

# REVIEW OF TEXAS BOOKS



PUBLISHED BY LAMAR UNIVERSITY - BEAUMONT

Volume XIII

FALL 1998

Number 3

## ★★★★FICTION★★★★

Friedman, Kinky. *LOVE SONG OF J. EDGAR HOOVER*. New York: Ballentine Books, Inc. 1997. 238p. Paperback: \$11.95, ISBN 0-345-41509-4. 97-93936.

If you're game to try an offbeat and often off-color mystery—joining company with fans such as President Clinton—you're likely to be captivated by the turns of phrase of this country singer turned novelist. Friedman—who is famous for such ditties as "They don't make Jews like Jesus anymore"—often dances at the edge of decency, but his clever, comic narrative will keep the readers guessing not only what will happen but also what Friedman will dare to say next in this tale of an attractive (to detective Kinky) woman who loses her husband.

Mary M. Fisher

Harper, Jo. *THE LEGEND OF MEXICATL*. New York: Turtle Books, 1998. 32p. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$15.95. ISBN 1-890515-05-1, English edition. 97-42222. (Juvenile)

"Some day a man of wisdom and courage will rise up among us and take us from this desert . . . He will lead us to a place with water and shade. Then we will live with peaceful blue days and bright laughter."

So says Mexicatl's mother in the beginning of this colorful legend about the origin of the Mexican people. Mexicatl becomes that leader, chosen by the Morning Star just as the legend says he will. He leads his people to the spot, which is today Mexico City. Along the way, he learns what it is to be a wise leader and a good person. Based on history, the author's epilogue nicely ties the story into the symbols found on the Mexican flag and the recording of history through the use of pictographs on deer skin. This well-written book is aided by rich illustrations of browns, tans, yellows, greens, and other earthy subtle colors by Robert Casilla. The story moves quickly, and the author, Jo Harper, does an excellent job of writing a clear, concise tale with beautiful language.

This book can be purchased in both English and Spanish, which makes it a great teaching tool in both the bilingual and regular classrooms. The subject matter lends itself to many applications: as an exam-

ple of diversity literature; a lively discussion about the difference between fables, oral history, and myths followed by a writing assignment; the origin of the symbols used in flags around the world; a discussion about nomadic peoples and how environment shapes the way many native people live; identification of traits that make a good leader; and, a comparison of written and oral histories and their accuracy. In addition to being an attractive book, *The Legend of Mexicatl* is useful as a teaching tool or can be read simply for pleasure.

Diane Fusaro

Hinojosa, Rolando. *ASK A POLICEMAN*. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1998. 196p. Paperback: \$12.95, ISBN 1-55885-226-3. 98-10316.

Set on the Texas-Mexican border, this story of drug smuggling and murder brings back fictional sleuth Inspector Rafe Buenrostro. In his multi-generational tale of murder and mayhem, Rolando Hinojosa, a professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin, brings alive the bicultural world—and the underworld—of the Texas border region in a dry, matter-of-fact style that lends credence to the grisly goings on. Not recommended for the squeamish.

Mary M. Fisher

Holt, Kimberly Willis. *MY LOUISIANA SKY*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1998. 200p. Hardcover: \$15.95, ISBN 0-8050-5251-8. 98-12345.

Kimberly Willis Holt, an Amarillo writer, places her twelve-year-old main character, Tiger Ann Parker, in Louisiana where Holt grew up. With carefully chosen details, Holt ably recreates life during a hot summer in the 1950s in a small Louisiana town where family and neighbor roots run deep. Elvis is on a black-and-white TV, pink poodle skirts are the rage, and segregation is unquestioned. Tiger is beginning adolescence made more difficult with the knowledge that her mother and father are both retarded. Only by the firm leadership of Tiger's maternal grandmother can the family of four live together.

When Aunt Dorie from Baton Rouge invites Tiger to visit her and then to live with her, Tiger is thrilled and ready to escape her parents; however the revelation of a dark family secret forces her to examine the values her family has taught her.

This is Holt's first novel for young adults and she successfully portrays the many conflicts typical of the age. Holt has a talent for fresh metaphors and devel-

oping characters the reader cares about. Her theme of the importance of family life leaves a distinct impression on the reader. Highly recommended.

Sally Dooley

Kelton, Elmer. *CLOUDY IN THE WEST*. New York: A Forge Book, 1997. 255p. Hardcover: \$21.95, ISBN 0-312-86239-3. 96-30704.

*Cloudy in the West* is a coming-of-age story, as was Kelton's earlier *The Pumpkin Rollers*. In both, Kelton moves from ranchers and cowboys to homesteaders, the decent folk who struggled to survive on the land they tilled.

It is 1885. Joey Shipman, orphaned, lives with his stepmother and her live-in "cousin." Joey will inherit the East Texas farm when he comes of age. Should Joey die, the wicked stepmother inherits. Fearful she wants him dead, Joey runs away to find his only kin, Beau, in Central Texas. He finds Beau—in jail—a hopeless drunk, who does not believe the boy's story and sends him packing. Fate takes a hand when the "cousin" appears, ostensibly to take the lad back home. While crossing a river, however, the "cousin" attempts to drown Joey. Beau plunges into the river and grapples with the man; Joey grabs a stick to help Beau. After a do-or-die struggle, the "cousin," knocked senseless, drifts down river. Joey and Beau are killers. They must flee.

The story becomes structurally an on-the-road tale. The two fall in with good and bad, ultimately meeting an outlaw, Miller Dawson, who takes a liking to Joey. Joey, seeing Dawson as a Robin Hood figure, believes he has found a friend whom he can trust. Dawson takes them to a hide-out and introduces them to a gang of outlaws, and Joey realizes how villainous men can be. With Dawson's help he and Beau, fearing for their lives, escape the outlaws taking with them the soiled dove Alta.

The final step in Joey's maturity is with the sheepman MacIntosh, who becomes his mentor, leading Joey to reconcile his emotional disturbances with his moral considerations.

Kelton spins a good yarn. The settings are true to Texas. It is, however, his characterizations that move him from being a writer of "westerns" to recognition as one of America's foremost writers. The see-sawing interaction between Beau and Joey—the gradual changes in Beau matching Joey's gradual growth toward maturity—written convincingly without "deus ex machina," is a feat only a great writer carries off successfully.

*Cloudy in the West* lends itself to comparison with *Huckleberry Finn*.

Ernestine Sewell Linck

Kelton, Elmer. *THE SMILING COUNTRY*. New York:

A Forge Book, 1998. 256p. Hardcover: \$21.95, ISBN 0-312-86471-X.

After *The Good Old Boys*, and especially after Tommy Lee Jones' televised production of that novel, Kelton received request after request to write a sequel. Fans wanted to know what happened to the cowboy Hewey Calloway. *The Smiling Country* is Kelton's response, although it stands as a complete novel in itself.

It is 1910. Hewey is past his prime, but he is still one of the best. The boss man, Old Man Jenkins, offers him the foreman's job of the Circle C, a ranch he is buying. Hewey has no ambition, though, beyond breaking bronses and working cattle. Cowboying is his life. He has admitted nothing else into that life until his nephew, Tommy, runs away from home, finds Hewey, and announces he wants to be just like him—a cowboy.

Hewey plans to send the boy home. Meantime, Tommy experiences the excitement, the hard, hot, sweaty, dusty work, the dangers and the sometime tragedies. One unfortunate day, Hewey, to protect Tommy from a "loco" bronc, takes over from the boy; a terrible scene ensues, and Hewey is broken up. He will never ride again.

In the earlier book, Hewey had one conflict: should he marry the girl he loves and settled down to spend his life behind a plow, like his brother? Or should he yield to the "go-yonders," staying at one place hardly more than a couple of years, soaking up the beauty of the high-low country?

In *the Smiling Country*, Hewey's life takes on problems. His age for one. The responsibility for his nephew. Modern technology. Old Man Jenkins buys a touring car. Hewey would like to see all the cars in some ditch. He saw an airplane once and thought if God wanted a man to fly he would have given him feathers. He cannot put out of his mind the schoolteacher he left. And, further, cowboying is over for him.

Hewey would have benefitted from Alexander Pope's lines: "Be not the first by whom the new is tired / Nor yet the last to lay the old aside" (*Essay on Criticism*). His convalescence gives him time to view his problems from another perspective, not mounted on horseback, that is. He gains understanding of his place in the great scheme of things and leaves readers considering the implications of the novel for our times.

