

Book Reviews

mend that every Iowan interested in the past history of the state and of its people seek to learn more from the memories of these eight people. One can only hope that Iowans of the last half of the twentieth century are also recording their impressions of the things that have given them both happiness and sorrow so that future generations may experience the nostalgia of this later period.

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Saloons of the Old West, by Richard Erdoes. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979. pp. 277. Illustrations, photographs, notes, bibliography, acknowledgments, index. \$13.95.

Lavishly illustrated with photographs, old prints, cartoons, and line cuts—many of which are in the author's private collection—*Saloons of the Old West* by Richard Erdoes is a western history buff's miscellany. It contains every cliché ever uttered about western saloons, every anecdote, all the folklore, and most of the analytic and narrative discourse as well. It is, in short, the ultimate coffee-table book about western saloons.

The author, Richard Erdoes, is an artist and photographer who has written four books about American Indians. His approach to western saloons is that of a romantic pursuing an authentic "American" institution. The result is a mixture of quotations, old stories retold, and illustrations on every other page. Erdoes traces the evolution of saloons, their westward expansion, the bartender, "the stuff" they drank, western lodgings (some of which were associated with saloons), religion in the West, courts in saloons, gambling, women in the West, famous barroom fights, and prohibition.

The result is difficult to categorize. *Saloons of the Old West* is not a monograph (but no one intended that), or a scholarly synthesis. It is not a narrative account nor an edited anthology, but it has elements of all these forms. There are eleven pages of notes and five pages of bibliography; readers can track Erdoes' sources. The book does not merit serious scholarly consideration, but history teachers might pull an anecdote or two to enliven their lectures. Very few "general" readers will read the work from cover to cover, and Iowa readers will find no

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entries under "Iowa" in the index. Kansas by contrast has six entries and a "see also 'cowtowns.'"

What then, to make of this book? Libraries will want a copy as a handy, although confusing, reference work. Few readers will buy it for themselves, but it would make a nice gift. If you get a copy, don't throw it out, enjoy it!

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The Great Platte River Road, by Merrill J. Mattes. Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969; reprint ed., Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1979. pp. xxiv, 583. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index. New preface added. \$8.95 paper.

The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1860, by John D. Unruh, Jr. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979. pp. xviii, 565. Maps, illustrations, tables, bibliography, index. \$22.50.

Scholarship of the trans-Mississippi migration of the nineteenth century is flourishing, judging from these two books, coincidentally appearing in print in the same year. In the Mattes reprint and the original Unruh publication, we have the opportunity to compare these two works of exhaustive research and differing emphases. Mattes traces the development of the Platte River route from the Missouri River towns, the "jumping-off" points, to Fort Laramie in the period from 1849 to 1867. Unruh treats essentially the same span, 1840 to 1860, and extends the migration routes through to California, Oregon, and Washington, but he focuses on an analysis of the changing roles of the Indians, the federal government, private entrepreneurs, the Mormon "half-way" house in the Salt Lake Valley, and the emerging settlements on the West Coast.

Mattes defines the Platte River Road as the main trunk route along the Platte from Fort Kearny to Fort Laramie. It subsumed various route names which indicated destinations, such as the Oregon Trail or

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