

Sheridan, for example, was not an advocate of genocide but rather a disciple of total war and in many respects a modern warrior. William S. Harney was not just a single-minded Indian fighter for "in addition to his passion for battle, he also understood the need for a humane policy once conflict was over" (p. 56). Typical of many career officers was Stephen H. Long, who never fought Indians or Mexicans. Rather he typified careerists "who spent decades carrying out routine tasks with only an occasional dangerous or exciting assignment" (p. 39). Men like Long constituted the backbone of the military, and their contributions as explorers, engineers, and topographers were enduring.

After reading these biographies, one must conclude that the "typical" frontier soldier was a myth—the variety, diversity, and complexity of these men is now clear. Still controversial is the question of the impact of the Indian wars on the Army. Was it true that the Army was never ready for a real war because it was basically structured to fight Indian bands? Why was the lesson of how to fight guerilla wars never learned? Robert Utley concludes that the problem was that the Army was always structured to fight conventional wars, and thus did not do as well as it should have on the unconventional frontier. The paperback edition will be useful in those courses in military and Western history which use a biographical approach.

D'ANN CAMPBELL, a fourth generation Coloradoan, teaches courses in frontier, military, and social history at Indiana University. She has written on western women's roles and attitudes in the 1940s, and is currently completing a book on the roles played by women in the military during World War II.

Agricultural Distress in the Midwest: Past and Present. Edited by Lawrence E. Gelfand and Robert J. Neymeyer. (Iowa City: University of Iowa, for the Center for the Study of the Recent History of the United States, 1986. Pp. ix, 111. Notes, figures, tables, references. Paperbound, \$9.95.)

This is a peculiar little book which, despite its title, is only intermittently concerned with either agricultural distress or the Midwest. It consists of four essays originally delivered at a conference sponsored jointly by the University of Iowa's Center for the Study of the Recent History of the United States and Iowa State University's Henry A. Wallace Center for Agricultural History and Rural Studies. The conference organizers hoped that historical analyses of previous farm depressions would provide a useful perspective for understanding the current farm crisis.

Only the first essay, "American Farmers and the Market Economy, 1880–1920," by Walter T. K. Nugent, achieves that objective. Written in his usual felicitous style, and based on his own extensive work, it describes the current farm crisis as only the most

recent since the structural changes in farm economics in the late nineteenth century inexorably bound American farmers to world markets. Offering explicit comparisons between the 1880s and the 1980s, Nugent discusses the issues of banking, credit, protectionism, and the rural depopulation of marginal(ized) farmers. His conclusion is sober: "The vexing situation of the small farmer is not a problem, but a condition. It is not something that has a solution, other than leaving the land, but it is something that has to be lived with" (p. 15).

The remaining essays are less satisfactory. David Hamilton focuses more narrowly on farm policy in the 1920s and 1930s, but by placing the subject in the context of the now well-known "organizational synthesis" he does provide a useful reexamination of the complexities and continuities in government policy. His particular interest is with the technocratic experts of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics who sought to "integrate commercial farming into a world dominated by industry, science, and large-scale organizations" (p. 25). Still narrower is economist Stanley Johnson's essay reporting econometric projections that the Food and Security Act of 1985 will not significantly improve the current depressed agricultural conditions. Norman Borlaug's essay goes to the other extreme, virtually lacking any focus as it rambles across centuries, cultures, and continents, with asides on topics ranging from the last general to become president of Mexico to the possibility of growing wheat in space. Borlaug, of course, received the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the Green Revolution, but this awkward piece, delivered extemporaneously at the conference, is embarrassing to read.

In short, this volume, lacking coherence and direction, is of limited use and only marginal interest to historians.

PETER H. ARGERSINGER, professor of history at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, is the author of "Populists in Power: Public Policy and Legislative Behavior," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XVIII (Summer, 1987), 81-105.

The Breckinridges of Kentucky, 1760-1981. By James C. Klotter. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986. Pp. xviii, 393. Illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliographical note, index. \$35.00.)

Until the advent of the new social history, family history was mostly the province of local historians and genealogists, and even now historians have produced few distinguished histories of individual families. Therefore James C. Klotter's new book on the Breckinridges is a welcome addition to the literature and is even worthy of comparison to Paul C. Nagel's outstanding *Descent from Glory: Four Generations of the John Adams Family*.