

Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier. By Joanna L. Stratton. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981. Pp. 319. End maps, illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. \$16.95.)

Pioneer Women is based on a collection of eight hundred reminiscences gathered during the 1920s by Lilla Day Monroe, a pioneer Kansas lawyer and suffragist. Monroe believed that "no history . . . carried a good portrayal of the pioneer housewife," and she planned to collect women's memoirs and reminiscences for a book-length account of "the part women played in the early struggles to make Kansas" (p. 20). Monroe collected but never started writing. It remained for her great-granddaughter, Joanna Stratton, to complete her task.

Stratton has organized her material topically. The chapters include discussions of the westward journey; problems of pioneer settlement; daily life; battles against Indians, prairie fires, and the elements; family and community social activities; childhood experiences; schools, education, and teachers; religious institutions; town as well as rural life; cowboys; immigrants; antislavery campaigns and the Civil War; temperance; and suffrage. Stratton provides a continuity throughout the volume by placing the reminiscences into a historical as well as topical framework and identifying important people and events mentioned in or closely connected to the main themes of the narrative.

Stratton's methodology, although aesthetically pleasing, is historically frustrating. Reminiscences should be always subject to close scrutiny, but the materials in Stratton's book pose special problems. The memoirs are divided among the various chapters so that it is impossible to gain a sense of any one woman's experiences or the reliability of an individual account. The majority of the reminiscences came from relatives or friends rather than the women themselves, and some accounts are third- or even fourth-hand. Moreover, the women confined themselves to subjects they considered "appropriate for publication" (p. 25), and they may often have added subjects they believed should be in a pioneer reminiscence (such as a grasshopper plague, Indian raid, or prairie fire) whether or not they directly experienced such events. Monroe's collection included only reminiscences of middle-class, literate, Protestant, white women and a small number of European immigrants. Black and Indian women were not included, nor were working women, barmaids, or prostitutes.

Despite these problems and limitations the book should be of interest to both the scholarly and lay public. The book is about Kansas women, but Indiana readers will find memoirs of women who emigrated from Indiana, and many of the experiences of these pioneers reflect universal rather than provincial or local frontier experiences. *Pioneer Women* is recommended to both the serious student of the frontier and to the casual reader.

University of Texas, Arlington

Sandra L. Myres

A History of Retirement: The Meaning and Function of an American Institution, 1885-1978. By William Graebner. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980. Pp. x, 293. Notes, tables, bibliographical essay, index. \$22.50.)

This volume by Professor William Graebner has nothing to do with the joys and problems of people living in retirement, nor does the author endeavor to review fully retirement legislation of the past. Rather the book is an orderly survey of the relationship of retirement to unemployment and the development of social security during the past century of a changing American capitalism. The problem of retirement for an aging population became more difficult as the rural America of the midnineteenth century gradually shifted to the urban industrial economy of the twentieth century. Retirement on the family farm or to the nearby village was one thing—retiring to a big city tenement was far different.

Early in the present century a definite discrimination against the older worker began to appear. The shorter work day, the use of new expensive complex machinery, and an increased emphasis upon greater productivity often seemed to bring grief to the older worker. Herbert Hoover's Committee on Recent Economic Changes found that the new job climate placed a premium upon the vigor of youth. The author presents three case studies covering early efforts in the twentieth century to obtain improved retirement programs in federal civil service, education, and industry.

A major change appeared during the Great Depression with the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935. Most historians agree with Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., who held that the new welfare legislation "began a new phase of national history" (p. 181). The 1935 act clearly helped relieve unemployment by encouraging the earlier retirement of older workers, and it also contributed to the ease of Franklin D.