

Historical Society of Southern California

Borein. Some thirty footnotes accompany the introduction, and fifty more supplement the main text. There is also an index, primarily of names and places.

Historians of this period of pastoral California will inevitably compare the work with a very similar one, *California Dons*, by Ralph L. Milliken (Fresno, 1956), which also consists of the boyhood recollections of life on a rancho near Mission San Juan Bautista during the 1850s and 1860s. This book of recollections was dictated, over a period of more than three years, by Estolano Larios, while he was resident at the home of Mr. Milliken in Los Baños. Though not quite contemporaries (Estolano was fifteen years younger than Ygnacio), both boys had similar adventures on their nearly contiguous ranchos. Both attended rodeos, fiestas, Mass on holidays at the mission, and so on. The major difference is that the Larios account is far more detailed, particularly in the matter of life at the ranch house where he lived, and in his memories of his school days. Villegas is completely silent about his elementary education, and all he says about his year (1854–1855) at Santa Clara College is “After I returned from school . . .” Larios, on the other hand, dictated at least four chapters detailing his adventures in school, from first grade at the mission to his graduation from the four-year course at the Franciscan College in Santa Barbara.

These comparisons should not, however, detract from the value of Villegas’ memoirs. His statistics on the value of elk and deer hides, and of otter and beaver skins in the 1850s are enlightening. Also his statement that in the early 1860s the central Salinas Valley was alive with quail, and that hunters in those years would ship as many as 4000 quail a year to San Francisco, gives some idea of the value of these recollections for historians of “California pastoral.” Dr. Shumate is to be congratulated on his fine editorship, and the California Historical Society is to be thanked for making this work available to all.

Dr. Wood has labored long in the vineyard of California history. He has published widely on a variety of topics and was the editor of the most recent Brand Book, sponsored by the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners, of which he is a member.

THE SAN GABRIELS II. *The Mountains from Monrovia Canyon to Lytle Creek.* By John W. Robinson. (Monrovia: Big Santa Anita Historical Society, 1983. 224 pp. \$24.95.) Reviewed by Sheldon G. Jackson.

Take a good historian, let him spend most of his recreational hours hiking and climbing in the San Gabriel Mountains, give him ten years to research the history of the range, lavishly illustrate his manuscript

Book Reviews

with pictures, and the result is a reader's delight. John W. Robinson takes the reader into those mountains and introduces him to their history and many of their secrets in his new book *The San Gabriels II*.

John Robinson's name was already well established as a fine local historian. His *The Los Angeles & San Pedro Railroad, 1869-1873* (1978) is a railroad history with a "distinct economic and social bent." But it is in his writing about his beloved mountains that he has made his most prolific contributions during the past decade. From his pen have come *Trails of the Angeles*, *San Bernardino Mountain Trails*, *Mines of the San Gabriels*, *Mines of the East Fork*, *Mines of the San Bernardinos*, and *The Mount Wilson Story*. The present volume is a companion volume to his *The San Gabriels: Southern California Mountain Country* (1977). The first volume told the story of the western half of the range. The present volume covers the eastern half.

This section of the San Gabriels encompasses their highest reaches. Mt. San Antonio (Mt. Baldy) rises to 10,064 feet. From Monrovia Canyon on the west to Lytle Creek on the east, and from the southern slopes overlooking the Los Angeles Basin and the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys to the northern slopes at Wrightwood and Big Pines they are "majestic."

They have a rich heritage, also. In the present volume, Robinson attempted to uncover that heritage. He called it a "time-consuming but rewarding task." He consulted manuscripts, rare books, periodicals, newspapers, and legal records. He interviewed "old-timers," who provided invaluable first-hand material. He hiked the mountain trails and climbed the highest peaks. Thus, he was able to write with the authority of one who has been there.

To arrange the material in such a complex story presented a dilemma. On the one hand, it is a specific region. On the other hand, each canyon has a history of its own. Should the book be organized chronologically, topically or geographically? Robinson's solution represented a compromise that seems, on the whole, to have worked rather well. The early history is presented in integrated chapters. Then, the specific stories of canyons and sub-regions are told in individual chapters.

The Indian period saw the Gabrielinos, Serranos and occasionally Ute and Mojave Indians following trails over and through the mountains. During the mission era, the padres provided names for the mountains and the streams flowing from them, but seldom ventured there. With the coming of the rancheros and especially the American era, it was a different story. Water wars and gold rushes brought swarms of eager prospectors. They "sluiced and long-tommed the river, hydraulicked the river banks, and dug into the higher slopes in their frantic quest for wealth." They found some gold, but no rich bonanza.

