



SUMMER 2006

LOS ANGELES CORRAL

NUMBER 244



Sketch of Fremont. Illustration from a book about Fremont published in 1850's. Courtesy of the Museum of Local History.

From History & Biography to Hagiography: John C. Fremont & the People Who Have Written About Him *by Abraham Hoffman*

An earlier version of this article was presented at the August 10, 2005 meeting of the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners.

More than 115 years after the death of John C. Fremont, the life of this extraordinary man continues to fascinate people. Biographies, movies, a television miniseries,

monographs, and countless articles provide a major cottage industry for Fremont's life and times. Studies of Fremont's contemporaries—friends and enemies alike—keep the flamboyant Fremont in the public eye. Fremont place names dot the map of North America. Locally, Los Angeles has Fremont
(Continued on page 3)

THE BRANDING IRON
The Westerners Los Angeles Corral
Published Quarterly in
Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter
OFFICERS 2006

TRAIL BOSSES

KENNETH E. PAULEY.....*Sheriff*
2238 W. 37th St., San Pedro, CA 90732-4506

DEE DEE RUHLOW.....*Deputy Sheriff*
2705 No. Myers St., Burbank, CA 91504-2130

FROYLAN TISCAREÑO*Registrar of*
.....*Marks & Brands*
3 Liquid Amber Irvine, CA 92620

TED DALTON..... *Keeper of the Chips*
322 Blue Cavern Pt. Long Beach, CA 90803-6813

RONALD C. WOOLSEY.....*Publications Editor*
395 Cliff Dr. #100, Pasadena, CA 91107

THOMAS R. TEFFT.....*Assist. Publications Editor*
47719 Date Palm Court, Palm Desert, CA 92260

PAUL RIPPENS.....*Past Sheriff Trail Boss*

GARY TURNER.....*Past Sheriff Trail Boss*

APPOINTED OFFICERS

MICHAEL PATRIS.....*Wrangler Boss*

PATRICIA ADLER INGRAM.....*Membership*

FROYLAN TISCAREÑO.....*Daguerreotype*
.....*Wrangler*

ART COBERY.....*Magic Lantern Wrangler*

GARY D. TURNER.....*Historian/Representative*

WILLIAM DAVIS.....*Librarian*

ERIC A. NELSON..... *Editor, Brand Book 23*

Address for Exchanges & Material Submitted for Publication:

The Publications Editor, Ronald C. Woolsey
395 Cliff Dr. #100, Pasadena, CA 91107

The Branding Iron solicits articles of 2,500 words or less, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions from members and friends welcomed. Copyright © 2006 by the Westerners Los Angeles Corral Publication Design & Layout by Katherine Tolford

EDITOR'S CORNER

We found Abe Hoffman's article on John Charles Fremont well written and interesting. Abe starts by listing all the places named Fremont in the United States. Thank goodness for the Internet because without it, Abe would have taken months just to dig that information out for our benefit. Next Abe gives us a standard biography of Fremont that he admits anyone can get from an encyclopedia. Finally we get to the "is Fremont a hero or a fraud" section where Abe has put his primary focus. We found this section provocative. Abe does a great job of research to describe the many, many publications that portrayed Fremont either as a hero or a fraud. Fraud is too strong a word; maybe showman or promoter might be better. Maybe Fremont was all those things. Anyone who accomplished as much as he did and was involved in so many key moments in history probably was a mixture of hero and charlatan. Unfortunately, most historians have been on one side or the other, with many in recent years leaning in the direction of charlatan. Witness recent treatments of Jefferson. We like our heroes to be pure and straight up the way we like our whiskey.

As for us, if the Pathfinder was good enough for Kit Carson, he will always be a hero in our eyes.

Tom Tefft
TRTEfft@aol.com
38771 Nyasa Dr.
Palm Desert, CA 92211

Ron Woolsey
rcwoolsey@yahoo.com
395 Cliff Dr. #100,
Pasadena, CA 91107

High School and the Fremont branch of the public library system, and Fremont Place is a fashionable address. Fremont Avenue is a major street in Alhambra. There are elementary, junior high, and senior high schools named for him in Oxnard, Bakersfield, Oakland, Santa Rosa, Corcoran, and Fowler in California, these only a bare beginning of a lengthy list. Mariposa, where Fremont owned a rancho, has the John C. Fremont Healthcare District. The National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, has the John C. Fremont Chapter in Carson City, Nevada. Las Vegas hosts the John C. Fremont Chapter, Association of the U.S. Army. One alternate name for San Fernando Pass over which Interstate 5 goes north is Fremont Pass.

There is a Fremont Island in Utah's Great Salt Lake, and a Lake Fremont and a Mount Fremont in Wyoming. There are the towns of Fremont, Wisconsin, population 500 or so; Fremont, California, population 131,000; and Fremont, Nebraska, this last town hosting an annual "John C. Fremont Days." Its web site shows a man and a woman in period costume, reenacting John and his wife Jessie. In all, over a hundred place names preserve Fremont's name throughout the West. Fremont Peak State Park in San Benito County was established in 1934, and the Board of Geographic Names changed the name of Gabilan Peak to Fremont Peak in 1960. However, Fremont Canyon in Orange County was named for Fremont Smith, a rancher, sort of the exception to the Fremont naming rule. In some cases Fremont's luster has faded. Yolo County was once Fremont County, and Fremont Canyon there was changed to Sierra Canyon. Nevertheless, the power of the Fremont name has proved enduring.

The visual arts have captured a likeness of Fremont in the actors who have portrayed him. In *Winners of the West*, a 1921 silent film starring rodeo champion Art Acord, actor Burton Low played Fremont. In 1936 Ray Corrigan was Fremont in *The Vigilantes Are Coming*, a Republic serial that paid considerable homage to Zorro. Corrigan's Fremont

was at best an incidental character who appeared in three of the serial's twelve chapters. Fremont was elevated to a major character in *Kit Carson*, a 1940 action-packed film that paired Dana Andrews, in his first major role, as Fremont, with Jon Hall as Kit Carson. Carson guided Fremont across the continent to win California for the United States in a wildly inaccurate rendition of history. Fremont made a brief appearance in the 1952 film *California Conquest*, with character actor George Eldredge playing the part.