Ernestine Sewell Linck

Marcus, Hal. *AUNT ALICE ALLIGATOR'S ANIMAL ALPHABET ALBUM*. El Paso: Paso al Sol, 1996. 27p. Illustrations. Paperback: \$9.00. ISBN 0-9652560-1-4. (Juvenile)

Aunt Alice accentuates the alphabet using an astute alliterative approach in association with an amalgam of amiable animal acquaintances. Alice herself intro-

duces the letter A as she "... accepts the award of her amazing Animal Alphabet Album."

As the ABC procession unfolds, the reader is regaled by activities featuring appropriately named relatives and friends. Cousin Christy Cat and Grandma Gertrude Gopher join Kevin Kangaroo and Terrace Tortoise among characters representing a letter. By the time "zippy Zack Zebra zigzags in the zinnias and zooms through the zoo!", the alphabetic traveler has been tantalized by twenty-six titillating tongue-twisters vividly illustrated, ostensibly with Aunt Alice's water colors. Hal Marcus' literary alter ego is apparently based on a childhood memory of a real alligator, which was an attraction in his El Paso home for many years. That Aunt Alice lives on in Mr. Marous' imagination is testimony to the nature of young minds. A few readings of this book between teacher or parent and charge will certainly help impress the vital alphabetic key to print on an emerging reader. By providing children with a lively mnemonic code breaker, Aunt Alice Alligator's Animal Alphabet Album promotes literacy effectively.

A companion coloring book, with the same illustrations and text, is available (ISBN 0-965-2560-2-2. \$6.95).

Paul Miller

Medearis, Angela Shelf. THE GHOST OF SIFTY SIFTY SAM. Illustration. New York: Scholastic Press, 1997. 32p. Hardcover: \$14.95. ISBN 0-590-48290-4. 96-37489. (Juvenile)

This is a children's picture book about a house which is haunted by a ghost named Sifty Sifty Sam. A chef, Dan, successfully spends a night with the ghost by cooking him lots and lots of food, wins \$5,000, and buys the house. Dan turns the haunted mansion into a restaurant and employs the ghost as his dishwasher for the cost of food — especially Sam's favorite, fried fish. At first read, The Ghost of Sifty Sifty Sam is a disappointment. The words feel clumsy in one's head, and the reader is left with myriad questions. However, Angela Shelf Medearis is not just an author; she is a well-respected storyteller. The book is a joy when read aloud, especially when read to children. The words work very well, and Medearis creates a lot of fun for the reader by switching from rhyme to prose, using repetition, and changing the cadence.

The book receives much of its strength from the outstanding illustrations by Jacqueline Rogers. One of the best features Sifty Sifty Sam full of food, which can clearly be seen through his white, ghostly belly.

There is another reason to share this book with children: the natural questions it will engender. Who was Sifty Sifty Sam when he was alive, and why is he haunting the house? What is the origin of a name like Sifty Sifty Sam? Can ghosts be hungry and, more importantly, can they actually eat? And finally, if a ghost were hungry, wouldn't he just continue to scare

the chef into making him food rather than wash the dishes? Can a ghost really wash dishes? Part of the enjoyment will come with pondering these and other open-ended questions.

Diane Fusaro

Nixon, Joan Lowery. MURDERED, MY SWEET. New York: Delacorte Press, 1997. 200p. Hardcover: \$15.95, ISBN 0-385-32245-3. 96-43431. (Juvenile)

Joan Lowery Nixon has written many fine books for young adults. She is a four time Edgar Award winner and her recent book, Murdered, My Sweet is another well-written and engaging mystery. Most of the story's action takes place in a hotel on the Riverwalk in San Antonio, where a family reunion of sorts is taking place. The reason for this particular reunion is the "public" reading of the revised will of a wealthy candy maker. He wants to make all of his family aware of his wishes in one fell swoop.

The heroine, Jenny Jakes, is a fifteen-year-old daughter of a famous mystery writer. And when murder happens and it is a member of the family, people expect the famous mystery writer to solve the case. Jenny is very well aware that her mother has never solved a real crime and that she will need all the help she can get. Jenny is determined to keep her widowed mother from harm and to save her reputation. Detective Sergeant Sam Donovan, who is investigating the case, is single. Will Mrs. Jakes fail to take enough precautions since the murderer just might be a family member? Jenny has to keep both eyes open to danger since her mother often is caught thinking about her future novels and not paying enough attention to her surroundings.

Murdered, My Sweet is fast paced with a little travelogue, a little romance, suspense, and lots of clues to make the reader try and guess who the murderer is. Recommended highly for any library including fiction for young adults.

Dorothy Leising

Sebestyen, Ouida. OUT OF NOWHERE. New York: Puffin Books, 1994. 183p. Paperback: \$3.99, ISBN 0-14-037640-2. 95-9434.

Rarely does a young adult novel have the depth of characters and thematic development that this fine work exhibits. Abandoned by his mother, an exotic dancer, fourteen-year-old Harley is left by the side of the road as his mother drives off with her latest boyfriend. Nearby, May, at a roadside campground, observes this wrenching scene. She too has recently been abandoned by her husband, and now she is en route to claim a property of hers for a home. May has her problems, but she has a big heart and offers to help Harley. Each is cautious of the other, but Harley and his dog work their way into May's, allowing them to accompany her back to Texas. Harley promises to help May clean and fix up her house in exchange for

room and board and time to find himself.

When they reach her property, two other castoffs of society meet them: Bill, a crippled bachelor who lives in May's house, and Singer, a teenaged girl with a warm heart and positive outlook on life. These disparate people grow to love, accept, and forgive one another, and the reader finishes the book with the knowledge that this unlikely foursome will be a family, albeit a non-traditional one.

Sebestyen is a fine writer whose fresh metaphors convey the angst of her characters as well as their personal growth into loving adults. Her characters are ones we can genuinely care about; we understand their hurts and their healings. She is the author of The Girl in the Box and On Fire.

Sally Dooley

Shrake, Edwin. BLESSED MCGILL. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. 236p. Paperback: \$15.95, ISBN 0-292-77724-8. 97-22171.

Blessed McGill offers the seemingly real account of the fictional first American saint, Peter Hermano McGill. The primary setting spans the Reconstruction years in Texas. Shrake offers readers McGill, or "Ka-Teu-Wie" — "Refuses to Die," as the hero who lives in the untamed regions of Texas. As the novel opens, McGill is waiting for Octavio, an Indian who was once his friend, to come and kill him. The reader is immediately hooked because the reason for McGill's imminent death is not revealed. McGill, as narrator, slowly unfolds the details of his life in journal-entry style to explain the quarrel between himself and Octavio. McGill writes the story of his life as he waits to be killed, and the details are intriguing and realistic. The main conflict between the two characters develops when Octavio's favorite wife and only son die of smallpox, due in part to McGill's presence. McGill is allowed to leave the Indian camp; however, Octavio warns McGill that he will get revenge. McGill leaves the camp, marries, has a son, and seems to forget the promise issued by his former friend. One day while McGill is out hunting, Octavio finds the white man's home. He kills McGill's wife and son and sets the house afire. When McGill learns of this, he begins tracking Octavio, and his journey leads him into several more adventures.

Shrake's novel may appear somewhat politically incorrect for today's social climate, but the cutting remarks equally color all races of people. He presents "good" Indians, whites, and blacks, and he offers the "bad" of all of the ethnic groups. The novel is a well-balanced work of wit, intrigue, and dark humor. I strongly recommend this book for its attention to detail pertaining to the Reconstruction period of Texas, for its ironic style, and for its approach to naturalism.

Janet K. Turk

Sisnett, Ana. GRANNIE JUS' COME!. San Francisco:

Children's Book Press, 1997. 30p. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$15.95, ISBN 0-89239-150-2. (Juvenile)

"Is Tuesday afternoon an' Grannie Jus' come!" Using soft, melodic tones of Caribbean English dialect, Ana Sisnett creates a joyous celebration of a young girl's simplest pleasures. The young girl is the author herself, remembering her childhood home of Panama, and the event is a weekly visit from Grannie Sophie. Ms. Sophie, a Caribbean island native, apparently bequeathed to her granddaughter an unbridled love of life to go along with the rich, distinctive accent. Every aspect of Grannie's weekly visit serves as a source of pure delight for the little girl. As Ms. Sophie steps off the bus, she is exuberantly inspected from head to toe by her loving granddaughter. In prose style reminiscent of song, Ana inventories Grannie's apparel and accessories, including the contents of her purse. Young Ana proudly leads Ms. Sophie to the comfort of a couch and gleefully helps her mom serve refreshments. As Tuesday afternoon slips away a little girl, admiring hair so white and skin so soft, peacefully melts in her Grannie's warm embrace. "Ah say, 'Oh Grannie! Ah lov yu so much!' She say, 'From de very first time Ah set eyes 'on yu, Ah did lov yu plenty, plenty me lov!'" Brilliant, full page illustrations, sprinkled with pets and little brothers, attractively complement linguistically lush tones.

