

laborers in a California gold field. These and the other photographs—of immigrant families resting by their covered wagons, a barn raising in Minnesota, cowboys dancing with each other, a lynching in Colorado—are stark and striking evidence of the frontier spirit, daring, enterprise, and hope that has become a part of the American tradition.

*National Archives, Washington, D. C.*

Herman J. Viola

*Frontier Capitalist: The Life of John Evans.* By Harry E. Kelsey, Jr. ([Denver]: State Historical Society of Colorado and the Pruett Publishing Company, 1969. Pp. xiv, 371. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$12.50; deluxe edition, \$15.00.)

The story of Governor John Evans is well known in western history. In many respects the most interesting of all the famous names connected with Colorado Territory, Evans was a curious combination of dreamer, promoter, and man of action. In an age of political spoils-men and unscrupulous businessmen Evans was an anomaly, notwithstanding his occasional surrender to expediency and vindictiveness. This biography by Harry E. Kelsey, which supplements and, in many ways, revises the early study (1924) by Edgar C. McMechen, is welcome.

A physician, founder of universities, humanitarian, businessman, railroad builder, and politician, Evans attained prominence in three states—Indiana, Illinois, and Colorado. He combined a religious commitment to the betterment of society with an ambition for worldly place and fortune. He launched a successful movement for the establishment of the first mental hospital in Indiana, took a leading part in the founding of Northwestern University, invested in real estate in both Chicago and Evanston, and became the director of the Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad, foreshadowing his great railroad achievements in Colorado.

Throughout his life Evans had an amazing ability to shut out the immediate past and move to new adventure. In 1862 he journeyed from Chicago to Colorado where he served as territorial governor and where he made a fortune in real estate and railroad construction. Although his term as chief executive was short lived and complicated by his handling of Indian relations, his achievements were relatively impressive considering the vacillating governmental policies and meddling Indian Bureau politicians. The author concludes that Evans was removed from office in 1865 because of political pressure in Washington rather than from his inability to handle the Indian prob-

lem. Although Evans remained active in Republican party politics, his primary concerns were the economic development of Colorado and the attainment of economic self-interests. His business ability and prestige were determining factors in bringing railroad facilities to the state. Evans organized and built three main railroads, including the Denver and New Orleans that eventually gave Colorado an outlet to the Gulf of Mexico. His boundless energy also found expression in the building of the University of Denver and in the creation of the Denver Board of Trade.

*Frontier Capitalist* makes especially useful contributions toward interpreting the nineteenth century business rationale and filling some of the enormous lacunae in our knowledge of the economic growth and development of the American West. The book is also a worthwhile study of capitalism at work on the frontier. It reveals how, through the ambitious dreams of one man and the instrumentality of agents, capital, and the products of capital investments—especially railroads—contributed measurably toward booming Denver, a small mountain town, into a city of metropolitan proportions during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Kelsey has written a critical but not unsympathetic biography. He develops his subject by exposition rather than by interpretation, and he is objective in presentation, no easy task in some of the complicated and controversial events he encounters. Not all, however, will agree with the author that Evans refrained from the manipulation of men and money in the advancement of his schemes for wealth or that he received the appointment as territorial governor because of his prominence in the Republican party and widespread experience in politics prior to 1862. Nevertheless, none will deny that Evans was worthy of a new biography, and most will agree that this study is in most respects a thoroughly satisfactory account.

Originally written as a doctoral dissertation, Kelsey's volume contains copious footnotes and an impressive bibliography which are evidences of thorough research. However, the writing is frequently heavy and pedantic as insignificant details sometimes interrupt the flow of events. Had the author limited the requirement to document virtually every statement, the study could have been turned into an exciting biography. The footnotes—totaling 1,442—which in this volume should have been at the bottom of the page, have been relegated to the back of the book. Although this format is economical for the publisher, it definitely annoys the reader.