

offers a chance to reflect on those enduring values that grew with the corn down on the farm.

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Witnesses to a Vanishing America: The Nineteenth-Century Response. By Lee Clark Mitchell. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981. Pp. xvii, 320. Illustrations, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$18.50.)

Scholars have repeatedly focused on the nineteenth century's confidence in progress. Spokesmen of the era believed not only that the young nation would conquer the wilderness but that from the process of mastery would emerge a better society than mankind had ever experienced. Criticisms about the destruction of the natural landscape, according to such treatments, came belatedly in association with the conservation movement of this century or the general disillusionment of the 1920s.

In this perceptive study, Lee Clark Mitchell does not attack the conventional view of nineteenth-century American attitudes, but he argues persuasively that many misgivings about the vanished wilderness can be detected among witnesses of the time. Mitchell wisely does not attempt to overstate his thesis. He admits, for example, that many of the early doubters were still convinced of the ultimate benefits of conquering the wilderness or felt a sense of regret without fully comprehending what the alterations meant. Overall, however, Mitchell's discussion indicates that a loose progression existed in the minority's criticisms. The early doubts tended to be inchoate, but misgivings were more frequently and strongly expressed as the century developed.

Mitchell draws upon a wide range of evidence in substantiating his thesis and demonstrates imaginative use of sources. He reassesses, for example, numerous literary notables (among them Irving, Parkman, Twain, and Melville) and treats the many artists and photographers who sought to preserve a visual image of the original landscape. He also examines the amazing propensity of Americans to found historical societies, collect documents and artifacts, and record their memories of pioneer life.

Perhaps the author's most innovative contribution is his skillful and intelligent tracing of American society's changing

attitudes toward the Indian as a reflection of whites' self doubts. In his early chapters, Mitchell analyzes the nostalgic image of the Indian in various works of fiction such as Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. In a later chapter, "Toward Cultural Relativism," he turns to a more specific examination of the evolution of anthropology from the highly ethnocentric views of the early nineteenth century to the more enlightened perceptions of scholars such as Frank Hamilton Cushing and Franz Boas. The author is unusually successful in showing the relationship between concern for conservation and respect for indigenous people.

As seems typical of many intellectual histories, this book's organization is occasionally redundant and confusing. Readability improves considerably as the study progresses. Despite the writing problems, this is a solidly researched, insightful, and exciting first book.

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The American Frontier Revisited. By Margaret Walsh. (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1981. Pp. 88. Notes, tables, maps, select bibliography, index. Paperbound, \$5.00.)

Almost a century ago Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his paper on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" at the World's Congress of Historians in Chicago. With his explanation of American history as a process of "European germs developing in an American environment," Turner introduced the analytical approach to the study of the American West and endeavored, as the late Ray Allen Billington noted, to promote the study of the "Great West" as a field of legitimate historical scholarship. He certainly succeeded. Perhaps no historian has had a professional paper examined so intensely. The Turner hypothesis has been modified and revised, but it largely has stood the test of time.

The American Frontier Revisited is just that, a re-examination of parts of the Turner hypothesis from an economic perspective and a discussion of what historians have written on the subject. Margaret Walsh of the University of Birmingham, England, uses a topical, analytical, and interpretive approach, stressing four themes: the availability of "free land"; agricultural development; the non-agricultural stages of western growth; and the demographic aspect of settlement. For