Paul Miller

## ★★★POETRY★★★

Lieberman, Michael. A HISTORY OF THE SWEETNESS OF THE WORLD. Huntsville: Texas Review Press, 1995. 66p. Paperback: \$8.00, ISBN 1-881515-07-9. 97-049074

Lieberman's A History of the Sweetness of the World presents innovative images and new poetic language not easily categorized as the author's background in research pathology surfaces in many of his poems. This chapbook is divided into three sections: "A Slender Decency," "The Mint and Perfumes We Carry," and "A Language We Are Afraid to Understand." Each section offers a diverse look at life, memories, and landscape as the author seeks to find meaning and beauty in living. In "Survivor" cadmium becomes the "leper of metals, / unable to shed the stigma of its birth." "Eleven Views from the Bayou at Chimney Rock" offers more vivid imagery in the descriptions of oleander and peonies: "Oleander, astride the bayou, / crazed from within, / self-feeder, / head tossed back in the wind." And "The peonies / flow, ruffled / like a young boy's foreskin." Perhaps the most memorable image occurs in Lieberman's poem "My Father." The tribute to his father states, "He would not be a burden—a bag of ready mix / soaked in the driveway and hardening."

Lieberman clearly offers inventive and exhilarating poetry. As schools seek to find examples for writing

across the curriculum, they should consider A History of the Sweetness of the World in which the poet successfully blends biological terms, Jewish history, and life experiences to create unforgettable images.

Janet K. Turk

## ★★NONFICTION★★

### ARCHITECTURE

Mullen, Robert J. ARCHITECTURE AND ITS SCULPTURES IN VICEREGAL MEXICO. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. 286p. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$45. ISBN 0-292-75209-1. Paperback: \$24.95. ISBN 0-292-75210-5. 96-51256.

Its title may be a bit off-putting, but the format and typography of this splendidly-prepared, well-illustrated and authoritative work more than make up for it. The late writer, an associate professor of Latin American Art and Architecture at the University of Texas at San Antonio and author of a similar book on Oaxaca, has filled an important void with this overview of Mexican colonial architecture and sculpture. During its viceregal or colonial period from 1535 to 1821, perhaps 100,000 churches and civic buildings were constructed in Mexico, which then included much of the American southwest. Surviving structures are analyzed succinctly. The chapter on frontier mission architecture alone merits this work's place on the shelves of those wishing to put the early structures of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California in proper perspective.

But buildings are treated not simply as having risen of bricks and mortar alone, but are seen instead as products of their social and economic contexts. In larger cities, we learn, buildings stay close to European designs in vogue, while in smaller towns the designs often reflect indigenous styles predating the Hispanic presence. Photographs taken by the author during his quarter century of study on the subject are augmented with those from other sources in a lavish, inviting overall design.

Mary M. Fisher

### ART

Carter, Keith. KEITH CARTER PHOTOGRAPHS: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. 168p. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$40.00, ISBN 0-292-71195-6. 97-8052.

Ask the average southeast Texan the name of a world-renowned artist from Beaumont and more often than not the answer will be George Jones or Tracy

Byrd. But for the last twenty-five years, and from strictly local resources, Beaumont native Keith Carter has been quietly making stunning art in his Old Town and Lamar University studios. Keith Carter Photographs: Twenty-five Years is his fifth published work. A.D. Coleman, in the introduction to this collection of seventy-nine old and new photos, draws a distinction between photographs of something and those about something. The quality that has come to differentiate Carter's work from that of a mere recorder of images is its efficacy in suggesting and expressing an extra layer of meaning in subjects that in our own hands or through our own lenses seem trivial or mundane. The images in this book seem, without cleverness or clap-trapping or highbrow abstraction, to reflect not only what is, for a fraction of a second, just there, what is universal and transcendent and true. This is, of course, the poet's gift. Increasingly Carter's critics and colleagues are agreeing that it is his gift, too.

His students love him. His peers respect and admire him. Galleries display him; foundations pay him. But for those who don't know him through his work as a teacher or through professional contact, this book's retrospective quality lets us come to know who Keith Carter is, while the current work lets us enjoy him; his clarity of vision, his humor, his interpretation of our world, his mastery of the photo medium, his sense of balance and his artistic poise are all revealed, all offered without self-consciousness or fanfare. Autobiographical and critical comments help provide perspective on his artistic and technical views and allow the reader to trace his development from a recorder of images to a shaper and creator of them.

The paper and binding are of high quality, so the book will spend more time circulating than it will in waiting to be routed to mending. Texana collectors, high school and academic libraries, and collectors of southern cultural artifacts should have this book.

Andrew B. Preslar

Rosenberg, Marjorie von. ARTISTS WHO PAINTED TEXAS. Austin: Eakin Press, 1997. 90p. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$15.95. ISBN 1-57168-203-1. (Juvenile)

For each of the fifteen artists represented the author has included a brief biography, a small portrait, and at least one full page color illustration of his or her work. The end of each chapter includes a letter written by the artist. Five are copies of actual letters: the others are composed from true events in the lives of the artists. The earliest known Texas artist produced the prehistoric cave painting of the lower Pecos River region of Texas. The other artists who lived from the early nineteenth to the mid twentieth century all loved Texas and painted Texas portraits, scenery, or history. Works in oil, watercolor, pastel, lithograph, and pencil are represented. Elementary students will find this attractive book useful in conducting research on either Texas history or on artists and how their careers developed. The book includes a brief glossary, the location of works cited, credits for the artists' por-

traits, and a bibliography.

Frances M. Ramsey

## BIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Ken. *YOU CAN'T DO THAT, DAN MOODY! THE KLAN FIGHTING GOVERNOR OF TEXAS*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1998. 166p. Hardback: \$15.95, ISBN 1-57168-181-7. (Juvenile)

Ken Anderson has written a book which is accessible to upper elementary students, has the suspense of a Grisham novel, and seems very timely in a day when hate crimes fill headlines. In the 1920s when the Ku Klux Klan had a growing influence on elections as well as spreading terror through vigilantism against Catholics, Jews, people of color, and any who crossed them, Dan Moody and a small group of close friends had the courage to tackle the problem. The author describes the inner workings of the Klan, their cruel treatment of those whom they targeted, the difficulty of getting reliable witnesses, and the danger to those who stood up to them. Born in Taylor, Texas, Dan Moody, was an honest, hardworking man with a persistence about seeking justice. He rose from district attorney to state attorney general to defeat the corrupt Ferguson and become governor of Texas. He was the first in the nation to win a conviction of a Klan member with a sentence of time in prison. This book will be useful in Texas history classes. It is also inspiring with its look at the functioning of the justice system as it points out the path of hope for overcoming those who would spread fear and hatred.

Frances M. Ramsey

Calvert, Patricia. *GREAT LIVES: THE AMERICAN FRONTIER*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1997. 377p. Hardcover: \$25.00, ISBN 0-689-80640-X. 96-48519. (Juvenile)

Patricia Calvert has assigned herself a daunting task, that of choosing, researching, and writing about those people who really defined and shaped the American West. This excellent book features notable figures from history whom one would expect — Daniel Boone, Calamity Jane, Buffalo Bill, Davy Crockett, Custer, Crazy Horse, Sam Houston, and Lewis and Clark — but also includes the fascinating accounts of Johnny Appleseed, John Muir, John Wesley Powell, George Bird Grinnell, and Nancy Ward. If some of these names are a mystery, it is worth picking up this book just to learn about their exciting and adventurous lives.

The writing is superb, as are the interesting and sometimes gruesome facts that the author puts forward. For example, James Bowie (famous for the knife named after him) rode on the back of an enormous alligator that had killed his hound dog, until he devised a way to kill the gator. Sir George Gore, an Irish nobleman, hired Jim Bridger to lead his party onto the plains where they butchered, among other animals, 2,500 buffalo and forty bears. Kit Carson

was a runaway from the saddle shop he was apprenticed to, and the shop owner offered one cent to anyone who would bring the boy back. Lewis and Clark felt fortunate to be able to eat elk meat on Christmas day, even if it did have maggots. A well-known and respected stagecoach driver during the California gold rush, "Cockeyed Charley" was discovered to be a woman only after "his" death. Fiction writers would have trouble creating such unique and colorful characters as these people who really lived.

