
Henry S. Marks
THE GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH, edited by James X. Corgan (University: University of Alabama Press, 1982) 170pp., $17.50

This is an important work, for it introduces, to people interested in the history of the south, broad interdisciplinary studies of the geological sciences in the antebellum South. The nine papers presented were part of a symposium, “The History of the Geological Sciences in the Antebellum South” held in Birmingham in March, 1980, as part of a southeastern sectional meeting of the Geological Society of America. All of the contributors (only three from the South) are experienced scholars who have some status as students of history.

Fortunately for most of us, there has been an “active avoidance of detail in all the essays in this volume” (better for the general audience not to be lost in a maze of details). Also most contributions are at least partially biographical, and no contribution assumes the reader to have a background in any of the sciences or an especially strong interest in the scientific aspects of modern culture. Alabama is well represented; for example, Charles Lyell’s observations on southeastern geology.

How correct he was, when he expressed the opinion that the iron, limestone, and coal of the Birmingham area would ultimately be a source of mineral wealth. However, there is really only one reference to Huntsville, when the French emigre Joseph Nicollet examined the Cumberland Mountains from Huntsville to the Cumberland River.

EDITOR