BOOK NOTES

From time to time we will report on books that are important or interesting, or both, that have no direct relation with the history of the Tennessee Valley. Our primary aim will be to inform, not to judge. Draw your own conclusions.


Kansas, of course, is very much connected with Southern and Confederate history—just a reminder of "bleeding Kansas" is enough. The names of towns are fascinating generally, for the scope and variety of them are universal. Yet many towns in Kansas owe their origin to the Southeast. For example, Spring Hill in Kansas was named by one James Honey because Spring Hill in Alabama was "one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen."

The author, a retired educator, has spent his retirement years on his evident labor of love and has arranged his material topically with some chronological sequence. Why this arrangement? Because Mark Twain "purportedly disliked the dictionary because it was constantly changing the subject." And because a dictionary has no index.


This is an excellent portrayal of and discussion about the role of the national character as developed in the Revolutionary War in
the interplay between democratic principles and military necessity. Analytical rather than narrative in presentation, the book dwells on the irony of the need to maintain democratic principles the revolution purportedly were based upon, yet accept military discipline and order to win the war. Experience gradually showed Americans that they could not draw a clear line between Europe, tyranny, brutality, and rigid military discipline on the one side and America, liberty, virtue, and voluntarism on the other."


An intensive investigation of Vicksburg and its environs during the period 1863-1870, it provides us with an in-depth analysis of Union control.

After its capture, Vicksburg became an enclave of Union territory in the heart of the Confederacy, where slavery was abolished and the population mushroomed to 50,000. Following the war it reverted to civilian control, then federal troops again occupied Vicksburg during Congressional or Radical Reconstruction.

Curry, Assistant Professor of History at Jackson State University in Mississippi, gives us in this provocative essay the major reasons why Vicksburg never reached its potential. Very well done.

Editor
Sometimes good things come in small packages, and inexpensive, too. So it is with these two reprints of articles originally appearing in the Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society. Most of the general reading public remains unexposed to the professional journals and the University Press of Virginia is to be congratulated for making significant articles more available to the general public.

Albanese's "King Crockett" is a fine examination of the creation of the Crockett myth of greatness, primarily as it developed from his autobiographical Narrative and the Crockett Almanacs. Myth wins over reality, also bestiality over refinement and civility. This might (ought) to make one wonder if much of the same mythmaking occurred in our own Tennessee Valley, in our own early history. For Davey once "lived" not too far away. Albanese also makes us aware of the national political aspirations of Crockett and the role of politics in the creation of the legend — another possible lesson for today.

Quarles, professor of history at Morgan State University in Baltimore, is one of the country's leading black historians. He shows us that today's efforts to recapture the African and Afro-American past is not some-
thing new, but was first consciously attempted in the first half of the nineteenth century, in order to combat white mainstream assertions that blacks had no history worthy of relating, since they were inferior.

Quarles is objective in his treatment of this quest for identity, for he provides the reader with the weaknesses as well as the strengths of what the quest produced. The history produced was "open to question in its documentation and tone," but "if their grasp of history was fragmentary and partial, it was neither lacking in vision nor devoid of a core of essential truth." Well said.

Editor
THE TEXAS GULF COAST: INTERPRETATIONS BY NINE ARTISTS.
112 pp. $29.95.

Every so often I get a book to review that I simply
cannot do justice to—all the words at my command are
insufficient to describe the book. Resorting to a
Thesaurus does not help. Words like haunting, incisive,
enticing, evocative are only clues.

So it is with this depiction of the Texas Gulf Coast
by nine artists. Forty-seven color plates reveal this
area as seen by these artists. Plus an excellent
textual introduction to the area.

You will simply have to see the book to believe,
and understand.

Editor

According to available statistics, the South before the Civil War appeared "to be a violent place to live . . . regardless of one's race or class." Also "certain forms of violence were exclusive, or virtually so, to the South." Bruce, like many another, has tried to study both forms of violence and the place of violence within the cultural mores of the South. He has succeeded very well.