Fremont the man managed briefly to escape Hollywood distortions in 1960 when NBC presented *Destiny, West!* The program starred Jeffrey Hunter as Fremont. The one-hour docudrama was produced in association with *American Heritage* magazine and had a respectability lacking in the usual movie treatments. Fremont was again teamed with Kit Carson in *Kit Carson and the Mountain Men*, a 1977 movie in which Robert Reed departed from his Brady Bunch image to play Fremont. But the major portrayal of Fremont came with the 1986 TV miniseries *Dream West*, with Richard Chamberlain as Fremont. Based on the best-selling novel by David Nevin, the presentation scored high in the ratings and brought the image of Fremont to a generation of Americans who at best recalled him as someone in their history textbooks. But television wasn't through with Fremont. In 2005 Steven Spielberg twelve-hour miniseries, *Into the West*, gave Fremont, as portrayed by actor Robert Maloney, a cameo appearance.

Apart from George Armstrong Custer, who is in a class by himself, few military men of the 19th century have had as much attention paid to them as John Charles Fremont. He would appear to have more lives than a cat when it comes to resurrecting him in movies and television. However, Hollywood portrayals are notorious for distorting the historical record and creating perceptions of history for a public too busy to read, much less critically evaluate the record of the printed word as presented by journalists, biographers, and historians.

If we stick to the facts and try to avoid

interpretations for the moment, the outline of Fremont's life shows a man who was ambitious and fortunate, someone at the vortex of historical currents. Born in 1813, a graduate of West Point, Fremont eloped with Jessie Benton, the daughter of Thomas Hart Benton, United States senator from Missouri. The marriage lasted half a century, during which time a totally devoted Jessie served as editor of his manuscripts while his father-in-law bailed him out of trouble. In the early 1840s Fremont, as an officer in the Topographical Engineers, embarked on a series of expeditions across the North American continent, arriving in California for the first time in 1844. On his second expedition he became embroiled in disputes with the governor of California and subsequently played a role in the Bear Flag Revolt of June 1846. News arrived shortly afterward that Mexico and the United States were at war. When the Californios rebelled against the United States occupation force later in the year, Fremont managed to patch things up with Andres Pico, signing the Cahuenga Capitulation that ended the fighting in California, though the war continued for another year. At this moment of success Fremont chose to side with Commodore Robert Stockton against General Stephen Kearny over who was in charge of ruling California. Although Kearny gave him plenty of warning, Fremont persisted in his insubordination and was court-martialed and found guilty. Luckily for him, President James K. Polk forgave Fremont for his transgressions, though Fremont left military service.

The discovery of gold in January 1848 transformed California. Within a year nearly 100,000 potential prospectors converged on the former Mexican province. Fremont had purchased the Mariposa Rancho and had to use political connections to get rid of squatters and to secure a clear title to the land. He also was very active in politics, getting appointed to the short-term position of United States senator from the new state of California. In 1856 the newly formed Republican Party nominated him for President, but he lost to the Democratic can-

didate, James Buchanan. When the Civil War began he was recalled to service and placed in charge of the border state of Missouri. On his own initiative Fremont abolished slavery there, an act far ahead of President Abraham Lincoln's views or intentions at the time. Lincoln removed Fremont and assigned him to a lesser position. Fremont found the post unacceptable and resigned.

Fremont's later years amounted to a gradual downhill slide. He became involved in the construction of a railroad to the Pacific, but financial irregularities in the company brought him criticism as well as costing him his fortune. He managed to rebuild his career somewhat by serving as governor of the Arizona Territory from 1878 to 1883, but his last years were spent essentially in poverty. A federal pension awarded to him in 1890 did him little good as he died later that year. He attempted to write his memoirs, but historians consider the result a disappointment. The book is labeled "Volume One" but there would be no Volume Two, and the book was cobbled together from previously published writings and offered nothing new.

Such is the biographical sketch of John C. Fremont, a summary of his life that can conveniently be accessed in an encyclopedia, the online edition of the Columbia Encyclopedia being an example. Almost forty years after Fremont's death, Allan Nevins would bring him back to public attention in a major biographical study of the Pathmarker, as Nevins called him. Before Nevins and other biographers can be addressed, however, a few words are necessary regarding the people who would buy the books written about Fremont.

During Fremont's military career he submitted reports of his expeditions of the West to the federal government. His wife Jessie edited these reports for public consumption, polishing the prose and turning the reports into a compelling narrative that found a wide audience. Reprints and annotated editions of these works continue to attract readers. Certainly one way to make it into the

historical record as well as the more vague area of popular memory is to write a lot. Doing so gives biographers and researchers the material necessary to do their own writing. History and memory can be very selective, and without the raw material, research can't be done, and the participant becomes soon forgotten. It also helps if the participant was controversial, since drama sells more than mundane routine.

It should be noted, however, that there are many reading audiences, and in the case of someone such as Fremont, there are different writers to serve those audiences. Audiences include the juvenile or young adult audience, the popular readership, and the specialist. Fremont has attracted attention in all three of these audiences, and increasingly so in recent years..

Since 1986 at least five biographies on Fremont have been published for a juvenile or young adult audience. These categories presumably include children between ages eight to eighteen. The books vary quite a bit in vocabulary level, though the Harry Potter books have demonstrated that kids can read very long books with big words and complex plots if they really want to. In the juvenile and young adult categories we have Fredrika Shumway Smith, *Fremont: Soldier, Explorer, Statesman* (1986); Edward D. Harris, *John Charles Fremont and the Great Western Reconnaissance* (1990); William R. Sanford and Carl R. Green, *John C. Fremont: Soldier and Pathfinder* (1996), Hal Marcovitz, *John C. Fremont: Pathfinder of the West* (2002); and D.M. Souza, *John C. Fremont* (2004). Apart from variations in length and vocabulary level, these books share the characteristics of authors who are not doing original research and who are essentially rehashing the same often-told stories about Fremont. The similarity of these adult level books can be seen in their interchangeable titles. Nevertheless, the subject of Fremont would seem to have a continuing market value in children's books.

While the distinction between children's and adult books is obvious, the line blurs when determining whether a book written at the adult level will appeal to a general read-



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1838. The present U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was formed from several Army groups including the Corps of Topographical Engineers. Courtesy of the Museum of Local History.

er, a specialist, or both. Even the term "specialist" requires qualification. The term may apply to an academic historian, but it has equal merit for a non-academic writer who happens to be a buff, a person whose avocation is a deep and sometimes fanatical interest in a subject. Organizations such as the Westerners, the Western Writers of America, and the Civil War Round Tables have many members who could teach academic scholars a thing or two about a historical topic.

