

wanting to understand the United States between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains. Both tell you what it was like.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

JOSEPH H. CASH

*Ranchers' Legacy*, by Lewis G. Thomas, edited by Patrick A. Dunae. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986. xxv, 217 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$14.95 paper.

*Ranchers' Legacy* reminds us, once again, of the grace, sophistication, and insight that distinguish the narrative of one of Canada's most able historians, Lewis G. Thomas. These essays also serve to emphasize that narrative history, with cursors capering through the cerebellum, are as interpretive as cursors of raw data compiled by cliometricians. For Lewis Thomas's style is not only graceful, but on occasion his perceptions are so subtle that the reader's eye must retrace its route to catch the meaning.

In these ten well-crafted essays, Thomas offers the fruits of a lifetime of thinking about Canada, Canadians, and their history. His themes are well evolved. Thomas discovers little in Frederick Jackson Turner or the Turnerian cast(s) applicable to frontier Canada. In contrast to Turner's emphasis on the frontier as the site of equalitarianism, Thomas contends that the social structure of the Canadian West was orderly, well-defined, highly structured and stable, dominated not by the vagaries of the Turnerian "democrat," but by a series of privileged elites—the Hudson's Bay Company, the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, the Royal Mounted Police, and the ranches—all successive agents of settlement on the Canadian frontier. The cement of this social world was a term invented by Thomas—"social contiguity." Individuals established authority and order through effective communication. Institutions were defined by established values and above all a strong, unwavering belief in a conservative democracy. No rum and rebellion for these people, though they did not always scorn the former. No social levellers, no spirit of the round heads hovered over Thomas's frontier, but a society of conduits of customs and wealth that flowed unimpeded from eastern Canada and overseas.

While most readers will find these essays chewy in general, one that stimulated me in a singular way was the "Umbrella and the Mosaic." Thomas argues that the "mosaic" of western settlement owed its identity, its excitement, its diversity, and its preservation to the biculturalism of the French-English national presence and to liberal national land policies—"The Umbrella" that covered and protected the

### Book Reviews

West. Thomas's thesis, so thoughtfully developed, is, at once, both provocative and convincing.

By the publication of *Ranchers' Legacy*, Patrick A. Dunae and the Western Canadian Publications Project Committee have underscored once more the debt we all owe to Lewis Thomas when we venture north of the forty-nine degree latitude and west of the ninety-six degree longitude.

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

GENE M. GRESSLEY

*Corncribs in History, Folklife, and Architecture*, by Keith E. Roe. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988. xi, 103 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

The development of farm and other commonplace buildings and structures, little studied until recent years, has become the focus of increasing attention. Most of the work to date has been done by cultural geographers and folklorists, studying log buildings and other folk housing and associated rural structures. Such studies have pointed to the uneven spread of one or another type across rural landscapes and within regions, and have suggested connections to ethnic and cultural traditions to explain the presence of particular buildings and their patterns of diffusion across the United States. Some scholars are now also beginning to probe deeper—digging beneath geographic place and looking beyond cataloging the incidence of surviving building traditions—to document the development of particular kinds of buildings over time. It is this "historical perspective" that characterizes Keith Roe's *Corncribs*. This perspective encompasses modern corn storage and building practices and also stretches back to examine past forms of bygone building traditions.

*Corncribs* is a splendid contribution to helping Iowans and others living in "Corn Belt" states better understand farm structures as they reflect the vast changes that have been wrought in our farms and farming. Roe's emphasis is clearly on twentieth-century developments, which absorb two-thirds of the text in the final chapter. The character of corn cribbing in preceding centuries Roe ably sets forth in three chronological chapters: he gives attention to corn storage practices among Indians as well as Euro-Americans in the colonial period, and carries the narrative on through the nineteenth century in a chapter on the era of "Pioneer Spirit and Westward Expansion." Throughout, we see the influence of changing requirements for corn storage brought on by changing methods of harvesting, mechanical improvements—the portable elevator, tractor, and corn picker—and the introduction of

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