Basically, Bruce regards the Southerner before the Civil War as a pessimist. Deeply afraid of passion, regarding the veneer of civilization as so thin that it frequently cracks, the Southerner became inured to violence, not because "it was good, but because with their sense of impotence to a perverse humanity, they were resigned to its necessity." Bruce also makes the most important point that the Southerners "never saw violence as anything other than a response." So Southerners never caused violence, they reacted to it. That they reacted with force, violence, did not generally occur to them. It does make it easier to blame someone else for what one does, especially if passion lies so conveniently near the surface.

We may not like these conclusions but this provocative book will make us think.

Highly recommended.

Editor

In Alabama most students of American history are familiar with the story of the Creek Indians and that the powerful Creek Confederacy controlled much of Alabama and Georgia when settlers first began moving in. Conflict between Indian and white led to war by 1813. The Creeks lost; their subsequent removal to unwanted lands in the West began a policy that was to virtually destroy all the Indian nation by century's end. What is not as well known is that, from the middle of the 18th century on, blacks played a significant, sometimes dominant, role in Creek affairs.

AFRICANS AND CREEKS tells the little-known story of the Creek Indians and the blacks who became part of their nation. The author begins his story in the colonial period, when black runaways and the slaves of Spanish, French, and English traders began to live among the Creeks. These men and women were not regarded as slaves by the Indians. After the Revolution, increased contact with whites led the Creeks to acquire blacks as slaves. Littlefield explains in detail the differences between the Creeks' unique system of slavery and the white model. He then examines the blacks' part in the war of 1813 and 1814, and shows how events in this conflict led to an alliance between the blacks and the Seminoles of Florida. The blacks became a source of controversy within the tribe during the removal process: Littlefield describes the black role in that event.

Slavery was maintained in the new western Creek nation. Blacks continued as a source of tribal conflict between the Creeks and the Seminoles, who were also relocated. Littlefield explains these developments and examines in detail slave trading by the Indians during the period. A discussion of the role of the Creeks and their blacks in the Civil War, and the process of emancipation, completes this study.
This is the third book that Littlefield, Chairman of the English Department at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, has produced for Greenwood Press. Like the others, it is based on primary as well as secondary sources, and contributes to our understanding of our past.

Editor

WHAT WAS FREEDOM'S PRICE, edited by David G. Sansing. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978. 113 pp. $7.95, cloth; $3.95, paper.


For the past four years the Department of History of the University of Mississippi has sponsored the Chancellor's Symposium, very likely the best series ever held in this country dealing with the problem of race relations in the South. The participants have been well-known historians; white and black, male and female, youthful and mature. Every year after the symposium the proceedings have been published, in paperback and hard bound editions.

Most of the essays are perceptive and reflect the best standards of historical scholarship. Together, they provide the reader with a detailed overview of black/white relations throughout the history of the country.

These four volumes should be a part of every library in the South and should be read by all people living in the South.

Editor

This will be the first comprehensive treatment of the role of Union cavalry in the Civil War, when all three volumes of the proposed set are published, and will surely prove to be the definitive work on the Union cavalry. However, the initial volume can stand by itself, and will be the one to be enjoyed by the pro Southern folks, for it covers the period from Sumter to Gettysburg, when the Confederate cavalry had all the best of it.

The book actually opens with the final Union cavalry operation of the war, Wilson's invasion of Alabama and Georgia. The author's intent is to show the Union supremacy by the end of the war and how this superiority was achieved.

Starr next gives an excellent overview of the history of cavalry operations in the United States before the Civil War, setting the stage for conflict. He then gives the preparation for war by both sides, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of both. The two worst weaknesses of the Confederate cavalry were the lack of discipline and the Southern system of depending on cavalrymen to furnish their own mounts, which, beneficial in the beginning, turned out to be disastrous. Starr also maintains that the major step of Union cavalry towards parity with Confederate units was "the replacement of most of the initial cadre of officers . . . by men who had had several months or years of cavalry experience in the ranks . . . . Their skill as fighting men is a major factor in explaining the dramatic improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Federal cavalry from mid-1863 on."

For the reader who would rather read about battles, the highlight of this volume will be the detailed descriptions of the campaigns. Some will claim that here Starr is at his best.

Editor