

Unless breaking the silence is deemed in itself disrespectful, this edition is reliable and in good taste. Barrett's notes are all the help needed by anyone with the sketchiest knowledge of the Civil War, and the essay by Patterson's grandson, Edmund Brooks Patterson, is very helpful in putting the journal in focus.

Wabash College

Walter L. Fertig

*A Room for the Night: Hotels of the Old West.* By Richard A. Van Orman. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966. Pp. xiii, 162. Illustrations, notes, index. \$4.95.)

Van Orman's book is one of a growing company that sees the history of the West as something other than saddle leather and war paint. After all, most of everyone's time in the Old West, as elsewhere, was concerned with the ordinary business of living, and a large part of this was aimed at putting food on the table and a roof over one's head. For the part of western life that involved people on the move—and it was a goodly part—inns and hotels were of considerable importance in the matter of locating the night's bed and board. *A Room for the Night* tells the story of how this need was satisfied.

The book is based mainly upon printed sources, mostly books of traveler's recollections. The notes contain only four citations from manuscript collections, six from contemporary newspapers, and two from actual hotel registers. Of the numerous traveler's accounts used, a large proportion are those of foreigners, chiefly British. Since tourists, whether foreigners or easterners, would tend to remember and write about the most vivid episodes in their journeys, the use of many such sources probably explains the emphasis in the book on the bizarre and the extreme.

Most of the book is organized around the device of recapitulating topics region by region. This might have made for repetitiousness were it not for a stream of sprightly anecdotes which lend variety to the narrative. The style is clear and readable; and the last chapters, on hotel men and employees, hotel meals, and hotel life contain some delightful vignettes.

While providing an entertaining survey of an interesting aspect of western social history, there are one or two caveats about the book as history that should be mentioned. Much of what it implies to be western could as easily be identified with other sections of America in similar stages of development. The generalizations on western hospitality, for example, could as well hold for the Old South, the Middle West, and elsewhere, and appear to reflect more a part of general rural American values than something uniquely western. Moreover, the generalizations on the place of the hotel in western history are rather sweeping. While these hotels undoubtedly had unique features, the author seems to overstate the case when he says, "The history of the West would be incomplete without the dimension given to it by the Western hotel" (p. 139). Dimension implies something

basic—as the length, width, and breadth that enclose space; an historical dimension by analogy ought to be equally basic. To see hotels as basic in this sense to western history is to force the point. Embellishment, yes; dimension, hardly.

This book would have been strengthened by giving more attention to the economics of the business in the West, for instance, to the pursuit of the interesting suggestion that hotel building as well as railroad promoting helped bankrupt many western communities.

In sum, this is a pleasant, diverting book about a little-known side of western history. Its greatest appeal will be to buffs and any others having a general interest in the western scene.

Indiana University, Northwest Campus

William M. Neil

*This Almost Chosen People: Essays in the History of American Ideas.*

By Russel B. Nye. ([East Lansing]: Michigan State University Press, 1966. Pp. x, 374. Index. \$7.50.)

*This Almost Chosen People* consists of seven unrelated essays on ideas that "have given an ideological backbone to American thought and activity" (p. ix). The author has attempted "to sketch out some of the changes these basic cultural presuppositions have undergone from their beginnings to the present" (p. ix). In a truly impressive display of erudition accompanied by extremely helpful bibliographies the ideas pass in review before the reader. Out of many themes or concepts the author chose to examine the idea of progress, the American view of nationalism, the tradition of free enterprise, the sense of mission, the place of the individual, the view of nature, and the idea of equality. For the sake of brevity this reviewer has been inconsistent in condensing the titles of the essays, but he has only followed the example of the author who felt obliged to entitle Chapter V "America and the Individual" instead of "The American View of Individualism."

Unless one is a Curti or a Persons, he will find it difficult to comment meaningfully on the broad panorama of ideas and on the sources upon which the discussions are based. In a general way the author seems to be on surer ground in discussing the earlier expressions of the ideas. This seems to be an entirely reasonable result of his scholarly studies of the cultural history of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Again he seems to be more at home with the literary exponents of the ideas than with the business men and politicians who sometimes adopted them. Clearly the essayist was confronted with a monumental task of compression, synthesis, and generalization. Inevitably he exposes himself to the criticism of the specialist who has a particular interest in one of the ideas. This reviewer is inclined to the belief that the influence of the frontier has been over-emphasized particularly with respect to the idea of individualism. He would suggest that since attention is paid to Charles A. Beard's *The Myth of Rugged Individualism* some mention should have been made of Mody C. Boatright's *The Myth of Frontier Individualism*. On a related topic the reviewer recalls that there was a fairly strong con-