The marketability of a book plays a major role in book publishing. A book by an academic historian, published by a university press and intended for specialists, meaning a limited audience, would be lucky to sell 2,000 copies, and a large part of that number would be to college libraries. The hallmarks of a scholarly book are notes, bibliography, and index, and the bibliography would include unpublished sources such as archives or manuscript collections. However, these criteria may also be found in books intended for a general readership. In fact, the difference between a work of history aimed at a general audience and one meant for specialists may lie in the quality of

the writing. I hope everyone has enjoyed the discovery of a well-written book that is thoroughly researched. Having established rather wide parameters for determining the different audiences for books, it is time to focus on how Fremont has been written about for those audiences. The first biographies written about Fremont appeared in 1856, the year he ran for President. No less than three campaign biographies extolled Fremont's career and abilities. They were *A Memoir of the Life and Public Service of John Charles Fremont*, by John Bigelow; *Life, Explorations and Public Services of John Charles Fremont*, by Charles Wentworth Upham; and *The Life of Colonel J.C. Fremont*, by S.M. Smucker. Of this trio of biographers, John Bigelow was a lawyer, diplomat, newspaper editor, and author, perhaps best known for his work as U.S. ambassador to France during the Civil War. He edited a ten-volume edition of the writings of Benjamin Franklin and wrote a biography about him. Charles Wentworth Upham held numerous political offices at local, state, and national levels in Massachusetts. Smucker, whose works appeared under various spellings of his name, was a prolific author who wrote on a wide variety of topics ranging from biographies of Catherine the Great and Nicholas I of Russia to a history of the Civil War.

None of these men could be considered historians in the modern sense of the word. As founders of the Republican Party, they wrote biographies about the 1856 candidate that put him in the best possible light. Their work has no more value today as biography than books published to persuade voters to cast their ballots for modern presidential candidates. Such books are quickly placed in remainder bins or gather dust on the shelves of the larger libraries. Smaller libraries discard them to make room for newer books.

Thirty years after Fremont's failed candidacy he was accorded quite a different view than the adulatory campaign biographies had given him. The movers and shakers of California politics and economic development had spent years building liter-

al and metaphorical monuments to themselves. They glorified the Bear Flat Revolt as a patriotic endeavor, the conquest of California as an inevitable prize of manifest destiny, and the prose and poetry of Bret Harte as nostalgic reminders of their successes. Dissent from this interpretation of history and history-makers came from an unusual source. Josiah Royce was a native-born Californian who in the 1880s was beginning a notable career as historian, essayist, and philosopher. In 1884 he was invited to write a history of California, or at least its most dramatic era. His book, *California, from the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee*, published in 1886, critically appraised the historical events that participants and their descendants had glossed over.

In doing the research for his book, Royce paid a visit to Fremont in 1884 and asked him about his role in the Bear Flag Revolt. Royce had done his homework, and it became obvious that Fremont was being untruthful in his recollection of events.

I still cherished, foolishly enough...a hope that, now all his official secrets were out, and his road in that direction cut off, he might have some revelations to make, that would show Benton's plans more clearly, or implicate Gillespie, or that he might furnish documents to support his theory," recalled Royce. "But no; cordial he still was, dignified and charming as ever, and the good Jessie sat calm and sunny and benevolent in her easy chair; but alas, he lied, lied unmistakably, unmitigatedly, hopelessly. And that was his only defense.

Royce's book, needless to say, did not win a friendly audience in California or from anyone who still preferred a heroic image of Fremont. Even historian Robert G. Cleland, in his introduction to the 1948 reprint edition of the book, felt that Royce's unflattering portrait of Fremont went too far in too much detail. According to Cleland, Royce "found a youthful and all too obvious satisfaction in exposing the errors of his adversary and top-



John C. Fremont. Courtesy of the Museum of Local History.

pling him from his shining pedestal. Nevertheless, Royce put future Fremont biographers on notice that their subject had feet of clay.

The first major and modern biography of Fremont, in fact the first biography since the campaign biographies of 1856, appeared in 1928 when Allan Nevins wrote *Fremont: The West's Greatest Adventurer* in two volumes. At the time, Nevins became a professor at Columbia University and embarked on a highly successful career as the author of some fifty books, including a multi-volume history of the Civil War; founder of Columbia's oral history program; and an academic historian who enjoyed a wide reading audience. Late in his career he became a senior research associate at the Huntington Library. Nevins's literary suc-

cess may be compared to one of the best-selling historians of our own time, Stephen Ambrose. However, like Ambrose, and like Fremont, check the feet for clay. In 1939 Nevins prepared a revised edition to be published under the title *Fremont: Pathmarker of the West*, a sort of demotion from "pathfinder." This edition appeared in one volume with "much fresh material."

The "fresh material" included information Nevins obtained from an article submitted to the *American Historical Review* by Fred Harrington, a young historian at the University of Wisconsin whose dissertation had dealt with the politics of the 1850s. At the time the *American Historical Review's* editor was at Columbia, as was Dumas Malone, a member of the magazine's board of editors. Schuyler and Malone were aware of



Fremont's Flag. Jessie's handmade flag is on display at the Museum of the American West in Los Angeles, California.

Nevins's reworking of his Fremont book and asked him to comment on Harrington's article. Nevins recommended rejecting the article, but he found the manuscript useful, perhaps a little too useful. He incorporated sentences and paragraphs into his revision of the Fremont biography. When the book was published in 1939, Nevins was vulnerable to charges of plagiarism. To avoid a public airing of what could have been a major embarrassment for Nevins, the *American Historical Review* published a condensed version of Harrington's article in its July 1939 issue. An editorial note appended to the article stated that Nevins had thought the original version of Harrington's article had been published. This was an odd excuse, given that Nevins had called for rejecting the article.

In a recent article dealing with ethics in the historical profession, Ralph Luker commented, "By publishing Harrington's foreshortened article, Nevins's colleagues at Columbia both exposed his plagiarism to those who cared to look and protected him from any consequence of exposure." Luker attributed the affair to people who "were white, male, elite, and...well beyond suspicion of professional malpractice." The half-confession apparently worked, for Nevins continued to enjoy a popular reputation as a historian whose books appealed to a general readership. In 1955 he updated *Fremont: Pathmarker of the West*, this time in a two-vol-

ume version and with a forty-page final chapter on "Some New Light on Fremont." This version was reprinted in 1961. Nevins noted that as to Fremont's many controversial actions, "I have made an effort to state the facts accurately and impartially." But he still saw Fremont in a positive light.

