

sity faculty members concern Iowa's past. Dorothy Schwieder writes on Iowa farm wives, 1840 to 1880, and Ardith Maney and Donald Hadwiger discuss recent pesticide regulation by the state government. Other papers on broader geographic areas refer to Iowa's involvement with the Farm Holiday; Farmers Union, and nineteenth-century farm tenancy.

The historians, economists, and political scientists represented in the volume tend to be established scholars, with a sprinkling of younger academics. Their papers are on significant topics without regard to the availability of sources at the National Archives. The papers are in the mainstream of scholarly opinion but divergent voices are heard, usually second-hand, from New Left historians on the New Deal's attempts to deal with rural poverty to conservative opposition to recent farm programs. A handful of audience remarks at the conference are printed.

Because the conference was faithful to its announced title, also used as the title of the book, the book is more than a guide to National Archives holdings of agricultural records. One must still use specialized finding aids, although one chapter, "The National Archives and the Study of Agricultural History," and other remarks by archivists succeed in showing the wide range of sources available for research. Maps, photographs, and sound recordings were demonstrated at the conference and are used in the book by archivists, if not by the participating scholars. The volume concludes with a brief, incomplete index.

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EARL M. ROGERS

*The Ranchers: A Book of Generations*, by Stan Steiner. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980. pp. 241. Illustrations. \$13.95.

Oral history does not translate easily to the printed page. A successful book of oral history must be tightly organized and edited with care. Its writer must be a master of his craft. Without these elements a book of oral history such as Stan Steiner's *The Ranchers* can meander for pages until the reader becomes lost, bored, or both. *The Ranchers* does not meander and it does not bore.

*The Ranchers* consists of ten chapters—a prologue, an epilogue, and eight remaining chapters in which Steiner has organized reminiscences around common themes. In the prologue Steiner introduces his interviewees. These ranchers—men and women—are the pioneers or descendants of the pioneers who homesteaded in the

western United States. Steiner has spent many years getting to know some of the people in this book. Others are more recent acquaintances, people he met over a cup of coffee or a bottle of beer. Not surprisingly then, Steiner writes that "this is not a Gallup poll, nor a sociological study nor a statistical study of ranchers and ranching. This is an appreciation of a way of life, a homage, a requiem, and a celebration, an invocation of the spirit."

Chapter titles in *The Ranchers* include "In the Beginning," "The Old Days," "Communities of Rugged Individualists," and "School Days." Steiner's additional chapters on women and the young ranchers of the present are particularly welcome. Within each of these eight chapters, Steiner uses good editorial judgment to limit each recollection to no more than two or three pages. Often it is less. This brevity maintains the reader's attention and allows Steiner to introduce each piece with a paragraph or two. Happily, these remarks never intrude. In fact, they unify the book. Thus, *The Ranchers* grips and flows at the same time.

That Steiner is a master of his writing craft should be no surprise to anyone who has read any of his dozen earlier works, including his award-winning *La Raza: The Mexican Americans* (1969). Nor should it be a surprise coming from a man who states that "writing is not a career; it is a religion." Steiner and his writing gods should be particularly proud of his epilogue. It tells of his last meeting with Boyd Charter, a tough sinewy man whose words and philosophy pepper the book. Charter is dying of cancer. He knows it. Steiner knows it. This account of their last visit together is no maudlin six-page finale. It is a moving dedication of the book that reveals Steiner's sensitivity and his affinity for his ranching friends.

Students of the West will be grateful to Stan Steiner for this mosaic of ranch life.

PUBLIC LIBRARY OF DES MOINES

STEPHEN R. BROGDEN

*The Chisholm Trail: High Road of the Cattle Kingdom*, by Don Worcester. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980. pp. xx, 207. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$14.50.

The cattle kingdoms and trail drives of the American West lasted no more than twenty-five years, but in many respects this was the most memorable era in the nation's history. During the time of the cattle drives, from the 1860s to the 1890s, the cowboy became a legendary figure, an American folk hero; and this heroic cowboy acquired his

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