Equally interesting are the stories of the building of the major flood-

Historical Society of Southern California

control dams. The San Dimas, Big Dalton, Morris, and San Gabriel Dams each carries its own story. Many readers will be surprised to learn that in 1921, the county proposed to build at the forks of the San Gabriel River “the world’s largest concrete structure.” When crews began work on a scaled-down version of the project, they completed a railroad up the river to the site of the proposed dam at the forks. The “World’s largest electric shovel” excavated rocks and debris. But a massive landslide caused the project to be abandoned. It was called the “Forks Dam fiasco” and it wasted three million dollars of the taxpayers’ money. An investigation uncovered bribery and corruption. A county supervisor was indicted, tried and convicted of accepting a bribe, and was sentenced to a term in prison.

Geography is the organizing theme of the major portion of the book. The histories of Monrovia Canyon, Sawpit Canyon, San Gabriel Canyon, Crystal Lake area, Dalton Canyon, San Dimas Canyon, the San Dimas Experimental Forest, San Antonio Canyon, Old Baldy, the Wilderness area, Lytle Creek, Wrightwood and Big Pines are brought to light in a style designed for the general public.

The age of the pleasure seekers, from the 1880s to the 1930s, is described best in the story of the canyons. Far-famed mountain resorts such as Silas Glenn’s Glenn Ranch, Ruth Curry’s Camp Baldy, R. W. Dawson’s Coldbrook Camp, Charlie Smith’s Camp Rincon, and especially Ralph Follows’ Follows Camp hosted thousands of visitors for weekends of relaxation or recreation. Fishing and hunting were popular activities. Then the automobile and better roads spelled the end of most of the resorts. One-day excursions into the mountains became the norm for a busy population.

The final chapter relates the literary history of the San Gabriel Mountains. Here, the names of Charles Francis Saunders, Mary Austin, Charles Lummis and John Muir loom high.

This is a book that the “average reader” will enjoy. Since it is not a scholarly dissertation, footnotes are limited. Only quotations are footnoted. Neither is the book a scientific treatise. Robinson has left the geological story of the region to geologists.

It is not a social polemic. Robinson has left for others to discuss the urgent problem of overcrowding in the San Gabriels. Because the San Gabriels are within driving distance of the Los Angeles metropolitan basin, more than six million people visit there each year. The transition phase through which the area seems now to be passing, includes not only overcrowding, but also a change in type of usage. In addition to fishermen and those seeking a quiet time of relaxation, the canyons are now visited by target shooters, off-road vehicles and thrill-seekers. Problems such as vandalism, drunk driving, gangs, littering, and narcotics have been reported. The Forest Service, which shares jurisdiction with

Book Reviews

the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (in the Los Angeles County portion) and the California Highway Patrol, have only a few people to cover more than 200 square miles of territory. The most urgent problems are in the San Gabriel Canyon, which hosts eighty percent of the six million visitors. Studies are currently under way to assure the preservation of the region as a valuable family recreational resource for the Los Angeles and San Bernardino area.

This is a book written by one who still hikes and climbs these mountains, and who has increased our enjoyment of them by unfolding their heritage. Its usefulness is enhanced by more than 400 illustrations, including a stunning full-color view of Mount Baldy on the cover. Scores of the pictures are rare and never before published photographs of mining activities, resorts, dams, and pioneers. The book is readable but filled with authentic information.

Professor Jackson, Department of History, Azusa Pacific University, is the author of a definitive biography on Henry Dalton and recently published a history of Azusa.

HISTORIANS AND THE AMERICAN WEST. Edited by Michael P. Malone. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983. 449 pp. \$24.95.)
Reviewed by Nicholas P. Hardeman.

Few regions of the globe have generated as much historical writing in as short a time span as the American West. It was time for a book to be written on the writings. Michael Malone's edited, one-volume panoramic survey, a composite work of nineteen highly credible authors, provides an excellent critical assessment of the "history of western history," and casts a glance toward the needs for future scholarship. For purposes of this volume the editor defines the West as the area beyond the 98th meridian, although several of the contributors spend some time and space out of bounds.

To have encompassed such a work within the bounds of a single volume is both an important first for western history writing and a very valuable contribution to western historians. (Despite occasional overtures to broader audiences, this work will be primarily used by western history scholars and graduate students.) Heretofore, in order to lay hands on assessments of such scope and depth, historians found it necessary to comb many volumes. To be sure, much work had been previously done. For example, one might consult the bibliographical essays by historians such as Walter Rundell, John A. Carroll, Gordon Dodds, Henry Fritz, Michael Sievers, Thomas Alexander, James Allen, David Weber, Thomas Torrans, and Charles Sacconaghi in numerous