

Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790–1860. By Charlene M. Boyer Lewis. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001. Pp. x, 293. Illustrations, notes, works cited, index. Clothbound, \$55.00; paperbound, \$19.50.)

The numerous springs in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains were once the favored retreats of the southern elite. Only a handful of these resorts still thrive, now modernized to attract an international clientele. As Charlene M. Boyer Lewis reveals here, they have a fascinating history, one that benefits from the extensive scholarship she brings to her subject. Mountain sulphur springs became a major attraction, not only to those wishing to restore their health, but to many wealthy southerners seeking to escape low-country diseases and boredom during long, hot summers. From the late-eighteenth century until the Civil War, thousands of southerners, and a few Yankees, annually flocked to some seventy of these mountain spas.

Lewis examines numerous aspects of these resorts and the experiences of both the guests and those who served them. She explores the hotels' unique architectural features, the background of their patrons, and the myriad social activities that they offered. Only a few, she writes, became glittering hotels capable of offering a host of services and social events. Most were small in size and lacked desired amenities, a situation that fostered complaints about poor food, filthy accommodations, and indifferent service. Nevertheless, southerners continued to frequent them. The resorts gave southerners what they needed, especially a stimulating social environment for those in good health. Guests bathed in the soothing—albeit smelly—waters, gossiped, hiked, picnicked, attended masquerade balls, and observed jousting tournaments. The infirm enjoyed quieter days by dipping in the sulphur baths, napping, breathing fresh air, and dining on a bland diet.

Although the resorts were the preserve of the elite, classes and races interacted and sometimes clashed. Interlopers often were snubbed; "legitimate" guests represented the cream of southern society. In these settings far from home, patrons competed to establish their status. Individuals displayed their finest clothing and laid claim to the most desirable cabin, dining table, or dance partner. Patrons made every effort to uphold the boundaries of southern white society. As Lewis asserts, these Virginia springs "acted as a theater in which elite white southern society could perform in a contest for social status before a judging audience of their peers" (p. 213). Proprietors were usually middle-class, eager to please their clients and so ensure a full hotel each year. Servants and slaves served patrons but also took advantage of the situation by earning tips for performing extra services and sharing gossip about guests.

The Virginia resorts also became a setting where southern norms were challenged. Men and women mixed freely in social situations; hotels became public arenas for flirtations and courtship. Southerners boldly discussed their bodies and bodily functions and boasted about each pound of weight gained during a visit. By setting the social standards, women wielded unusual power. Slaves often accompanied their owners to the spas and sometimes also enjoyed the restorative waters to cure a physical ill.

Lewis's book has much to offer on an interesting subject. Her bibliography and footnotes reveal an impressive amount of research. However, less repetition and a livelier presentation would have made this even more readable. For those intrigued by the life of the South's elite, *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display* adds important insights into another of the region's social indulgences.

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Finding the West: Explorations with Lewis and Clark. By James P. Ronda. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001. Pp. xxii, 160. Maps. \$22.95.)

This book is an imaginative and thoughtful journey into the West of Lewis and Clark as well as into the mind of western American scholar James P. Ronda. Ronda succeeds in crafting a journey, both geographical and intellectual, which should appeal to a wide variety of historians, geographers, and anyone interested in how the West as we know it came to be. Ronda makes explicit reference to geographers such as Carl Sailer, J. K. Wright, and John Allen and their focus on assessing how people have perceived and imagined places in the past. In a series of seven chapters and in an evocative map portfolio, Ronda also leads us through the varied ways in which his own ideas about the West have evolved and matured. The result is a stimulating, elegantly penned collection of essays that reveal once again Ronda's master touch as teacher, writer, and storyteller.

At the outset, Ronda reminds us that Lewis and Clark brought many stories to their epic journey. Most significantly, they brought the expectations and world view of Thomas Jefferson. Ronda explores how Jefferson's ideas, both factual and fanciful, shaped the expectations of Lewis and Clark along every mile of their journey. Jefferson's perceptions concerning navigable rivers, drainage divides, Native Americans, and the potential for agrarian settlement helped define what the explorers saw and how they reported it along the way. More broadly, in another essay Ronda reconstructs Lewis and Clark's awareness of a larger tradition of North American and global explo-