

Book Reviews

The New Encyclopedia of the American West, edited by Howard R. Lamar. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. xv, 1324 pp. Maps, illustrations, timeline, index. \$60.00 cloth.

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This is a revised and expanded version of *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West* (1977). The original version was the best one-volume reference book on the topic. Much of the material of the first work, however, became outdated in light of the historiographical ferment in U.S. western history in the 1980s and 1990s. The new work is even more impressive than the original, yet it has some serious limitations.

Perhaps the overriding strength of the new volume is its comprehensiveness. The more than 2,400 entries cover traditional western topics, such as Billy the Kid, guns, railroads, gold and silver rushes, and Indian wars. Yet there are also articles on every state in the United States; on artists of Taos and Santa Fe, the Chicano liberation movement, riots against Chinese, cowboy clothing, the environmental history of the West, the Australian frontier, Indians of the Northwest Coast, men and manhood in western history, western music, national parks and monuments, vegetation, and women in western history; and on a host of individuals (some still living) beyond the traditional western heroes, including Mary Hunter Austin, Dennis Banks, George Herbert Walker Bush, César Estrada Chávez, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Walter Elias Disney, and Larry McMurtry.

There are also a number of articles on Iowa-related topics. Broad thematic articles include agrarian movements, agricultural expansion, Civil War in the West, corn production, fur trade, land policy, land reform movement, and populism. More focused articles include ones on Grenville Mellen Dodge, Julien Dubuque, Granger laws, the Homestead Act, Keokuk, Mesquakie Indian settlement, and Benjamin Franklin Shambaugh. Dorothy A. Schwieder has revised the Iowa article originally written by James W. Whitaker.

Yet the decision to revise the older edition rather than construct an entirely new work has resulted in some problems. New articles are, by and large, reliable overviews of their topics, and they also provide up-to-date suggested reading. The "revised" articles, though, are as a

group uneven in quality. Some, such as the one on Iowa, are appropriately updated. Others remain needlessly outdated. The article on Frederick Manfred, for example, does not include his year of death (1994). If one looks up Lakota, not only is there no article, there is no cross-reference to Sioux Indians, where there is an article. There is little to nothing of the new religious historiography reflected in the articles on religion. Pioneer missionaries and pre-1860 frontier developments predominate—as if religion atrophied in the West once the Civil War started. While Oral Roberts is treated in an article, Aimee Semple McPherson is not. But then, there is no article on Pentecostalism. And, apparently, Lutherans, Russian Orthodox, and Episcopalians have not been significant in the West, whereas Baptists, Congregationalists, Latter-day Saints, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics have, thus meriting their own articles.

Perhaps the overriding problem is that the volume attempts too much. It seeks to cover both the trans-Mississippi West and the frontier stage of the entire United States. Tackling just one or the other would have helped focus the work. The volume is intended to reflect the best of the "old" western history—that is, the frontier—while incorporating the best of the "new" western history—that is, moving beyond the frontier into the twentieth century and into more sophisticated accounting for race, class, gender, environment, and cultural encounter, conflict, and exchange. Instead of a stimulating interweaving of the two historiographies, though, the result is more a jarring juxtaposition. One example will have to serve: an incisive treatment of the Dust Bowl that takes account of economics, environment, politics, and migration is immediately followed by a revised article on the Dutch in North America, which competently gets the Dutch to North America but inexcusably ends the overview with 1664. Frederick Manfred, John P. Clum, Wyatt Earp, and Theodore Roosevelt would be puzzled by the implication that individuals and communities of Dutch ethnicity played no further role of significance in the historical development of the American West. Rather than a consistently comprehensive and updated treatment of all western and frontier topics, the volume is by turns cutting-edge and old-fashioned, abundant and incomplete, intriguing and frustrating.

Perhaps the book's weaknesses are emblematic of the current transitional state of the field. In any event, this is an important reference work. It is a fine guide into many subjects of western and frontier history. It is judiciously illustrated with both photographs and maps. It is cross-referenced, and it has an index of persons. Yet, it is a flawed work—too problematic to serve as one's exclusive reference work on the American West.

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