Meanwhile, other writers were finding Fremont a topic with popular appeal, and his wife Jessie also found an interested audience. Irving Stone, best known for his biographical novels about Vincent Van Gogh, Michelangelo, Mary Todd Lincoln, and Rachel Jackson, wrote *Immortal Wife: The Biographical Novel of Jessie Benton Fremont* (1944), which inevitably included John as her husband. Stone demonstrated his research skills in a note on sources at the end of the novel and, while frankly admitting, "Much of the dialogue had to be reimagined," and that in a couple of instances he created scenes where there was no documentation for them, and fudged a few dates, he stated, "Aside from these technical liberties the book is true." He cited sources in the Bancroft Library and the Huntington Library, published narratives, and secondary works. In effect, Stone gave more evidence of research than is to be found in many biographies.

Around the same time that Stone wrote *Immortal Wife*, he produced a nonfiction book, *They Also Ran: the Story of the Men Who*

Were Defeated for the Presidency (1943, 1945), which included a chapter on Fremont. Unlike *Immortal Wife*, he based his research largely on secondary sources, among them Nevins's 1939 biography. This book was clearly intended for a popular audience and essentially summarized Fremont's life with a focus on the 1856 presidential campaign. In 1956, under contract with Doubleday to write a book for its Mainstream of America series, Stone wrote *Men to Match My Mountains: The Opening of the Far West, 1840-1900*. Although intended for a general audience and lacking footnotes, and deliberately written as a compelling narrative, Stone provided a bibliography and sources, chiefly contemporary accounts, memoirs, and secondary studies. Fremont plays a prominent role in Stone's account of the conquest of California and is clearly one of the men who matched the mountains. The book also demonstrates that Stone could be as masterful at writing popular history as he was in writing historical fiction.

Incidentally, Stone's popular novel about Jessie Benton Fremont was not her first appearance in print. Two major biographies of Fremont's wife have been published. Catherine Coffin Phillips, *Jessie Benton Fremont: A Woman Who Made History*, was first published in 1935 and reprinted as recently as 1995. A recent effort is Pamela Herr, *Jessie Benton Fremont: A Biography* (1987), a model of research in use of manuscript collections in numerous libraries and judicious use of secondary sources, and with 25 pages of endnotes. It's a book meant for specialists

and general readers alike.

Allan Nevins's book and its subsequent editions stood for decades as the standard biography for Fremont. Not that he had said the last word; as Pamela Herr noted, previously undiscovered or unnoticed correspondence might turn up that could provide fresh perspectives and interpretations. Also, the lure of popular historical writing and the money to be made from it made Fremont a popular figure. Specialists could carp at books such as Ferol Egan's *Fremont: Explorer for a Restless Nation* (1977), but Egan focused on Fremont as an explorer rather than write a full biography. His book was well written, based mainly on published sources and meant for a wider audience than academics who wanted something new.

Other historians dealt with parts of Fremont's life that figured in their own studies of the West. Examples include William Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (1959), examining Fremont's participation as an officer in the Topographical Engineers; Bernard De Voto, *The Year of Decision 1846* (1942), critically evaluating Fremont's actions in California in

1846; and Neal Harlow, *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846-1850* (1982), offering another view of Fremont's role in the Bear Flag Revolt. In fact, any important work on California, Western exploration, and many other topics must deal at some point with the fact that Fremont was a featured if not starring actor in their drama. Front and center,



Jessie Benton Fremont. Courtesy of The Museum of Local History.

he was idolized by an admiring public, a celebrity who had earned his iconic status by being in places that most easterners could only dream about. Controversial in his own time, with his own list of political enemies, Fremont left a legacy for future historians and biographers who would judge it as golden or gilded.

The greatest challenge to Fremont's reputation came with the publication of Andrew Rolle, *John Charles Fremont: Character as Destiny* (1991). More than a century had passed since Josiah Royce had called Fremont a liar. Rolle, long-time professor at Occidental College who has rounded out his career as a senior research associate at the Huntington Library, is the author of numerous books dealing with California and Western history. He has also published articles in the field of psychohistory, a relatively new area of scholarship not without its critics. Rolle explored Fremont's life using psychohistorical techniques, examining the often contradictory and just plain bad decisions Fremont seemed prone to make at crucial points in his life. Rolle knew his interpretation of Fremont's personality would attract critics, and he let the profession know what was coming in articles in *Pacific Historical Review*, *California History*, and *Southern California Quarterly*. He also presented his views to the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners in 1991.

In the preface to his book, Rolle tossed down his academic glove.

Whether my approach will convince general readers as well as historians and psychoanalysts is another matter. Opposition to such a biographical technique usually divides into that voiced by critics who object to any sort of psychological inquiry and that of those for whom interpretations of a person's life are either never analytic enough or too sweeping. Often the quotations of contemporaries tell the story best. By using their evaluations, readers can make up their own minds about key controversies in Fremont's life.

Rolle raised many questions about

Fremont's rashness and penchant for spoiling his own successes, in effect creating an image that contrasted with the heroic explorer. Whether that image would persuade the American people to reevaluate Fremont's place in history, however, was another matter. In the meantime, just prior to Rolle's research into Fremont's character, another historical fiction about Fremont was published. In 1983 David Nevin (no connection to Allan Nevins) finished *Dream West*, a novel about John and Jessie Fremont. In the preface to the book Nevin stated he had spent more than eight years in its research and writing, and he credited various repositories, including the Library of Congress, the Huntington Library, the Bancroft Library, and the Southwest Museum for use of Fremont materials. In an interview Nevin gave at the time the book was published, he said that when he started the project he intended it to be a biography but decided he could make it more dramatic if he wrote it as historical fiction. The possibility of bigger royalties from a best-selling novel may have played a part in this decision.

The book did well financially, and Nevin also sold the television rights to make *Dream West* as a miniseries. Richard Chamberlain, ruler of the miniseries genre (*Thornbirds*, *Shogun*) played Fremont, and Alice Krige, now seen as Maddie on the HBO series *Deadwood*, played Jessie. In 2005 a new edition of *Dream West* was published. In the public mind, Fremont was again the bold adventurer, not the tortured Hamlet of psychohistory.

The new century sees no pause in books about Fremont. In 2000 David Roberts, *A Newer World: Kit Carson, John C. Fremont, and the Claiming of the American West* was published to generally good reviews. Despite the subtitle, Roberts did not write a dual biography but instead focused on Carson and Fremont on their western expeditions, in effect expanding on Ferol Egan's book, but also including much more on Native Americans. Roberts relied on published primary sources and secondary works and, as Pamela Herr noted in her review of the book,

"While historians will find little new in his account of selected episodes in the lives of John C. Fremont and Kit Carson, the book should make interesting reading for those unacquainted with the two men." Once again, an author aimed for a wider audience than the historians who were already acquainted with Fremont.

