
Periodic personal views of various sections and cities effectively portray the growth of Illinois. In reading The Prairie State one has the pleasant sensation of watching Illinois develop in the same manner that time lapse photography portrays the blossoming of a rose. From the French and Indian period of the seventeenth century to the middle of the twentieth, the tight bud of civilization slowly develops into full flower with one graceful movement following another. Paul M. Angle, whose work is familiar to students of Illinois, has obviously labored long and hard in choosing the representative excerpts. The Preface indicates the editor's difficulty in selecting a geographically balanced assortment, for so many observers visited only Chicago. The Table of Contents is impressive in its diversity, but in the reading a down-stater will perhaps tire of the ever present Windy City. Northern and west central Illinois are also the recipients of repeated attention. In contrast, the east central Illinois prairie region is viewed only from the tracks of the Illinois Central Railroad and a 1927 essay on Edgar County. Perhaps available materials are limited, especially in the early period, for this was the last section of the state to be settled. But are there no sketches, memoirs, or letters viewing life in Champaign, Danville, or the surrounding countryside during the late nineteenth century?

The reader will encounter some familiar names, many of them noted Europeans, that would appear in any such travel anthology—Jacques Marquette, Morris Birkbeck, William Cullen Bryant, Harriet Martineau, Charles Dickens, and Anthony Trollope to mention a few. In addition, there are numerous less known works, such as Aurelia King's personal letter vividly describing the Chicago fire.

The almost three hundred year span of history can offer something interesting to any armchair historian. He will visualize the beauty of the virgin countryside as seen through the eyes of the explorers and early travelers, and he will shrink with the timidity of an easterner at the unsanitary conditions of primitive eating and sleeping facilities, as well as resent the close confinement with unwashed mankind in the interior of a crowded stage coach lurching over unimproved roads. He will undoubtedly be repelled by uncouth manners but warmed by friendly frontier hospitality, and he will be far less than human if he does not marvel at the energy and determination of all the people who helped make Illinois the state it is today.

From the neatly boxed exterior of the volume to the concluding essay extolling the virtues of the state, the book is an enjoyable experience. Each account is briefly introduced by the editor. In a few instances he is handicapped by a lack of information about the writer, but even when prefacing the work of a noted essayist, his remarks do not overshadow the source material.
For the most part the footnotes have the virtue of not intruding upon the reader's attention, but frequently there is the desire to know more about men, events, or places referred to in the text. The footnote format is radically different, and no explanation is given for this departure from tradition. The book is a contribution to the Illinois Sesquicentennial and should appeal to a wide audience.

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Duane Elbert


This attractive anthology gathered from the writings of Professor Thomas D. Clark is organized around three types of pioneering: "The Frontier West and South," "The Frontier of Social Change," and "The Frontier of Historical Research." Forty-six selections, drawn from fourteen of the historian's works, represent most of his varied writings over a period of almost thirty years. The most extensive are those taken first from The Emerging South (1961), then from The Southern Country Editor (1948), Pills, Petticoats and Plows (1944), The Rampaging Frontier (1939), and The South Since Appomattox (1967). The Introduction offers a pleasant biographical sketch and an explanation of the nature and purpose of the volume.

The arrangement of the book is casual, for notwithstanding the breadth of Clark's interests, his writing is concerned essentially with a single topic, the lives of his countrymen chiefly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. No maps or charts, no masses of statistical data, nothing of computerized quantification, no pseudoscientific jargon mar these delightful essays. Whether the author is recounting one of his colorful anecdotes, describing the landscape, analyzing the myths of southern tradition, or evaluating the changing patterns of race relations, his pages are infused with sympathetic understanding, humane and civilized values, and a genial humor. Readers familiar with Clark's work and those who know the man need not be told of those qualities, but others in search of them will find them in this book in abundance.

Three American Frontiers is a volume that may be opened at random and read with pleasure. Another such collection could be made without duplication, and admirers of Clark's historical writing may miss some of their favorite stories and other passages. But they may also be thankful to the University of Kentucky Press and editor Holman Hamilton for having made available this choice harvest from the work of a distinguished scholar.

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Harry R. Stevens