

Book Notices

Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography on CD-ROM, by Dan L. Thrapp. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. Illustrations. \$150.

REVIEWED BY J. THOMAS MURPHY, WACO, TEXAS

The publication of Dan L. Thrapp's impressive three-volume *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography* in 1988, and its supplemental volume in 1994, provided anyone interested in western history with an important reference tool. In 5,530 biographical sketches, Thrapp describes prominent western heroes and individuals who are less well known. There are army scouts and sculptors, cowgirls and lawmen, rustlers and missionaries. He also furnishes a brief bibliography with each sketch. These four volumes, including portraits added to 270 entries, are now available on a single CD-ROM.

Using a DOS interface (emulation software is necessary for Macintosh and Unix computers), the CD-ROM version allows better access to Thrapp's information. While not duplicating the convenience of taking a volume from the shelf to consult one or two entries, the new version offers an easy search of the index to find surnames. More importantly, it proves invaluable as a means for gathering material. Users can consult twenty-two special subject listings based on "character definitions" established by Thrapp, such as "Fur Traders and Mountain Men," or search the text for specific terms, such as trader. The subject lists, however, can be unwieldy. There are, for example, 1,004 entries for military figures. Women and Native Americans are listed among these subjects, but African Americans are not. Anyone studying blacks in the West must rely on a search of relevant terms that appear in Thrapp's text. The key word *black*, for example, finds West Point graduate Henry O. Flipper because of his experience as a "black cadet." Overall, the *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography on CD-ROM* is easy to use, excellent for students, and enhances Thrapp's intention of producing both a reliable reference work and a starting place for research.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.