

*The Trans-Mississippi West, 1804–1912*, compiled by Robert M. Kvasnicka. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1993–1997. Part 1, *A Guide to the Records of the Department of State for the Territorial Period*. 1993. ix, 131 pp. \$12.00 paper. Part 2, *A Guide to Records of the Department of Justice in the Territorial Period*. 1994. ix, 128 pp. \$12.00 paper. Part 3, *A Guide to Records of the Department of Agriculture for the Territorial Period*. 1996. xviii, 379 pp. \$20.00 paper. Part 4, *A Guide to Records of the Department of the Interior for the Territorial Period*, 2 Sections: Section 1, *Records of the Offices of the Secretary of the Interior and the Commissioner of Railroads*. 1996. xiv, 236 pp. \$18.00 paper; Section 2, *Records of Select Agencies*. 1997. xiii, 203 pp. \$18.00 paper. Each volume contains tables and an index.

REVIEWED BY JEFFREY P. BROWN, NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

The National Archives and Records Administration holds a massive quantity of federal records that are vital resources for historians. Robert M. Kvasnicka has supervised the compilation of guides to these records for a series of departments for the trans-Mississippi states and territories for the period from 1804 to 1912. His project ably carries on the work done by Clarence E. Carter and John Porter Bloom describing federal records for areas east of the Mississippi River.

Scholars who study the development of Iowa and the upper Midwest will greatly benefit from this immense project, which includes records of the Departments of State, Justice, Agriculture, and the Interior. For example, volume one includes listings for Iowa court reports, correspondence about Union Army prisoners, and letters about fugitives from Iowa who had gone to other western jurisdictions. Volume two includes correspondence from U.S. district attorneys and marshals, discussions about counterfeiting and lost Treasury notes, and issues involving the Winnebago Indian Agency. Not surprisingly, volume three, which describes records of the Department of Agriculture, includes numerous records relevant to Iowans. These range from discussions about agricultural education, public domain lands, farm management, climatological reports, and boys and girls clubs to correspondence about road projects, fruit and grain investigations, Food and Drug Administration hearings, and Extension Service annual reports. Volume four describes records involving pension agents, the Office of Indian Affairs, the General Land Office, the Iowa Falls & Sioux City Railroad, and Historical American Buildings Survey and Historical American Engineering Records.

The first two volumes in this massive project have already received the C. F. W. Coker Prize from the Society of American Architects and the Thomas Jefferson Prize from the Society for History in the Federal Government. This guide is an indispensable resource for any historian who plans to conduct research on the development of Iowa or other trans-Mississippi states.

*Confessions of a Depression Muralist*, by Frank W. Long. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997. xi, 179 pp. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BARBARA MELOSH, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

This lively and engaging book recounts Frank W. Long's ten-year stint as muralist for the Treasury Section of Fine Arts (the Section), which commissioned 1,100 murals and 300 sculptures for New Deal-era federal buildings (mostly post offices). Long competed energetically for Section commissions and won more of them than any other artist. Nonetheless, he portrays his work for the Section with decided ambivalence. Long derides the Section's commitment to American scene painting—American subjects rendered in representational style—and concludes that the demands of public art "threaten[ed] [his] artistic integrity."

*Confessions* also suggests the vexed and contradictory character of New Deal-era regionalism. The Section tried to select artists who had some local connection, and encouraged artists to capture the locality in their paintings. Long's mural for Berea, Kentucky, has been championed as one of the few to exemplify a truly local commission awarded to a recent resident. However, Long was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, and educated in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Paris. He moved to Berea for professional reasons—to execute a mural commission in nearby Louisville.

Regionalism itself was a contradictory ideal, since regionalist consciousness was largely the product of an emerging national politics and identity. Thus, American scene painting was often a celebration of regional distinctiveness set in a remembered or imagined past. In this invented tradition, the Midwest loomed large as an ideal economic and political landscape, emblem of agrarian democracy; thus, the history of the Section helps to illuminate the cultural history of the Midwest.

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