7-1-1976

Book Review: Colonial Mobile, by Peter J. Hamilton, edited by Charles G. Summersell

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

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Many historians will also argue with Jahoda about some of her general conclusions. The Spanish period is portrayed as negatively as I have seen put to print for at least a decade. Andrew Jackson is presented with no redeeming virtues, and here believes "of the Indians that the only good ones were dead ones." (p. 47) Osceola appears in Chapter Five, incorrectly, as the major leader of the Second Seminole War.

There are errors of fact as well as of judgment. There were four survivors of the Narvaez expedition, for example, not two as given here. All the standard works regarding the survivors beginning with Bourne (1904) and Hodge (1907) are firm on this point. There are typos that should have been discovered in galley work, the most important ruining an important concluding paragraph in her discussion of space activities at Cape Canaveral. (p. 181)

This book is recommended only for those libraries with extensive holdings of Floridiana or to the general reader familiar with Florida history.


"Colonial Mobile," still regarded as the best history of Mobile and the surrounding area in colonial times, has been reprinted by the University of Alabama in its "Southern Historical Publications" series.

First published in 1897 and revised in 1910, it long has been a scarce item in Alabama bibliography, even though it was reprinted in 1952.

This edition is very important in Alabama historiography, for it has been edited and annotated by Charles Summersell of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, the doyen of Alabama historians.
Summersell has prepared a superb introduction about Hamilton, not only providing us with an excellent biography of the man, but giving us at the same time an overview of the history of Mobile and placing Hamilton in historical perspective.

Summersell has also included a select bibliography that could well serve as a basis for developing a library collection of material on Alabama history. Libraries around this state would do well to check their holdings against this bibliography, and add any missing titles. Individuals interested in Alabama history should do the same.

The price of the book is high, but you certainly get your money's worth. A "must" acquisition for all libraries and individuals interested in Alabama history.


The University of Alabama Press had recently reprinted William Brantley's definitive work on the early period of Alabama's statehood. This work, first issued in 1947, has long been out of print. Brantley traces and discusses the period from 1818 to 1826, when the capital was moved to Tuscaloosa from Cahawba. Previously St. Stephens had served as the territorial capital and Huntsville as the first, albeit temporary, one.

Brantley covers well the political turmoil of the time; the struggle of William Wyatt Bibb, the first governor of Alabama, to have Cahawba selected as the site for the first "permanent" capital and, after his death, the successful effort of the Tuscaloosa forces to move the capital there. A short appendix traces the history of Huntsville before 1819, and much of the history of this area is recounted in his section on Huntsville as the capital. For this reason alone the book