If there is anything negative about this book, it is that Calvert occasionally writes commentary (in parenthesis) about the facts she has recorded. This technique proves somewhat disruptive during the reading, but more importantly, it is not necessary as the reader is not being asked to judge any of these people's lives, only to learn about them. The only thing that might have made this book stronger would have been the inclusion of maps. These extraordinary characters traveled extensively, and it would have been helpful to be able to visualize their wanderings. *Great Lives: The American Frontier* is an excellent book — a must for any school or public library shelf.

Diane Fusaro

Casad, Dede Weldon. *TEXANS OF VALOR: MILITARY HEROES IN THE 20 CENTURY*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1998. Illustrations. Paperback: \$16.95, ISBN 1-57168-113-2. 96-2708.

This work collects of short essays on various military heroes of the twentieth century, most of whom had strong Texas connections. Its clear style, basic and analytical, and its references, make it appropriate reading for readers in junior high school to junior college, and furthermore make it a useful point of departure for modern regional military history. Not surprisingly, the book does confront the complex issue of whether or not Texas — or any American state — since the Spanish-American War has really had much of a military tradition of its own other than as a function of an accident of birth, or residence of a significant historical figure at the time of entry into military service. Nor is "Texans of Valor" definitively exhaustive. Bill Hawkins, one of the salient heroes of Tarawa, is not here. Aggies will be happy that Earl Rudder is included, but will not condone at the absence of most of their Medal of Honor winners. Eisenhower's tenuous youthful contact with Texas gains him entry, but not George Gay, the only member of Torpedo 8 at Midway to survive World War II. Despite that, this book offers an introductory view of what many Texans would claim as their heritage, and a subject left in the background in recent historiography.

Roger Beaumont

Gurasich, Marj. *BENITO AND THE WHITE DOVE: A STORY OF JOSÉ ANTONIO NAVARRO, HERO OF EARLY TEXAS*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1989. 104p. Hardcover: \$12.95, ISBN 0-89015-693-X. 88-36706.



The real Navarro, known as the White Dove, is paired with the fictional Benito Chavez to bring important history and a good story to young readers. Navarro was born in San Antonio under the Mexican flag, but he favored Texas independence and worked for it. He was taken prisoner when on the Santa Fe expedition and was taken to Mexico City. There he was tried for treason and sentenced to death. The death penalty was overturned, but Navarro was sent to prison in Vera Cruz, where he spent three-and-a-half years chained to the floor.

In spite of his hardships, Navarro remained a "gentle Dove." His experiences are relayed to the reader via conversations with Benito Chavez, the illiterate young son of the jailer. Through Navarro, Benito not only learns about events, but learns valuable lessons as well. One lesson is: different viewpoints make for different truths; to Santa Anna, Navarro is a traitor, but Navarro views himself as a patriot. Another lesson is: gentle ways can be brave ways.

With the help of friends, including Benito, Navarro flees Mexico and returns to Texas and his family. He gives a special gift to Benito — tuition to school. The friendship between youth and age is only one of the appealing aspects of this interesting historical novel.

Jo Harper

Kessler, Jimmy. *HENRY COHEN: THE LIFE OF A FRONTIER RABBI*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1997. 60p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Hardcover: \$12.95, ISBN 1-57168-199-X. (Juvenile)

After his boyhood in the poor areas of London and some years spent in Africa and Jamaica, Rabbi Henry Cohen came to Galveston in 1888. His experience in these frontier communities influenced his life and teachings as he was guided by Micah 6:8: "It has been told you, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you; to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Rabbi Cohen came to the Galveston congregation of Temple B'nai Israel in 1888 where he spent the rest of his life as a community leader as well as rabbi to his Reform Jewish congregation. Author Jimmy Kessler, who followed Rabbi Cohen as leader of the temple in Galveston, uses the eighty-two-year-old rabbi's reminiscences during a typical day of appointments as the vehicle to describe the way in which his hero influenced his world for good. Young readers will see how a good man reacted to prejudice against others as well as against fellow Jews. They will also learn about Jewish holy days and celebrations and some Galveston history. The book concludes with black-and-white photos, a glossary, and a bibliography.

Frances M. Ramsey

Wade, Mary Dodson. *JANE LONG'S JOURNEY*. Houston: Colophon House, 1998. Unpaged. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$13.95, ISBN 1-882539-0. Paperback: \$5.95, ISBN 1-882639-23-0. (Juvenile)

Mary Dodson Wade has attempted in very few words and pages to describe the life of a remarkable woman—Jane Long, the "Mother of Texas." She does an admirable job of setting down a linear skeleton of facts. The reader learns about Jane's marriage to James Long; her associations with Jean Lafitte (the famous pirate), Stephen Austin, and Mirabeau Lamar (the second president of Texas); the death of her husband in Mexico; her ability to survive without him; the creation and operation of her famous boardinghouse; and, the births and deaths of her three children. This book is an excellent way to begin learning about Jane Long, the historical figure. However, it leaves the reader wanting to know much more. Too often, Wade tantalizes readers with a fact or horror, then glides into the next facet of Jane's life without ever really introducing us to the "real" woman.

How did the young Jane feel about her husband's long absences? How did it affect Jane to lose her infant daughter, Rebecca, whom she had left with her sister while she traveled to Nacogdoches to reunite with her husband? Why did Jane continue to wait for her husband's return to Bolivar, even though everyone else had departed the settlement, when remaining endangered her entire family? Why was Jane's independence so important to her? Why did she ask Stephen Austin for land, and what was the attraction of Texas—a wild, newly settled territory? In essence, who was Jane Long, and how have the events of her life, laid out in this book, shaped the woman?

Also, too often, Wade introduces characters without putting them into the context of history. For example, Bill Milam helps Jane at Bolivar, and Randal Jones escorts her to San Antonio and later builds her a cabin and provides food for Jane and her family while they live in Austin's colony. Who were these men, and why did they help Jane?

Virginia Marsh Roeder does a good job of illustrating the story. The small pen-and-ink drawings found in an oval beneath each page are an interesting way to tell the story in pictures, while the larger, color illustrations complement the tale.

Diane Fusaro

## GUIDEBOOKS

Phillips, Bob. *52 MORE OFFBEAT TEXAS STOPS: TRAVELING WITH BOB PHILLIPS, TEXAS COUNTRY REPORTER*. Dallas: Phillips Productions, Inc., 1997. 160p. Illustrations. Paperback: \$13.95, ISBN 0-9636541-5-2. 97-091943.

This is the companion volume to Phillips' 1993 volume, *52 Offbeat Texas Stops*, and delivers exactly what the title promises—with the emphasis on "off-beat." Best known as the Texas Country Reporter, Phillips has quietly spent twenty-five years rooting up interesting people and places to share with his audiences, along the way collecting numerous awards for his journalism, including honors from the two major

wire services, the Texas Historical Commission, WorldFest International, and the Emmy Awards. His colorful, colloquial style is sprinkled with unusual or clever idioms that reflect the language of the region and people he describes, but his eye for the engaging fact and his well-built and carefully organized paragraphs belie the casual tone, suggesting that he is a craftsman and knows what he's doing. I found myself smiling and nodding throughout in appreciation of the stylistic choices he made; Phillips knows his target audience.

As the title suggests, the book is a travel guide organized around fifty-two unusual attractions one might visit on a weekend trip with the family. All areas of the state are represented; each write-up, illustrated with at least one black-and-white photo, offers a cameo of some person or feature of local color or interest (the Cowboy Jesus in Paris, Stonehenge II in Hunt, the Concrete Gorilla in Odem, or the real-life Rosa's Cantina in El Paso, for instance), with brief suggestions for interesting side trips to museums, festivals, or natural areas offered in "Bob's Best Bets" that accompany each featured attraction. Each "stop" listed in the table of contents includes the name of the community where the attraction can be found and is numbered and keyed to a locator map of the state on the facing page, so that with a glance a reader could find something of interest within a two-hour drive of just about anywhere in the state. Even though it would be a six-hour trip, I want to go to San Antonio myself to see the Toilet Seat Museum—and maybe make a side run to Navasota for some of Buck's Hot Carrots.

This certainly isn't an expensive book for all it offers, and will surely circulate as soon as it goes in the new book rack.

