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*The History of Texas* (review)

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# Book Reviews

JESÚS F. DE LA TEJA, *Editor*

*The History of Texas.* By Robert A. Calvert, Arnolde De León, and Gregg Cantrell. (4th ed. Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 2007. Pp. 512. Illustrations, figures, appendix, readings, index. ISBN 9780882952550, \$45.95 paper.)

In this fourth edition of what is becoming a classic history of the state, the authors have made a few changes from their earlier versions of *The History of Texas*. The new book is larger, more detailed, and more attuned to current historiographical trends than its predecessor. The authors have expanded, although only slightly, the end of chapter reading lists, placed more emphasis on Native Americans, and adjusted their treatment of some topics, such as the Sieur de La Salle venture, the coming of the Texas Revolution, and the era of Reconstruction.

The new edition retains those features that have made it a popular college text. Thus, as they themselves note, the authors have again included important features of social history, and the twentieth century—as it should—gets plenty of attention. But, as an important addition, the authors have discussed the roles of various cultural groups previously overlooked and told the stories of common folks to a greater extent than they did in earlier editions of the book.

In short, it is a good text, balanced in its treatment of the various peoples of Texas and altogether fair in its discussion of sensitive topics, including issues of race and ethnic discrimination and modern Texas politics. Although their treatment of these issues is fair, the authors' personal positions on such issues are easily discerned.

The attractive and comprehensive volume is a college textbook, and as such has some unavoidable problems, most of them minor, and some of them issues over which the authors have little control. In the minor problem category, there is the issue of audience. The authors are writing—or so one assumes—to twenty-year-old, junior level college students, a demographic group that in 2009 gets most of its information from sources other than textbooks, such as the internet and late night television. Some American undergraduate students are not used to reading big, sophisticated books, and, accordingly, they struggle to handle the complex, lengthy paragraphs and the elaborate discussions presented here. But many others do not, thankfully.

In the "little control" category, there is the issue of history and current events, particularly the discussions in chapter fourteen—the book's last. As the authors indicate, it often remains difficult to cover the immediate past with grace—too

many rapid changes in contemporary politics and modern economic life make it hard to marshal a reasoned history. One result is that portions of the final chapter are a bit awkward or dated—oil prices, for example. Moreover, the nature of current topics too often leads, as it sometimes does here, to an encyclopedic presentation of the material.

Still, if it is a historian's task to describe, analyze, and explain, and I think it is, the authors of *The History of Texas* perform their task well. The book in its current edition remains a solid work, popular among college instructors and balanced in its chronological approach to the state's past. And importantly, by its selection and treatment of the material it includes, it is reflective of the state's modern demographic trends. It is a fine book.

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*Texas Water Atlas.* By Lawrence E. Estaville and Richard A. Earl. Preface by Andrew Sansom. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. Pp.148. Color maps, tables, charts, bibliography, index. ISBN 9781603440202, \$24.95 paper.)

Our earth is imperiled. Natural resources are diminishing. The message is repeated so often we become immune to the warnings. Lawrence Estaville and Richard Earl's *Texas Water Atlas* jolts us back to awareness. While statistics can be manipulated to give a false interpretation, maps can hide facts only by omission. Here there is no omission. By dividing the book into seven discrete sections the authors ensure that every aspect of the Texas water supply and reserve is addressed. Each of their series of maps is prefaced by a brief narrative explanation to place the topic in a practical context. Here it may be forgivable to say "a map is worth a thousand words."

Before even glancing at the introductory paragraphs, I would suggest turning to the timeline that appears towards the end of the book to relate how history ties in to the present and future of our water resources. The chronology advances from prehistory to early human settlement by Lake Lubbock. The irrigation systems laid by the Spanish missionaries were later exchanged for new methods and more of the state's major river systems and creeks became an increasingly valuable asset. By the mid-twentieth century three million agricultural acres were irrigated and today a continuously increasing number of organizations and institutions (with acronym succeeding acronym) monitor and control usage and the potential for extravagance and exploitation. The color maps, singularly easy to interpret, identify changes and the further demands anticipated as the population grows.

The chapters explore the impact of the Texas climate, the extent of surface and groundwater supplies along with the quantity and quality and the water-related hazards. The pivotal chapter, "Water Projects, Pollution, and Protection," intimates what is likely to occur in the coming years. When the authors look to the importance of water from a recreational perspective, the contribution to the quality of life is secondary to the substantial income that accrues from fishing and water sports. The final pages map projected change in supply and demand