

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

Japanese, have adopted behavior patterns based upon a "Wild, Wild West" image of the United States. He saw that current image of the United States growing out of a pair of images created in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The first of those historical images left the impression that the frontier environment reduced its residents to semibarbarians; the second persuaded Europeans that the frontier promised material prosperity, equality and personal freedom. Billington's evidence ascribes much of this image-making to European writers, travelers and settlers in the American West who imbedded those views in the European mind by the end of the nineteenth century. In this essay, Billington briefly lapses into what could be considered a "Great Frontier" interpretation as he muses on how the image of the American West as a place of freedom and equality could have contributed to liberal reform efforts in Europe at the turn of the century.

These essays can be approached as separate entities since each treats a different aspect of the frontier; they can also be approached as a collection since they provide an opportunity to speculate about shifts in Billington's stance on the Turner Thesis. Each essay has sufficient documentation for the theme being explicated and all are clear, straightforward and move easily from segment to segment. Certainly these are qualities that historians should emulate and readers should appreciate.

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Dodge City: The Most Western Town of All, by Odie B. Faulk.
New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. pp. ix, 227. \$9.95.

The Twentieth-Century West: A Potpourri, by Gene M. Gressley.
Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1977.
pp. 196. \$12.00.

Faulk's *Dodge City: The Most Western Town of All* and Gressley's *The Twentieth-Century West: A Potpourri* represent two different approaches to Western American history,

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and to understand the differences and similarities it is best to examine each work separately. Beginning with Faulk's book, we have an extraordinarily prolific historian spinning a lively yarn concerning the whiskey-swilling, street-brawling, hell-raising days of Dodge City, Kansas. Footnotes are relegated to the back of the book while a galloping narrative races its way over four hundred years of history from when Francisco Vasquez de Coronado explored the southern Great Plains in 1542 to the tourists of today.

The purpose of the work, Faulk writes, is to prove that the west of white-hatted good guys and black-hatted villains depicted in numerous cineramic epics never existed. He seems to be unaware of recent trends in Hollywood film making, for in 1969 Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* followed in 1970 by Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man* systematically demythologized the West. Thus his claim of being on the cutting edge of historic interpretation should be viewed with more than the usual amount of skepticism. Also, the author focuses his attention on such denizens of Dodge City as John (Doc) Holliday, Wyatt Earp and William (Bat) Masterson. He finds that most did not live up to their "dime novel" caricatures which is the same conclusion that the 1973 movie *Doc* came to about the exploits of Holliday and Earp. A third theme of the work is the proclaiming of Dodge City as the par excellence stereotype western cow town. To prove this hypothesis, Faulk relates witty, humorous and tragic anecdotes which charm the reader, but do not justify the theatrical title of the work.

The book does give the general reading public a factual, if sometimes simplified, account of the growth and development of the American West. One such case of simplification concerns the discussion on the end of the western cattle boom in the late 1880s. The author blames the cattle boom collapse solely on the severe winter of 1886-87. The winter was a significant factor, but equally important was that overcapitalized cattle companies indulged in the excesses of over expansion and over grazing of the grasslands which resulted in the glutting the market. Other factors such as inaccurate herd counts, poor managerial practices on the range and a national recession hampered the infant livestock industry from becoming a profitable and

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efficient business. These individual elements together contributed to the bankruptcy of many cattle companies in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

Despite these flaws, the book is well written, factual and deserving of wide readership by those wishing an introduction to nineteenth-century Western history. It is probably the best book available for the tourist and amateur historian on Dodge City.

Gressley's book, in contrast, is a scholarly, difficult and challenging tome. It deals not with the romanticized West of the nineteenth-century, but the mundane—subsequently less written about—twentieth-century West. The book contains six essays tied together by a preface which interweaves the themes found in the individual essays. The essays discuss eastern United States and European economic colonization of the American West. Also discussed is the interaction of the federal government with the western states, personalized by incidents in the lives of Arthur Powell Davis, George Otis Smith, Thurman Arnold and Joseph O'Mahoney. The preface serves as a stimulating, thoughtful discussion of the validity of viewing the West as a cultural, economic and political colony of eastern interests in the twentieth-century. Gressley concludes that with one or two exceptions the western states are still in colonial bondage.

Unfortunately, several shortcomings mar the overall excellence of the book. First, a photographic section at the beginning of the book appears to have been added at the last minute only for the purpose of justifying the price of such a slim volume. Secondly, the six essays are all reprints from previously published magazine articles written by Gressley with only the introductory preface being unpublished before now. The essay entitled "Colonialism and the American West" was published in the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (January 1963) under the title: "Colonialism: A Western Complaint" and it is a verbatim reprint of the magazine article with only the title altered, a few punctuation marks changed, some footnotes reworked and one word in the text changed. The essays, though reprints, are still an interesting collection and worthy of study by serious scholars of the twentieth-century West.

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Faulk writes Western history in a deductive manner with a vigorous prose style for a general reading public, while Gressley writes in-depth studies of a few isolated personalities and events appealing to the economic and political historians. Both books are well done in their own ways and reflect the versatility of American western history.

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The Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions, 1775-1850, by Malcolm J. Rohrbough. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. pp. xiv, 444. Maps, tables, index. \$17.50.

The settlement of the frontier between the Appalachians and just beyond the Mississippi receives excellent treatment in Professor Rohrbough's book. The work is not concerned with such traditional topics as Indian wars, international diplomacy in this western region, or the fur trade but, rather, focuses on the frontier institutions of local government, county courts and the law, the militia, and other close-at-hand agencies which directly influenced the individual families who were trying to establish homes in the wilderness. There is some recognition of the development of education and religion, but they do not receive the emphasis which is placed on the legal and administrative apparatus of the county and its relationship to individual citizens.

The author uses the very effective techniques of introducing the experiences of specific families as they struggle with the environment and attempt to get help from their county officials in the process of carving farms out of the forest. For example, he describes in some detail and, in six pages of text, with interesting quotations, the personal narrative of Lovira Hart in setting up a home on Michigan's frontier.

The book is divided into three chronological periods: 1775-1815, 1815-1830, and 1830-1850. Two endpaper maps for 1775

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