Andrew B. Preslar

## HISTORY

Cartwright, Gary. *DIRTY DEALING*. 2d ed. El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 1998. 390p. Illustrations. Paperback: \$15.95, ISBN 0-938317-35-0. 98-11320.

First published in 1984, this is the chilling true crime story of drug dealing on the Mexican Border and the assassination of a federal judge in Texas. With a cast of characters more unique than a novelist could dream up, *Dirty Dealing* traces the crime-filled lives of the Chagra brothers of El Paso. They were into drug dealing, smuggling, and gambling. This absorbing account ends with the murder of Lee and prison sentences for Jimmy and Joe. The government's war on drugs was just beginning, and it revealed the scope of the Chagra brothers' wheeling and dealing. They lived in the fast lane and feared being brought before San Antonio Judge John H. Wood, known as Maximum John for his stiff penalties for drug dealers and other criminals. The plot thickened with the murder of Wood by Charles Harrelson at the behest of the Chagras. The war on drugs, according to Cartwright's account, has been no more effective than Prohibition.

He points out the injustices of the old system.

An afterword by Cartwright updates the story of Harrelson and Jimmy and Joe Chagra. This new edition is particularly timely since Harrelson will get a hearing for a new trial in August in Denver. His lawyers claim that the fact that he was convicted in the courthouse named for the judge could have tainted his conviction. The book concludes with "A Note to the Second Edition" by El Paso attorney Raymond C. Caballero who expresses his disdain for Judge Wood and his own concern for the American system of justice.

Sally Dooley

Cashion, Ty. *A TEXAS FRONTIER: THE CLEAR FORK COUNTRY AND FORT GRIFFIN, 1849-1887*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. 336p. Illustrations. Paperback: \$17.95. ISBN 0-8061-2791-0. 91-41192.

The Clear Fork, a tributary of the Brazos River, winds its way across West Texas. In early days it provided a trail for frontiersmen to lands unknown. The books, theses, interviews, and archival material in Cashion's lengthy bibliography attest to the Clear Fork area's being "the anchor of development" (xiii) for West Texas.

Gunfights, rustling, Indian depredations, hangings, drunkenness, gambling, soiled doves, drifters, vigilantes, buffalo hunters, cattle herders, and pumpkin rollers: all the cliché-ridden persons, places, and things in books about West Texas—be they history or fiction—are found in the story of this area for the telling and retelling. So rich is its legendary that Shackleford County residents perpetuate the tales in an animal outdoor musical, the Fandangle. Separating fact from lore is the challenge Cashion undertook in his revisionist history.

When Randolph Marcy led an expedition across the plains in 1848, he was so impressed by the South Fork area that he wrote his *Prairie Traveler*, an immigrant's guide. Southern herders felt encouraged to come to Texas where they adapted to open range grazing; dirt-poor Southerners came; others who had the "go-younders." Settling was anything but stable, however, and many became disheartened by Indian raids and tilling unproductive land.

In 1876 Fort Griffin was established atop a hill overlooking the stream; newcomers drifted into the flat at the base of the hill, a lawless place. Nevertheless, tents, shacks, and hovels were thrown up for habitation. There were opportunities for a mercantile, saloons, a barber shop, a photographer, a blacksmith.

The Flat enjoyed flush times when it became the hub for trading in buffalo hides. With the annihilation of the bison and the removal of the military unit in 1881, what there was of a community scattered into nearby towns.



account the varying cultures of the settlers, the environment to which they adapted, lawlessness, the removal of the Indians to Oklahoma: what he calls a "balanced" view. Overall, he accounts for the frontier experiences that changed Southerners into West Texans.

Ernestine Sewell Linck

Chemerka, William R. ALAMO ALMANAC & BOOK OF LISTS. Austin: Eakin Press, 1997. 195p. Illustrations. Paperback: \$16.95, ISBN 1-571158-150-7. 97-2623.

A high school teacher in New Jersey has produced this alphabetized listing of people and things related to the Alamo. Unfortunately, the selections are uneven. Listed are writers John Steinbeck—who simply had an idea about an Alamo film—and T.R. Fehrenbach—of whom we are told only that he wrote "a number of books," one about Texas which got printed—while there are no entries on the Alamo's two delegates, Jesse Badgett and Samuel Maverick, to the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence. Added to the reference section are thirty pages of lists, ranging from home states of the defenders to names of the officers who died in the battle to the "Top 10 Utilitarian Alamo Gifts."

Mary M. Fisher

Fisher, Lewis F. SAN ANTONIO: OUTPOST OF EMPIRES. San Antonio: Maverick Publishing Company, 1997. 101p. Illustrations. Index. Hardcover: \$24.95, ISBN 0-9651507-3-9; Paperback: \$16.95, ISBN 0-9651507-4-7. 97-74581.

This is an excellent book for the person who wants to read about the Alamo City's history without going into a lot of detail. In a slim volume of only 101 pages and eight easy-to-read chapters, author Lewis Fisher traces San Antonio's history beginning with a group of Spanish explorers who happened upon the site on June 13, 1691, the feast of Saint Anthony of Padua. The author uses numerous old photographs and sketches which show how the city has been transformed from five Spanish missions and a collection of huts to its present status of a major metropolitan area of nearly one million inhabitants. One of the more interesting pictures is a daguerrotype of the Alamo taken in 1849. It is thought to be the earliest known photograph taken in the State of Texas. Fisher briefly covers the major aspects of San Antonio's history one can think of: the years of Spanish colonization, the Texas revolution and independence, the Civil War, the Old West years, and growth before and after the World Wars to the present. Attention is also given to the ethnic elements that make up the city, particularly the Mexican and German heritages. Also mentioned is the major role the U.S. military has played in San Antonio's economy and growth.

An index concludes this fine work. There is no bibliography, though, to guide the reader to additional

sources on the city's history. San Antonio: Outpost of Empires is recommended for all libraries and local history collections.

Jon P. Tritsch

Francaviglia, Richard V. FROM SAIL TO STEAM: FOUR CENTURIES OF TEXAS MARITIME HISTORY, 1500-1900. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998. 352p. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$34.95, ISBN 0-292-72503-5. 97-009578.

Almost seventy percent of the boundary of Texas is water, and for more than four centuries, this strategic area has helped shape Texas history. Yet most twentieth-century scholars downplay or ignore maritime history. Francaviglia's book, the first comprehensive maritime history of Texas, should do much to redirect our attention.

His numerous illustrations, suggestive and sometimes delightfully unexpected, are worth the price of the book. Maritime motifs on early Texas bank notes show that Texas thought of itself as a seacoast state. Line drawings precisely render the types of Texas ships and their propulsion systems. And we witness the evolution of Texas cartography in twenty-two maps and nautical charts. One wishes the book were coffee-table size to do justice to the richly detailed illustrations.

Francaviglia surveys, in a straightforward, easy-to-read chronology, four centuries of maritime history. He elaborates about the more important figures, incidents, and developments: for instance, Karankawa Indians, Cabeza de Vaca, La Salle, the Texas Navy, the Morgan and Mallory Lines, the American Civil War, and riverboat navigation. Texas now has its maritime history in a single volume. Recommended for all serious collections of Texas history.

Stephen Curley

Hubbard, Bill. SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE. Far Hills, NJ: New Horizon Press Publishers, Inc. 1998. 322p. Hardcover: \$23.95, ISBN 0-88282-160-1. 97-066566.

In this book Bill Hubbard, at the time an officer in the Lubbock Police Department, tells his version of, as he terms it, a "whistle-blower's true tale of corruption, death, and justice." In terms of facts, no doubt his version is substantially true, but no objective reader could fail to see the profound skew Hubbard writes into this narrative.

Hubbard describes his year-long ordeal following his testimony against the incompetence and corruption of forensic pathologists Ralph Erdmann. Hubbard's investigative work uncovers evidence of a conspiracy to conceal numerous irregularities, medical evidence, falsification of reports, and collaboration with prosecutors to offer false testimony in criminal cases. A month after Hubbard testifies concerning these find-

ings, he is indicted on felony charges by the Texas Attorney General's office. The rest of the book is a play-by-play description (with commentary) of Hubbard's prosecution and his lawsuit against Lubbock County District Attorney Travis Ware and others under the RICO Act.