In 2002, a most eccentric biography about Fremont was published. This was Midge Sherwood, *Fremont: Eagle of the West*. It is often said that researchers stand upon the shoulders of those who came before, but Sherwood ignored most of the previous Fremont biographers. Andrew Rolle, Pamela Herr, and Ferol Egan get no mention, and Allan Nevins and William Goetzmann get a bare nod from Sherwood. Instead, she argues the best published sources for Fremont's career were the three biographies written during Fremont's campaign for the presidency in 1856—the books by Bigelow, Upham, and Smucker.

Sherwood blithely ignored the inescapable and obvious fact the three campaign biographies were just that—campaign biographies that put Fremont in the best possible light. One would hardly expect them to do otherwise. Yet Sherwood finds the work of these three men more valuable than research subsequently done by generations of scholars who dare to reach conclusions about Fremont that differ from her own views. Sherwood's fourth major published source is Fremont's *Memoirs*. She invokes this book so often the impression is given she is channeling Fremont. Some examples: Chapter II, 28 consecutive endnotes citing *Memoirs*, covering the last ten pages of a 31-page chapter. Of fifty endnotes in that chapter, 38 come from the *Memoirs*. In Chapter III, of 63 endnotes, 59 are from *Memoirs*; in Chapter VIII, ten of eleven. Similar heavy use is made of the Bigelow, Upham, and Smucker volumes, though in fairness Sherwood also utilized important source materials from Fremont's court-martial proceedings, government documents, and materials at the Huntington Library. Sherwood offers no evidence of consulting manuscript collections at the Bancroft

Library.

Sherwood is determined to exonerate Fremont of all charges ever made against him of insubordination and incompetence. She correctly notes that the alleged issue of illegitimacy has no bearing on his accomplishments, though Rolle has argued the stigma did influence his ambitions. Rather surprisingly, Sherwood ended her biography with Fremont's defeat in the 1856 election. Fremont's controversial action in freeing the slaves in the Department of the West in August 1861, his dismissal from his post, and the last three decades of his life are summarized in less than two pages. It would seem that cutting out the last thirty-four years of someone's life makes for a less than complete biography, even if what has gone before runs to more than 500 pages.

Rather than a biography, Sherwood wrote a hagiography, of interest mainly to true believers who persist in seeing Fremont as an unalloyed hero regardless of what modern research and publication conclude about him. More skeptical readers will note with caution Sherwood's insistence on writing declarative sentences as facts, which they are not. To assert, as she does, that "It would be sheer historical delinquency to neglect the reading of these early Fremont biographies" implies that researchers did not or are not examining the books for what they are worth. This is simply untrue as authors have used these sources judiciously for whatever value they may offer.

Sherwood also had the poor luck to have her book published in the same year as Tom Chaffin, *Pathfinder: John Charles Fremont and the Course of American Empire* (2002). Vernon Volpe, reviewing Chaffin's book in the *Journal of American History*, observed, "Offering little that is new or controversial, the work does indicate the status of Fremont studies. Fremont now has weathered the historiographical storm; little remains hiding in the closet." Chaffin was less concerned about Fremont's private life than with the significance of his explorations and their effect on America's expansionist goals, a view that Volpe says "warrants scholarly

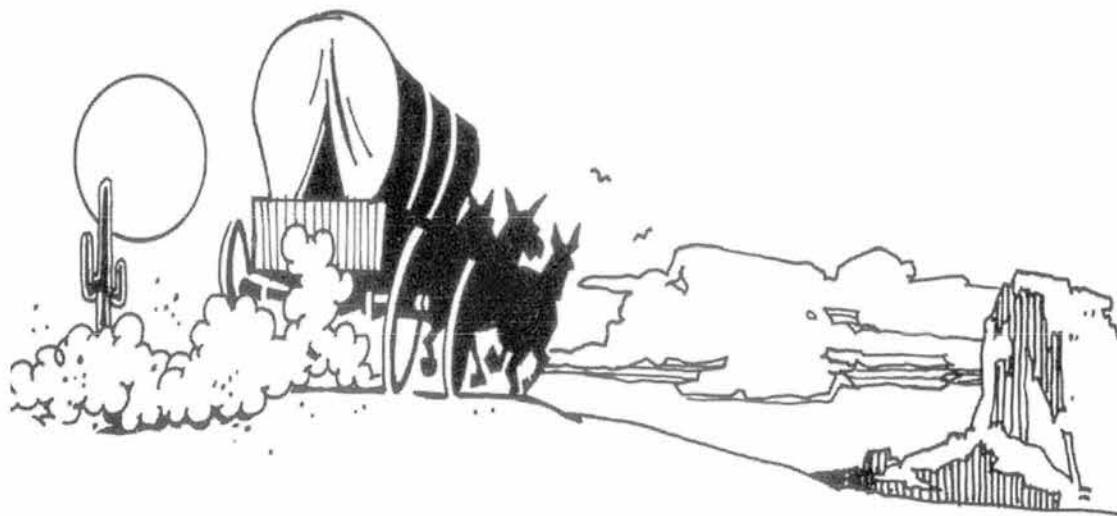
attention." James O'Donnell, writing in *The Historian*, says, "The author deserves our thanks for returning the Pathfinder to the public, for Fremont was instrumental in shaping both the image and the information fundamental to understanding the prescientific West." Other reviews also offered positive comments.

Curiously, reviews of Sherwood's book are difficult to come by. More than difficult: impossible. At least four years have passed since her book was published, but I have not succeeded in locating any reviews. Correspondence with editors at *Southern California Quarterly*, *California History*, and other journals revealed that they had not received a review copy. In fact, the only magazine that seemed to have a review was *California Historian*, the publication of the California Conference of Historical Societies. What at first glance appeared to be a review, however, turned out to be a full-page infomercial for Sherwood's book. I thought this odd and wrote to the magazine's editor about it but did not receive a response. Letters to the magazine's board of editors

resulted in a similar lack of response except from Daryl Morrison, head of Special Collections at the U.C. Davis Library. She admitted she had not been directly involved with the magazine for several years and had little connection with it. One is left with the conclusion that *California Historian's* board of editors don't edit very much, and that Sherwood chose to avoid having the book reviewed but instead to advertise it through friendly venues where she had some control over its marketing. *Caveat emptor*.

And so, more than a century and a half after Fremont burst upon the American scene, he still challenges biographers to figure out that essential but elusive ingredient that separates him from other men who fought Indians, endured desert heat and mountain cold, and either found paths or marked them across the West. Specialists and academics may insist there is nothing much new or left to say about him, but as long as that general audience continues to find him fascinating, there will be new biographies written about him.

