keyboard spitting adjectives, and truthfulness thrown to the winds, author James Cloyd Bowman hurls himself into the telling of the story of Pecos Bill, the greatest cowboy of all times. Where Ananias left off at the peak of his career, author Bowman starts in, and produces a thoroughly readable history of the legendary character after whom his book is named.

Mr. Bowman, who is head of the English department at the Northern State Teachers College, Marquette, Mich., has his book set in 12 point Granjon type, which, we have found, is still too small to match the astounding feats of his hero. Two hundred ninety-six pages of 12 point Granjon are necessary to record the life of Pecos Bill from his modest beginning as the adopted whelp of a coyote pack, up to the point where he vanishes in thin air. And in between those two events is crammed the most amazing of super colossal and thoroughly unbelievable cowboy achievements that ever came from the fertile brain of a college professor.

Professor Bowman gives as his informant Tex O'Reilly, creator of Pecos Bill yarns. He acknowledges the aid of numerous other sources, including materials in the Harvard Library. These stories are frankly tall tales of the backwoods and frontier variety. Pecos Bill is one with the gargantuan Paul Bunyan, boss lumberjack of America in the years between the winter of the Blue Snow and the Spring Rain Came up from China. For the searcher after truth, who is looking for authentic information about cowboys and ranch life, Pecos Bill will prove a complete washout. But the reader who walks into it with his eyes wide open will discover many a chuckle, mixed with wonderment at the skill of an author who can make his prodigious prevarications sound so plausible.

Pecos Bill is illustrated by Laura Bannon who goes in for green cows, pink horses and illustrations almost as re-

152 ] *The* NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

---

markable as the text. Anyone who is interested in American humor will find the rollicsome, preposterous adventures of Pecos Bill and his horse, Widow Maker, a rare treat.

CAREY HOLBROOK.

*Albuquerque, N. M.*

*Bugles Blow No More*—Clifford Dowdey—Little, Brown and Company, 1937.—\$2.50.

The QUARTERLY reviewing policy is confined to the survey of books on the Southwest, on regional American life, on topics of general cultural and educational interest. *Bugles Blow No More*, a May publication of Little, Brown and Company, is a book about Virginia and the South of Civil War days. It is a book with a new point of view—not that of the slave-owning, patrician South, but that of the more democratic, reliable middle-class with their strong loyalties to a South which was neither all moonlight and magnolias nor slave ridden and impoverished.

I prefer this book to *So Red the Rose*, because it has better narrative continuity and because with the concrete picture of the stark horror of the war we see the searing cautery of the caste system the war performed. Brose Kirby, son of a druggist, had never met the daughter of the rich tobacco warehouse owner he worked for. The Wades were both mercantilists and planters and Mildred Wade knew only the scions of the rich cotton plantations or the aristocracy of the army. When the war levels the defenders of Richmond to the values of common humanity, Mildred Wade and Brose Kirby find a union which the pre-war South would have forever barred. The story of Brose and Mildred begins on Secession night and follows the fortunes of the war from the battle of Manassas through the successive sieges of Richmond to the last fight at Appomattox. The profiteering in war supplies behind the lines of both armies is a new and very significant development in the story. The use of quoted excerpts from the documents of the times, speeches

of Lincoln and Davis, letters and comments of actual personages, add a veracity to the fictional stream which is effective in a novel of so significant a period. We want fact with interpretation in our American historical fiction.

Mr. Dowdey has a bit of a flair, nevertheless, in his character writing. Brose and Mildred over-dramatize themselves in situations which do not require it. Author Dowdey definitely belongs in the romantic mold of writers of Southern fiction, but he has original material through his conscientious research and this reviewer found his novel one of the most interesting and profitable transcripts of American life. The map of Richmond inside the cover with the legend adapted to both events of the war and details of the novel is a further device of realism which is entertaining.

T. M. PEARCE.

*Albuquerque, N. M.*

#### TO BE REVIEWED IN AUGUST

*Hitler's Drive to the East* by F. Elwyn Jones. A sensational, though carefully documented, account of the Nazi drive towards Eastern Europe. E. P. Dutton Co.

*Henry of Navarre* by Marcelle Vioux, translated by J. Lewis May. A biography of Henry Bourbon that reads like fiction; that shows him first as an uncouth cad at the brilliant court of Catherine de Medici, then as the hard-fighting gascon dividing his time between his stern Huguenots and his many mistresses; and lastly as the king to whom "Paris was worth a mass," and sometimes a pretty face worth more than Paris. E. P. Dutton Co.