The dust jacket promo is right—it is an exciting story. The problem with the book is not with its plot or its attention to detail, but with its eschewing of objectivity (less Hubbard's fault than his editors'). Hubbard's subjective responses to his own experiences, through relevant and predictably place Hubbard as a character in the greatest possible advantage while depicting those who oppose him as evil and corrupt. His assumption of the role of omniscient narrator in places is a typical device used to allow Hubbard to embellish. When he describes his wife's thoughts alone on her drive home from work after hearing of his indictment, he tells us that she says to herself how "he was the most honest, dedicated cop anyone could ask for." When he describes the scene in which his lawyer, Denette Vaughn, confronts Lubbock Police Chief Don Bridgers, he writes that she "looked something like a Chihuahua treeing a Great Dane."

Both of these bone-jarring shifts in point of view are effected simply to give the narrator a chance to play at omniscience. Junior high school English teachers don't countenance such primitive stylistic machinations, and neither should Hubbard's editors. Such inconsistencies and projections might be acceptable if this were fiction, where a narrator's impressions create a set of reactions in the reader, and if they were executed with artistry or grace. Even in nonfiction the writer's use of such devices is understandable in draft form. In telling one's own story, acknowledging feelings can be a necessary step in coming to control them. But this book does not purport to be a diary of the writer's impressions. His projections and assumptions, and certainly his embellishments, should have been editorially expunged from the final version. The second of the above inconsistencies could have been reconciled by simply changing the line to read "must have looked like a Chihuahua"; such a change would have sacrificed nothing. Other editorial lapses—misuses of punctuation, inclusion of problematic idioms and clichés, and even omitted words—create the sense that the work was hastily and carelessly prepared for publication.

Hubbard seems, even through this distorted lens, to be a conscientious law enforcement agent and a good man. His wounds might excuse both the bitterness with which he recounts portions of his story and his thinly veiled jubilation at the downfall of his enemies. In any case Hubbard himself should not be too harshly criticized for the problems with the book; he will probably look back on it in ten years and have many of these same criticisms. As a curiosity, and as an example of the local color, Substantial Evidence has a place in collections. People who like fictionalized biography and tabloids would no doubt also enjoy the book and not notice its editorial problems.

But it has no clear documentation of legal or journalistic sources (even textural references are unclear or incomplete), and it makes no serious effort at being either good history or good fiction.

Andrew B. Preslar

Landry, Wanda A. BOARDIN' IN THE THICKET: RECIPES AND REMINISCENCES OF EARLY BIG THICKET BOARDING HOUSES. Reprint Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1998. 216p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Paperback: \$15.95, ISBN 1-57441-048-2. 89-24868.

Boardin' in The Thicket, a charming book reissued in paperback and somewhat difficult to categorize, can be shelved with histories, memoirs of the Big Thicket folk from 1880 to 1930, folk culture and lore, or cookbooks. It has interest for a broad range of readers.

The author has family ties to the Thicket, that mystical East Texas "ecological anomaly" (xviii). Her great-grandparents operated a boarding house at Kountz and her grandparents were not long following. She writes familiarly. Obviously the book is a labor of love.

Any one of her twelve boarding house histories and recipes will entertain and inform. Timber baron John Henry Kirby built two houses for entertaining investors and business associates. At Bessmay, a lovely child with blonde curls living there with her father entertained Kirby's guests with dancing and play-acting. In after years, this child's stage name was Ginger Rogers. Landry's schoolteacher mother married a time-keeper and went to live at Honey Island Boarding House. The first night there, they were awakened by swarms of bed bugs. Her mother said her only thought was that if this was what married life was like, she would have none of it.

An aspiring story of courage and hard work comes from stories of Scott Hotel in Trinity. Walter Scott, progeny of a slave owner and one of his slaves, saw the need for a hostelry for his own people. He set up a draying business, saved his money, and built the boarding house. With his wife in charge, they prospered, serving guests on beautiful china with cut-glass crystal and embroidered napkins.

Read about the mysterious light that ran along an old train bed. It annually attracted folks for Halloween revelry. Read about naturalist Lance Rosier, known as Mr. Thicket. Read about Mr. Mud at the Sour Lake springs, helping fashionable ladies with mud baths to make them beautiful and, perhaps, cure arthritis. And if you do not know the difference between chitlins and cracklins, you need this book.

Ernestine Sewell Linck

Morris, John Miller. EL LLANO ESTACADO: EXPLORATION AND IMAGINATION ON THE HIGH PLAINS OF TEXAS AND NEW MEXICO, 1536-1860. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1997. 414p. Illus-

trations. Maps. Bibliography. Index. Hardcover: \$39.95, ISBN 0-876-154-1. 96-40185

One is always wary of another book on Southwestern exploration, but *El Llano Estacado* is outstanding. In a highly readable style John Miller Morris interprets the Coronado and the Texan-Santa Fé expeditions, as well as those in between, against a solid array of sources. He is seeking "lo llano", the deep meaning of the Texas High Plains that has mystified explorers as it has scholars. He comes to the task from multiple disciplines: geography, history, historiography, literature, art, archaeology, botany, ecology, semiology, cartography, folklore, theography, and geosophy, employing as sustaining data space, water holes, trails, perceptions, legends, livestock, flora, and shards — all pulled together with a postmodern flourish.

This study shows how imagination and reality reinforce each other in exploration, an approach now standard since the Columbus quinquennial. In Morris's book "imagination" is a loose, embracing term, more dryly signifying culture. In Geertzian overtones Morris sees culture not as adornment or enrichment but as central to understanding the Llano. The Blanco Canyon is the still point in his story, a place of renewal that brings forth some of his best writing: "You grow to appreciate the subtlety of the canyon: the cold fire of the starfields at night, the tart, pulpy taste of squawbush, the feathers of hawk and turkey vulture."

*El Llano Estacado* will have broad appeal. It is as wonderful a gift book as it is a splendid reading selection for a graduate seminar. It should be on every world and regional scholar's shelf and in every high school and public library.

Henry C. Schmidt

Ravage, John W. *BLACK PIONEERS: IMAGES OF THE BLACK EXPERIENCE ON THE NORTH AMERICAN FRONTIER*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998. 224 p. Cloth: \$24.95. ISBN-87480-546-5. 97-33416.

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but this adage becomes an understatement of enormous proportions when John W. Ravage's *Black Pioneers: Images Of The Black Experience On The North American Frontier* is the book at hand. The author has collected photographs that deliver powerful visual impact. He also includes a running commentary to stimulate mental images rather than merely to explain the graphics.

This pictorial history offers a new theory based on examining variables inclusive of the political, economic, and cultural pursuits of westward moving black Americans; the good, the bad; the rich, the poor; the male, the female, etc. This is the book that could become the guide for historians who realize the need for revisionary history.

With approximately two hundred pictures, gathered from fifty archives and museums, correspondence from another fifty, his own collection, and many individual collections, Ravage articulates a truth that stares at viewers: African Americans played the same roles in opening up the West as did the whites and other ethnic groups.

The blacks "followed the drinkin' gourd," and Ravage has traced them across the plains states, desert country and mountains, to Alaska, Hawaii, Canada—and beyond. In group pictures, however, blacks are found in the background, hardly discernible. Racial prejudice is nowhere so glaringly conspicuous as in the photos of John James Audubon, where his dark skin has been lightened by photographers. And who has noticed Remington's cowboy in "Spooked by Lightning" is black?

Professor James L. Conyers, Jr., University of Nebraska at Omaha, wrote the foreword in which he praises Ravage for "invading the sphere of presenting 'cutting edge' scholarship" (xi). A lengthy and complete list of collections and fifteen pages of bibliography follow the text. One must say Mr. Ravage is an indefatigable researcher.

*Images* is a remarkable contribution to history. Ravage intended it to reach the consciousness of its readers and viewers. It does.

Ernestine Sewell Linck

Thompson, Jerry. *A WILD AND VIVID LAND: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE SOUTH TEXAS BORDER*. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1997. Illustrations. Index. 206p. Hardcover: \$29.95, ISBN 0-87611-164-9. 97-34646.

Even if you did not read this historical account of South Texas along the Rio Grande, you could get the picture from the pictures. Author Jerry Thompson, dean of Arts and Humanities at Texas A&M International University, has gathered some 160 images—many heretofore unpublished—to accompany his narrative. Ranging from E.O. Goldbeck's panoramic images of Brownsville and Rio Grande City to a rare engraving of the ferry crossing between the two Laredos, they tell a story all their own. The accompanying text moves chronologically in twenty-eight mini-chapters covering: the land and its earliest inhabitants; founding of towns along the river; revolutions, wars and outlawry; industries like ranching, citrus, and oil; and interesting and important players ranging from revolutionaries Gregorio Cortez and Catarino Garza to steamboat and ranching moguls Richard King and Mifflin Kenedy. Though it breaks a little new ground for the scholar, this attractively-packaged coffee table size book, lavishly illustrated and authoritatively annotated, should have great appeal for anyone interested in the South Texas borderlands.

