

A Sense of the American West: An Environmental History Anthology, edited by James E. Sherow. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998. x, 309 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, index. \$60.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY GAIL EVANS AND MICHAEL HATCH, EVANS-HATCH & ASSOCIATES, SILVERTON, OREGON

A Sense of the American West, edited by James E. Sherow, is an environmental history of the American West. For this anthology, Sherow has selected 14 essays and presented them in four sections. The first explores the various approaches to studying environmental history. The second describes the influence of pre-Anglo-American cultures on the environment. The third contains essays on the effect of Anglo-American activities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the environments of urbanizing Tucson, irrigated central Washington, and western national parks during the first 25 years of the National Park Service's management of its parks (1916-1940). In the fourth section, five essays explore some of the causes championed by various groups during the rise of environmental consciousness following World War II: the movements to preserve Dinosaur National Monument, to stop nuclear power development near Eugene, Oregon, to protect the communal water use of southwestern Hispanic and Indian peoples, to end the despoilment of East Los Angeles Hispanic neighborhoods, and to address the problems farms faced in pumping the Ogallala aquifer.

The final essay, John Opie's "The Drought of 1988," may be of greatest interest to readers of the *Annals of Iowa*. Opie examines the causes and consequences of the Plains drought of 1988 and compares it with the sobering 1930s drought of the old Dust Bowl of southwest Kansas and the Texas-Oklahoma panhandle. Although irrigation by water from the Ogallala aquifer helped High Plains farmers survive the 1988 drought, Opie observes that depletion of Ogallala groundwater combined with the drying greenhouse effect of global warming can have far more severe effects than the 1930s catastrophe. Opie's "sense of the American West," is that "irrigation on the Plains is still in a self-destruct mode. The Ogallala belongs to the world" (182). Thus, our search for its sustainable development must continue.

As with any anthology, the reader of *A Sense of the American West* may ask, why were these articles or essays chosen for inclusion and not others? What thesis, theme, or insight is Sherow trying to develop through his selections? Sherow does not directly address the issue beyond describing the book's organization in the prologue: part one

deals with methods (how environmental history is "done"); parts two, three, and four present writings grouped into successive historical periods. Nice, neat, and clean. But this organization does not explain why Sherow chose these particular essays and not others. Most of them do not clearly exemplify or develop Sherow's purported overarching theme—"a sense of the American West."

In his introduction, Sherow writes eloquently about a notion that environmental historians have only recently begun to adopt, namely, that the human-nature relationship is intimately interdependent, as opposed to the more classical Euro-American view that humans have controlled, or at least attempted to control, nature. Environmental history, Sherow argues, must transcend the mere chronicling of human conquest of, or adaptation to, the environment as espoused by the Turner-Spencer schools. It must be not only multidisciplinary, applying life and physical sciences; it must also be based on a more holistic awareness that the human environment (or the relationship between humans and nature) may actually transcend the elemental physical connectedness, and include emotional and spiritual aspects as well. Dan Flores thoughtfully develops this idea in his essay, "Spirit of Place and the Value of Nature in the American West."

Despite this book's failure to develop an important theme, it is a collection of thought-provoking, mostly well-written pieces (all of which have been published previously in journals and magazines) that suggest different approaches to environmental history in different areas of the West.

Harry Hopkins: Sudden Hero, Brash Reformer, by June Hopkins. The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute Series on Diplomatic and Economic History. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1999. x, 271 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ALAN JONES, GRINNELL COLLEGE

June Hopkins is Harry Hopkins's granddaughter, and her book gains strength from this family connection. It also profits from serious archival research, especially in the Georgetown University Special Collections, where many of Harry Hopkins's papers are preserved. The book concludes in the mid-1930s at the climax of Hopkins's achievement as director of the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA) and as one of the managers of the Social Security Act of 1935. For a complete account of Hopkins's service to his country (especially during

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