Note: This list does not include all of the books



Selected Bibliography

mentioned in the article, and it does include books and other publications not mentioned. Anyone interested in pursuing Fremont historiography should consult the sources listed in major studies of Fremont. Also, Fremont's published reports are not included.

Biographies:

Chaffin, Tom. *Pathfinder: John Charles Fremont and the Course of America's Empire* (2002).

Egan, Ferol. *Fremont: Explorer for a Restless Nation* (1977).

Eyre, Alice. *The Famous Fremonts and Their America* (1961).

Herr, Pamela. *Jessie Benton Fremont: A Biography* (1987).

Luker, Ralph E. "Clio's Malpractice; or, What's a Fallen Girl to Do?" *History News Network*, March 7, 2005, <http://hnn.us/articles/1696.html>.

Nevins, Allan. *Fremont: Pathmarker of the West*, 2 vols. (1955 ed.).

Roberts, David. *A Newer World: Kit Carson, John C. Fremont, and the Claiming of the American West* (2000).

Robinson, Forrest G. "Josiah Royce's California." *Western American Literature*, 36 (Winter 2002), 343-358.

Rolle, Andrew. *John Charles Fremont: Character as Destiny* (1991).

_____. "Exploring an Explorer: California, Psychohistory, and John C. Fremont." *Southern California Quarterly*, 86 (Spring

1994), 85-98.

Sherwood, Midge. *Fremont: Eagle of the West* (2002).

Some Examples of Studies that Include Fremont:

Bleser, Carol.K., and Gordon, Lesley J. *Intimate Strategies of the Civil War: Military Commanders and Their Wives* (2001).

De Voto, Bernard. *The Year of Decision 1846* (1942).

Gerteis, Louis S. *Civil War St. Louis* (2001).

Goetzmann, William. *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (1959).

Harlow, Neal. *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846-1850* (1982).

Johnson, Kenneth M. *The Fremont Court Martial* (1968).

Pitt, Leonard. *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1900* (1966).

Rolle, Andrew. "Two Explorers on the Trail to California: Carvalho and Fremont." *California History*, 73 (Fall 1994), 182-187.

Royce, Josiah. *California: From the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco, a Study of American Character* (1948 ed.).

Stone, Irving. *Men to Match My Mountains: The Opening of the Far West, 1840-1900* (1956).

_____. *They Also Ran: The Story of the Men Who were Defeated for the Presidency* (1943, 1945).

West Texas Cowboy

by Earl Nation

I was born and raised in northwest Texas. I spent youthful summers on my grandfather Johnson's and his son Earl's sheep ranches near Lovington, New Mexico. These spreads each comprised over 6,000 acres.

My father moved his family to San Diego, California in 1926. I had just graduated from Fort Worth Central High School. My mother's youngest sister, Leonora, about age 40, a West Texas school teacher married about that time a cowboy who was somewhat older than she was. He retired and they moved to Fort Worth. His name was Dick Ethridge. I never heard him addressed otherwise.

About ten years after we moved to California I asked Dick why they never came to visit us in California. He replied that he had started out a couple of times but by the time he reached El Paso he figured that he had gone far enough and turned around and went back to Fort Worth.

At that period a columnist named George Dolan was writing a column which he called "This is West Texas" for the local paper. He devoted two columns to an interview with Dick Ethridge. They give a word-of-mouth picture of what a cowboy's life in West Texas during the first quarter of the twentieth century was really like. I have the original columns but do not know the exact date of their appearance. Here they are:

"Dick Ethridge, retired cowboy, chuck wagon boss and ranch foreman, busies himself these days keeping the yard around his trim brick home in Fort Worth's Arlington Heights spic and span. As entertainment he watches westerns on television.

"He is particularly amused at the way the trail boss on 'Rawhide' handles his herd and his men.

"The trail boss runs his herd and hollers at his men. Even the greenest of us laymen knows a herd shouldn't be run. And Ethridge is emphatic about the hollering.

'You don't holler at a cowboy,' he says. 'If he's a little ways off, you ride over and tell him what to do. But you don't holler. That's one thing a real cowboy won't stand for.'

"Ethridge's formula for handling a cowboy goes like this: 'I'd pay as good as the boss'd let me, feed him good, give him good horses - and work the daylights out of him.' Then he qualifies it: 'Oh, not work him hard as all that-I believe in giving a man a couple hours every night just to lay around and sleep.'

"A good man glories in that kind of treatment, Ethridge says.

Next morning, if he gets up, pours a cup of coffee, lights a cigaret and looks up at you and grins, you know he is a man who will stay with you a long time.'

"Ethridge, born on a Fisher County ranch, grew up around Midland [Texas] and started cowboying when he was 16 or 17. When he retired in 1941, he'd done everything there was to do on ranches - and he'd worked on more than 100 of them in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado.

"Ethridge came out of retirement about four years ago to work a cattle drive for a friend, Teague Hutchison of Winston, N.M., who operates the Sugar Bowl Ranch.

"He went to New Mexico with the intention of riding, but Hutchinson didn't have a cook. And Ethridge hadn't ridden for a long time. So he cooked. Nobody complained about the food either. 'A cowboy never complains about the food,' says Ethridge. 'If he don't like it, he don't eat it.'

"One outfit, he says, had a rule that whoever complained about the food automatically took over the cooking job. And the cook wanted to get rid of the job - so he put out some mighty untasty dishes, hoping for a complaint. It didn't work. Finally, growing desperate, he poured some coal oil in his biscuit batter,

"At the next meal, a cowboy bit into a biscuit, spit the bite out and yelped, 'This

biscuit's got coal oil in it!' The cook's face lighted up. The cowboy suddenly remembered the rule. And he added quickly: 'Just the way I like it.'"

The Art of Roping

"You can persuade Dick Ethridge of Fort Worth, a retired cowboy, to talk about horses, if you go about it just right. All it takes is this: First, sit within range of his voice; second, don't interrupt.

"I'd rode night horses (those used for guarding a herd at night) that buck more'n any of those rodeo broncs," he'll tell you, "and called 'em nice horses." And cutting horses. 'Those horses at rodeos are dodging horses, not cutting horses,' he'll say. 'I'm not saying they're not good horses, you understand, but you put half of 'em into a big herd and they wouldn't know what to do. 'And,' he'll add dreamily, 'nobody's got a thrill out of life unless he's rode a real cutting horse into a herd on the range.'