Mary M. Fisher

## LETTERS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Bedicek, Jane Gracy, ed. *THE ROY BEDICEK FAMILY LETTERS*. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1998. 464p. Illustrations. Index. Hardcover: \$32.50, ISBN 1-57441-0326. 97-2954-39.

Roy Bedicek combined being a man of nature and a man of letters as well or better than most any man. What a pleasure it is then, to have a hefty, well-selected collection of letters the author of *Adventures of a Texas Naturalist* wrote to his family for a half century. Edited by his daughter-in-law, the letters are arranged chronologically from 1908 to 1959, the year he died, beginning with love letters to the girl he would marry and ending with letters to his son and daughter-in-law telling of the doings of their young son, who was wintering in Texas. While the book can be read from front to back, it can also be sampled at random. For it is sheer pleasure to dip in and out of Bedicek's missives, which touch on topics ranging from the birds at his back yard feeder to the benefits of exercise: "One who neglects physical exercise goes torpid in liver and brains." Pithy, full of good humor, home spun advice and literary allusions, they bring alive both the man and his time and place in history. Combined with sampling of letters from his loved ones, they offer a rare glimpse into the minds and hearts of a remarkable Texas clan which knew how to put words on paper as well or better than any other family.

Mary M. Fisher

*THE PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE OF SAM HOUSTON. VOLUME II: 1846-1848*. Ed. by Madge Thornall Roberts. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1998. 390p. Bibliography. Index. Hardcover: \$32.50, ISBN 1-57441-031-8. 95-36738.

Both scholars and Texas history buffs will be pleased with this second in a four-volume series devoted to the personal correspondence of Sam Houston. Previously unpublished letters are compiled and annotated, beginning March 6, 1846, as Houston left Texas to serve in the United States Senate and concluding with a letter of August 11, 1848. The letters contain a great deal of political and historical content: social and political life in Washington, D.C., the war with Mexico, and the problems with Oregon. Houston, aged fifty-three, reveals his innermost thoughts in these letters, many written late at night to his wife Margaret who remained in Texas with their children. Margaret is twenty-six years his junior, and their great love for each other brought sobriety, Christianity, and tenderness to the crusty San Jacinto hero.

The reader is touched by all the personal references contained in the letters. Sam Houston asks Margaret to "Hug our dear Boy, for me...." Margaret sends Houston a lock of their son's hair. Houston and Margaret miss each other terribly, but Margaret is a strong young woman and runs their East Texas plantation in his absence. Written 150 years ago, the col-

lection reveals the culture of the time: people actually write and snail mail letters containing reflections, questions, and anecdotes. Margaret and Sam both display vast vocabularies and great descriptive powers, which the communication of the time period demanded.

Madge Thornall Roberts is a former teacher and author of *Star of Destiny: The Private Life of Sam and Margaret Houston, Volume I: 1839-1845*. Her notes to the letters are either explanatory or guides for the reader to other sources including the extensive bibliography. Footnotes rather than the use of endnotes would make for an easier reading experience. This surely is an important book for Texas collections.

Sally Dooley

## NATURAL HISTORY

Amos, Bonnie B. and Gehlback, Fredrick R., eds. *EDWARDS PLATEAU VEGETATION: PLANT ECOLOGICAL STUDIES IN CENTRAL TEXAS*. Waco: Baylor University Press. 145p. Illustrations. Paperback: \$21.50, ISBN 0-918954-50-9. 88-16655.

In this collection of scholarly articles on the ecology of plants in Central Texas, more than a dozen biologists discuss the plant ecology of the Edwards Plateau region, past and present. Chock full of charts and graphs, it will delight scholars. But phrases such as "The analysis of the woody taxa presents five phytogeographic (floristic) assemblages" will put off the general reader.

Mary M. Fisher

Kutac, Edward A. *BIRDER'S GUIDE TO TEXAS*, 2nd ed. Houston: Gulf Publishing Co., 1998. 383p. Illustrations. Paperback: \$18.95, ISBN 0-88415-551-X 97-42011.

Wauer, Roland H. and Elwonger, Mark A. *BIRDING TEXAS*. Helena, MT: Falcon Press Publishing Co., 1998. 525p. Illustrations. Paperback: \$22.95, ISBN 1-56066-617-X 97-43351.

These two books both provide information on bird watching locations in Texas. Kutac's book is an update of the 1989 first edition, which in turn was a revision of a 1982 book published under a different title. Both provide detailed directions and maps, and describe the birds to be expected at each location. Both provide lists of birds which have been found in Texas, with Wauer and Elwonger providing some additional information on seasonal and regional occurrence. Kutac claims to cover "nearly 300" locations, while Wauer and Elwonger claim "more than 200." However, there are many instances where sites are clustered, and treated together in each book. In general, Wauer and Elwonger provides more detail, and direct comparison suggests that the vast majority of sites are covered in both books. Kutac provides more information on the general areas in which sites are located.

Many of the maps in Kutac remain small and difficult to read, whereas those in Wauer and Elwonger are excellent. Kutac's slightly smaller physical size may offer an advantage in the field.

The serious birder will want both books; libraries serving classes or adult studies in ornithology or bird watching should certainly have at least one of the books. No book describing locations can remain completely up to date for very long; however, the changes since the publication of the first edition of Kutac have been surprisingly limited. Those libraries already holding the first edition should certainly consider complementing it with Wauer and Elwonger. All in all, the greater detail and easier-to-read maps in Wauer and Elwonger probably make it the better choice if only one book can be purchased.

John A. Whittle

## POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Kraemer, Richard H., Charldan Newell and David F. Prindle. *ESSENTIALS OF TEXAS POLITICS*. 7th ed. Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1998. 277p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Paperback: \$37.95, ISBN 0-534-54846-6. 97-39961.

This is a textbook of just about everything one would want to know about Texas politics and the state's political structure. Published approximately every three years since 1980, this work is a condensed version of the authors' other textbook *Texas Politics*.

The book's preface indicates three themes that run throughout. First, the overriding theme compares "the reality of Texas government and politics to the democratic ideals of participation, majority rule, and protection of minority rights." In other words, the authors raise the question throughout "whether a particular political decision meets the test of being good for society as a whole or whether only special interests are served." In the textbook's second theme, the authors take note of the increasing conservatism in the state. This theme is especially evident in chapter five on "Ideology and Political Parties" and in chapter six on "Voters, Campaigns, and Elections." Political party junkies will find these chapters of particular interest. A third theme used in the book calls attention to conflict among varied groups: rich, poor and middle classes, Anglos, Mexican and African Americans, and various ideological groups like social conservatives, religious conservatives, etc. Chapter topics covered include the Texas constitution; local governments; the legislature; the state offices including the governor; the judiciary; the state's economy and financing; affirmative action in higher education. Each chapter contains tables, illustrations, humorous cartoons by Ben Sargent of the *Austin American-Statesman*, and quotations; each chapter ends with a short summary and study questions for the student. The book is concluded with an appendix of further research aids to Texas politics including books, periodicals, indexes, addresses and Web site addresses for

state agencies and universities.

*Essentials Of Texas Politics* should be essential for all academic libraries. Texas political science students need this book as well. Public libraries, too, may want to consider this work for their collections.

Jon P. Tritsch

## REFERENCE

Greene, A.C. *THE 50+ BEST BOOKS ON TEXAS*. Rev. Ed. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1998. 120p. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$19.95, ISBN 1-57441-043-1. 97-49625.

A.C. Greene picks them as he likes them in this revised edition of his well-thumbed and debated 1982 list of the top fifty (now grown to fifty-seven) books with Texas as subject or setting. Part of the fun is arguing with his savvy choices; the other part is discovering classics that you've somehow overlooked. One thing is certain: Greene, former book editor for the *Dallas Times-Herald* and author of more than twenty books, has the experience, authority, and taste to make his personal picks worth reading.

