

notes and a bibliography, particularly because of Wilson's access to corporate primary material, some of which may not now exist. Still, the use of that material is obvious in the text and makes it truly authoritative as an account of engineering and internal financing strategy on the Rio Grande in the 1870s and 1880s. People other than William Jackson Palmer himself remain somewhat in the background, but no good book tries to accomplish everything.

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CRAIG MINER

*The Colorado Front Range: A Landscape Divided*, by Gleaves Whitney. Boulder: Johnson Books, 1983. xii, 164 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, place-names index, facts list. \$8.95 paper.

The Colorado Front Range is the series of nine mountain chains which travelers from the East would first see when approaching Colorado's Rocky Mountains. It offers a magnetic, magnificent backdrop for the state's heaviest urban settlement and contains Rocky Mountain National Park to the north and Pike's Peak—the view from which inspired the words of "America the Beautiful"—to the south. The piedmont area at the Front Range's foot, not surprisingly, had attracted, as of 1980, a population of over 2,450,000 to its 16,000 square mile "urban corridor": Greeley, Ft. Collins, Boulder, Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo, from north to south. There people enjoy proximity to "purple mountain majesties" and to skiing, relatively mild climates, enough spring runoff to keep agriculture afloat, and the stimulation of a fast-paced latter-day frontier. There people also endure rapidly growing crime rates, an explosion of "little boxes on the hillsides," increasing air pollution, groundwater overdrafting, and unpredictable periods of drought and flashflooding. Growth has brought to the area phenomena we most often associate with southern California.

Gleaves Whitney is among those who have stepped forward with warnings and advice for his fellow Coloradoans. His *Colorado Front Range: A Landscape Divided* presents the region's assets and liabilities so eloquently that it could serve as a model for similar studies of other regions. In this 9 1/2 x 6 3/4-inch, paperbound book, illustrated with only small black and white photographs, Whitney paints the Front Range's colorful natural and human history with a palette of lyrical language and dramatic emphasis. Front Range place names, geology, climate, vegetation, prehistory, native culture, fur trading, mining, farming, ranching, and all elements of modern urban life receive Whitney's concise but impressively thorough attention. Yet he has

### Book Notices

woven this information into an almost romantically flowing narrative in which the reader's interest does not wane.

Gleaves Whitney's book is also part of a genre in western American literature that has been developing since the 1960s. Environmental crises, such as water shortages in the arid West, have occasioned numerous historical-political treatments which aim to influence policy making. Most of their authors use alarmist tones, with varying degrees of subtlety, to bring home their points. In this case, Whitney keeps such indulgences to a minimum and they do not interfere with his narrative flow, but the environmental hazards and potential policy solutions are still there. Whitney recommends land-use planning in particular: to prevent construction in flood-prone areas, to minimize pollution and congestion, to maintain agriculture, and to avoid growth beyond the resources available. He provides just enough examples of environmental disasters and their causes, and just enough tributes to people who have made strides in environmentally sound directions, to be convincing. His pleas for policy changes fall on eyes which his book primes with an irresistible picture of a region worth the effort.

JOURNAL OF THE SOUTHWEST

KATHERINE SCOTT STURDEVANT

*The Other Texas Frontier*, by Harry Hunt Ransom. Edited by Hazel H. Ransom. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984. 92 pp. Illustrations. \$14.95 cloth.

Harry Hunt Ransom was one of Texas's most accomplished men of letters. At the time of his death in 1976 he had been associated with the University of Texas for more than forty years. He was thoroughly familiar with all the heroic stories, legends, and myths of the violent Texas frontier and most certainly gloried in them as do most Texans. But Ransom believed in the notion of the existence of a counterfrontier: a quiet settling of the land by thoughtful, undramatic citizens who were, in his words, the Texans without guns. In this book Ransom's widow collected brief essays on the lives of three notable—if not extraordinary—Texans which illustrate her late husband's thesis. The three are Ashbel Smith and Sherman Goodwin, both physicians, and Swante Palm, a Swedish immigrant bibliophile. These essays are so brief that they can hardly be classified as biographical, but since their main purpose is to create an impression, this brevity matters little.

That a counterfrontier existed can be conceded without argument. Ransom's thesis is correct. However, this book does not prove the fact; it would take a much more extensive effort to do that. Instead, this

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