Ethridge, now 68, has enjoyed his many years of working with horses. And, he figures, lots of the horses have enjoyed it, too. 'A good cutting horse likes the work,' he says, 'So do some roping horses.'

"He has worked roping horses that exhibited disgust whenever he'd miss a calf. They didn't turn around and glare at him, exactly, but they did flatten their ears and shake their heads. Ethridge admits that he's missed as many calves as any man. But, by golly, he's roped about as many as the next man, too.

"He even has snared a couple of moun-

tain lions in his loop. It happened back in February 1928, when he was working for the Evans Brothers' Slash Ranch in New Mexico. Dr. Henry M. Calvin of New York went to the Slash Ranch on a bring-'em-back-alive panther hunt. He was escorted on the hunt by Dub Evans, an enthusiastic hunter, and Ethridge.

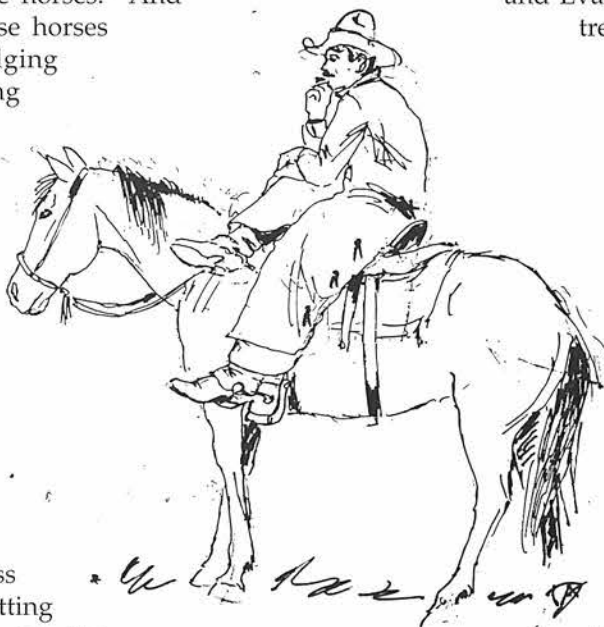
"The three camped, the first night out, in bitter cold - the mercury to 18 degrees below zero. The next day, though the sun came out and the dogs picked up some panther scents. They treed two mountain lions in trees 100 yards apart. Dr. Calvin shot one and both he and Evans climbed the other tree and tried to drop a loop over the second lion's head.

"The cat finally fell from the tree, while shaking off Evans' rope, and

Ethridge dropped a loop over it before it could scale another tree.

The next day two more were treed - as before, one was shot; the men went after the other with ropes. This time Ethridge climbed into the tree after the second lion, deftly tossed two loops over the cat's head and dropped the rope ends to the men on the ground. The men packed the lions by mule 25 miles over the mountains to the ranch headquarters. Dr. Calvin took them back to New York, where he turned them over to the zoo in Prospect Park.

"It's kind of a shame Ethridge wasn't doing his roping, those two days, from the back of a horse. His horse would have been right proud of him."





Corral Chips

Congratulations to **GLORIA LOTHROP** on her recent publications. Her outstanding review of *Witness to Integrity* appeared in the Summer 2005 issue of the *Southern California Quarterly*. In addition, the *Los Angeles Times* and KCET's "Life and Times" program interviewed Gloria regarding the parallels between the 2005 New Orleans disaster and the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

WILLIS BLENKINSOP passed away on December 13, 2005 at 100 years of age. Willis had been a member of The Westerners for many years and contributed articles and stories on the Mountain man and Fur Trappers of the West.

The Arthur H. Clark Company has been purchased by the University of Oklahoma Press. **ROBERT A. CLARK** will continue as a member of OU management and will oversee the AHC imprint. The Los Angeles Westerners wishes Robert the best in his new capacity.

KEN PAULEY was recently presented with The Edna E. Kimbro Award for his contributions to early California history by the California Mission Studies Association.

Congratulations to **PHIL BRIGANDI** on the his new work, *Orange County Place Names A to Z*, published by Sunbelt Publications.



Dr Robert C. Ritchie, W. M. Keck Foundation Director of Research for the Huntington Library, (left) accepts a Los Angeles Corral of The Westerners check for \$2,000 in support of this year's Fellowship at the Huntington from Past-Sheriff Bill Warren. The Corral has supported researchers in Western History at the Huntington for several years as part of their mission to advance that study. The Huntington is very grateful for their support." Photo taken 6/22/06.

The Circuit Preacher

He came ridin' into Tucson
On that dappled old gray mare
He struck a handsome figure
With that wavy, snow-white hair

It seemed he hadn't aged
(Course, he looked so old before)
He still had that dusty suit
And that beat-up Stetson he always wore

It had been at least eight months
But no one asked where he had been
After all, a devoted circuit preacher
Had to purge a lot of sin

We helped him up into the wagon
And used wooden sidewalks as our seat
Now, I am here to tell you
He gave a sermon with some heat

"Listen up you dad—gummed sinners
I saw you comin' from that bar
How come you can't do better?
If you tried you could go far"

Wit that he really found his speed
And you should have heard him tell
Bout' how nice it is in Heaven
And how hot it is in Hell

Then he called upon the Good Lord
He gave the Devil all his dues
He told how things were changin'
And he brought us all the news

It seemed he'd met the prophets
And talked to Old Moses, too
He even mentioned Daniel and the Den
Adam and Eve, to note a few

He was so dog-gone wound up
That he nearly forgot to quit

All that flamin' talk had dried him
He couldn't even spit

But he still had a little bit left
He passed his old Stetson out to us
He thought we'd all be saved
If we anted up without a fuss

Then he got in his final lick
With a prayer 'bout two yards long
He used that deep old voice
To lead us in a gospel song

"Well, folks, Bessie and I'll be back
Gonna' head on down the road
Wanta' find out if there's growth
From all the seeds we've sowed

He whispered to old Bessie as they rode
away

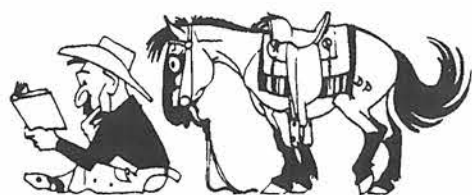
"That there offerin' was mighty, mighty
sweet

Now you can have your hay and some
good old oats

For me-a T-Bone, beer-my day's complete!"

—Loren Wendt





DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL ...

HAZARDOUS METROPOLIS, FLOODING AND URBAN ECOLOGY IN LOS ANGELES, Jared Orsi, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London, 2004, ISBN 0-520-23850-8, \$34.96 Amazon, cloth, 276 pages, photos, maps, notes, bibliography, index.