Only Greene would have the panache to tout so many different kinds of books, all in the same list. He finds *Blood and Money* a skillful true-crime book; *Johnny Texas*, is juvenile fiction with warmth and breadth; he calls *Journal of the Secession Convention of Texas 1861* the saddest, most tragic document in Texas history; and he finds *Six-Guns and Saddle Leather* an engagingly written list of books and pamphlets on outlaws and gunslingers. Arranged alphabetically by title, his choices cover prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction. You can't help but like his genial commentary, a mixture of appetite-whetting review and telling anecdote about the author. Each entry, about 300 words, is punctuated beautifully with a facsimile of the original's title page. He indexes authors, editors and titles but, oddly, does not include a publication date for each title.

Greene invites you to put down his list, and to read those best books for yourself. (You'll have to be resourceful in your search, for many titles are out of print.) Afterwards you'll want go back to Greene again and again for more clear-headed advice. Very enthusiastically recommended for all interested in Texas books.

Stephen Curley

Romain, Trevor. *HOW TO DO HOMEWORK WITHOUT THROWING UP*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 1997. 67p. Illustrated. Paperback: \$8.95, ISBN 1-57542-0211-2. 96-47405. (Juvenile)

Trevor Romain has written a great book about how to do homework. He understands how terrible it is to have to do homework. He tells young students no matter what they do to get rid of their homework nor

what they do to delay it, it will come back and haunt them. There is lots of helpful advice. He tells students ways of making homework easier on you. That way they don't have to worry about getting it done, or worry about their teacher yelling at them if they haven't done even a scrap of homework. I used to have a very hard time with my homework, but I think I will have no trouble this year because this book shows me how to deal with homework instead of hiding from it. I think kids who read this book will improve 100% on their homework. All classrooms, public and school libraries should have this book. Parents and children will enjoy this humorous and helpful book about dreaded homework.

David Avery

## SOCIAL LIFE AND CUSTOMS

Graham, Don. *GIANT COUNTRY: ESSAYS ON TEXAS*. Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1998. 289p. Hardcover: \$22.50, ISBN 0-87565-182-8. 97-027684.

How would you like to be a student in the renowned University of Texas class "Life and Literature of the Southwest," the one invented by J. Frank Dobie in 1930? Well, you can come pretty darn close by reading *Giant Country* by Don Graham, the current instructor of that class. No tuition, no quizzes, no term papers—just a pleasurable time learning from a gifted teacher.

Graham takes us on a conversational tour of Texas culture, peppered with insiders' stories about people, their notions and their works. Always sympathetic to what makes Texans edgy, quirky, and honest, Graham aims to "uncover, evaluate, and redeem from the past, writing which is valuable and worth knowing." He succeeds, and the result is a handy guide to what we ought to study further, what avoid. Use an index card for a bookmark: you'll probably need it to jot down titles of books to add to your own reading list.

In his wiseacre, unpretentious style, Graham delivers the goods not only on writers but also on the myths, the movies—his annotated Texas filmography is worth looking at—and the defining moments of a giant state that is at once western and southern, rural and urban, sentimental and sophisticated.

Stephen Curley

Monday, Jane C. and Calley, Betty B. *VOICES FROM THE WILD HORSE DESERT*. Austin: The University of North Texas Press, 1998. 265p. Illustrations. Index. Paperback: \$32.50, ISBN 1-57441-0326. 96-45639.

Many know of the fabled King and Kenedy ranches, but few may know of the Mexican and, later, Mexican-American cowboys who have worked them. In this first major work on the lives of these ranch workers, the authors bring alive such characters as Lolo Treviño, a horseman who weaves horsehair rope;

Beto Maldonado, a cattle handler; Rosendo Rodriguez, a windmill worker; and Felipe Garcia, a camp cook. Based on more than sixty interviews conducted between 1989 and 1995, the lively narrative describes day-to-day lives of the Kiñenos and their families at the King Ranch and of the Kenedeños, who worked the adjoining Kenedy Ranch. Loosely organized and interspersed with reminiscences from vaqueros and their family members ranging in age from twenty to ninety-three, this book covers everything from roundups to courtships. Enhancing interest are an introduction by Ana Carolina Castillo Crimm, who describes the relationships between the ranch owners and their workers, and a generous sprinkling of black-and-white photographs of ranch workers and their families. Students of Texas history, Mexican American history and South Texas ranching will be captivated with this engaging account of an under-chronicled aspect of two of Texas' best-known ranches.

Mary M. Fisher

Winniford, Lee. *FOLLOWING OLD FENCELINES: TALES FROM RURAL TEXAS*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998. 262p. Illustrations. Bibliography. \$29.95. ISBN 0-89096-802-0. 97-34586.

Lee Winniford, a Ph.D. in folklore who lectures at the University of Houston, has written a book which may be valued in more than one way. It may be enjoyed as an exploration of her roots and of the stories told by members of her family who settled in Hopkins County, Texas, as early as 1852. This book is also a scholarly work with six pages of references the author cites and an equally long bibliography. By comparing her childhood memories with those of her brother, who continues to live in the area where the family settled, and checking what factual documentation remains, she shows the evolution and functions of the family tales. Using the two graveyards where four generations of her family are buried, she is able to compare the contrasting backgrounds, lifestyles and value systems of her paternal and maternal families. In the paternal family it is mainly the men who pass on the family lore during hog killings, cotton picking, cemetery work days, and while taking refuge in the storm cellar, thus validating the family and its values. On her mother's side the women were the main storytellers, emphasizing moral lessons and the supernatural as the women and girls worked in small groups, thus perhaps venting the frustrations of restricted lives. While researching the material for this book, the author gained enhanced appreciation for her family and its lore as well as how her own identity developed. Black-and-white photos help give a sense of the small town, rural setting.

Frances M. Ramsey

## SPORTS

Hauser, Melanie *UNDER THE LONE STAR FLAG-*



STICK. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997. 320p. Hardcover: \$25.00, ISBN 0-684-84011-1. 97-28381.

The editor sets out the ambitious task of telling stories about Texas golf using articles authored by premier storytellers, sports writers. Thus embellishment is admitted at the outset and perhaps it is necessary for the subject to compete with stories told in locker rooms around the state. The book is mainly concerned with the subjects of professional sportswriters' articles, professional golfers, although the second half of the book manages to cover golf equipment, golf courses, and some of the lore surrounding golf in Texas.

Any stories of Texas golf must necessarily recount the often-told stories associated with Ben Hogan, Tommy Bolt, Jimmy Demaret, Ben Crenshaw and Tom Kite. The stories of Lee Treviño include a more in depth view not often encountered in golfing articles. They show a golfer who recognizes the value of also being an entertainer, "the Merry Mex," even though he personally may not identify with or even like such a character. The stories about and by the legendary golf teacher, Harvey Penick, are real highlights of this book. The lifelong relationships he established with many of his students is both heart-warming and a tribute to his teaching and mentoring skills.

Stories of the golf courses are likely to appeal to all of us hackers. "Goat Hills" reminds all of us of courses we've played across the state. Pedernales Country Club with its instructions to hit as many as it takes off the first tee to get one you like captures a sympathetic audience. Colonial's policy of conducting a lotto drawing among its 1,600 members for weekend tee times makes our home clubs look much more attractive. The two items of golf equipment that have originated in Texas came as a surprise. It was no surprise that an earlier version of one of these items was used as a weapon in the battle at the Alamo.

Fred Young

## CONTRIBUTORS

David Avery is a fifth grade student at Dishman Elementary School in Beaumont.

Roger Beaumont has taught history at Texas A&M since 1974. He holds a Ph.D. from Kansas State, and his publications include ten books and monographs, and eighty-five book chapters and articles, mainly on modern military history. Co-founder of the journal "Defense Analysis", and its North American editor, 1983-89, he was Secretary of the Navy Fellow at the U.S. Naval Academy 1989-90, and served two tours on active duty as an Army military police officer.

Stephen Curley is Professor of English at Texas A&M University at Galveston. He holds a Ph.D. from Rice University.

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Texas Review Press  
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English Department  
Huntsville, TX 77341

TAMU, TCU, UNT  
are distributed by:  
Texas A&M University Press  
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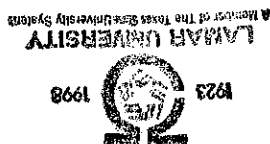
Wadsworth Publishing Co.  
10 Davis Drive  
Belmont, CA 94002

Review of Texas Books (ISSN 0892-6212) is published quarterly by the Mary and John Gray Library, Lamar University. Annual subscription: \$10.00, non taxable. Your subscription begins with Issue No. 1. Those who subscribe at Issue No. 2 or 3 will pay the full annual subscription amount and receive the back issues to form a complete volume. Subscriptions may also be processed through national subscription services.

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