Jared Orsi is an assistant professor of History at Colorado State University and the 2005 Huntington Library Fellow sponsored by the Los Angeles Corral.

Water problems have plagued Los Angeles. Always too little or too much. Jared Orsi traces the history of what has been done to control flow of runoff water across the Los Angeles Basin. Until the 1890's water from the Los Angeles River entirely supported the city's needs. Rains soaking into the plains and surrounding mountains and supplied the river. As the city grew more water was needed; at the same time more paved land became impervious to water. That water became runoff. Runoff became threatening. In wet years not just water but enormous quantities of mud and detritus inundated foothill communities. The floods of 1914, 1934 and 1938 were major events, causing loss of life and property in unacceptable quantities. Politically something had to be done. This book traces the various proposed schemes, some good, some terribly misguided.

Probably the root of the political problem came in 1924 when it was proposed to dam the San Gabriel River near where the east and west forks come together in the mountains. The public bought the idea, voted for bonds to finance it, and then discovered experts disagreed over this

grandiose scheme. The St. Francis dam disaster suggested more careful study of the footings for this proposed dam. A contractor had actually hidden evidence of potential failure. Lawsuits flew. The public became disenchanted and the project was scuttled.

The year 1933 saw massive brushfires above La Crescenta. On New Years Eve heavy rains sent tons of mud and boulders crashing from every canyon destroying homes and taking lives. A tug of war developed between those wanting unlimited development and those seeking a more cautious approach. The 1930's also brought the New Deal. Turning flood control over to the Army Corps of Engineers would mean major funding from the Federal Government. Critics were silenced by the thought of all that "free money." Local politicians saw cover from lawsuits and angry constituents if anything went wrong.

All doubts were drowned in the waters of the great flood of 1938. Forty million dollars worth of damage convinced every one of the benefits of paving the rivers. With cheap labor available the Corps did remarkable work by encasing 300 miles of waterways in concrete. Empty reservoirs were constructed to control runoff. All was sweetness and light – until Whittier Narrows. The good citizens of El Monte objected to being inundated every few years. Political processes forced the Corps to accept Plan B, moving the dam downstream. El Monte gained other perks. Whittier Narrows Flood Control Basin was completed in 1955. A freshman representative from Whittier brokered the deal and gained credit as a heroic arbitrator. His initials were RMN.

Most fortunately for Los Angeles, the years between 1938 and 1969 were relatively dry. The system worked, although voices were raised about the ugly concrete troughs crisscrossing the basin. Between January 18 and 26, 1969, thirteen and a half inches of rain fell on Los Angeles. Damage was \$30 million. Without the flood control system the damage would have been in the billions. At the same time, reassessment of terms like "twenty-five year storms" began with com-

puterized weather forecasting. It became obvious heavy rain years could quickly follow one another, they didn't occur only once in twenty-five years. Random mountain fires also greatly affected the equation; debris basins could turn into monster "flip basins" if drains became clogged, and they did. In 1980 flood waters almost topped some existing channels; heights were raised.

At this same time, environmentalism was on the rise. Both government and engineers realized they must accommodate alternatives to grey concrete. So projects to use land for both flood control and recreation are now underway. The Cornfield, Southern Pacific's old rail yard just northeast of Chinatown, presents a suitable challenge. It is yet to be seen whether compromise can make something beautiful out of today's dusty land.

Jared Orsi is a very readable writer who brings a balanced presentation to this subject. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the historic and ongoing problem of water in southern California.

—Bill Warren



DESERT MAGAZINE: the Henderson Years *Johannesburg: The Shady Myrick Research Project* by Peter Wild 2004. 112 pp, cloth, \$25.00.

MARSHAL SOUTH OF YAQUITEPEC *Johannesburg: The Shady Myrick Research Project* by Peter Wild 2005. 157pp, hardback, \$19.95.

Two recent books by University of Arizona scholar Peter Wild deal with related topics — and treat them in similar ways.

Despite what its title suggests, *Desert Magazine: The Henderson Years* can hardly be considered a historical narrative. Instead, it is really an extended essay; not so much about Henderson or his magazine, as about what Wild thinks about them. And what he thinks about them is often not very pleasant.

With the simple addition of an introduction explain his purpose (a useful part of any book), Wild could have avoided many mis-

understandings. As it is, his narrative seems jumbled, and would be rather confusing to any readers not already familiar with Randall Henderson and the magazine he founded in 1937.

We are already fourteen pages in before a subheading announces "A Brief History of *Desert Magazine*." Instead, we get our first dose of Wild's complaints about Randall Henderson — his "troglodytic thinking" and his "wildly conflicting values" about the development of the desert versus its preservation.

As Wild's essay unfolds, we meet many of his other favorite desert personalities, notably John C. Van Dyke. Not coincidentally, it was Wild's defrocking of Van Dyke's 1900 classic, *The Desert* that gave him his greatest recognition among Southwestern scholars. We also encounter a few of *Desert's* most popular writers, including Mary Beal, Everett Reuss, and Marshal South.

But many other contributors are notable by their absence. Wild highlights the lack of accuracy in some of *Desert's* features (even complaining that the articles did not include footnotes — something I believe even *National Geographic* can get by without), yet says next to nothing about scholarly articles by Edmund Jaeger, Arthur Woodward, Charles Kelly, and Harold and Lucile Weight, or even the more popular articles from Nell Murbarger (after South, certainly the magazine's most popular writer) and Russ Leadabrand.

More importantly, Wild never attempts to compare *Desert Magazine* with any contemporary regional magazines. Nor does he try to explain why this magazine he vilifies as "present[ing] a romantic illusion of the desert" was so popular under Henderson's leadership — unless we can interpret his occasional comments about some of its readers ("those Joe-Six-Pack readers") as his explanation.

"Detail, detail, that's what much good writing is about," Wild suggests, yet this book is mostly his own subjective analysis, with a few facts sprinkled in along the way. Major episodes, such as Henderson's sale of

the magazine in 1958 and his eventual break with the new owners four years later, pass without explanation; and even so simple a detail as Henderson's date of death is nowhere to be found. (It was 1970.)

Wild's book on Marshal South continues in a similar vein. His essay (which takes up only 28 pages of the book) is a little better organized here, but if he really wanted to "counter the froth and document [South's] life," he might have accomplished more with a straight forward narrative, and leave his quibbling about conflicting sources for the footnotes.

South's story is certainly unique. A struggling writer, in the 1930s he took his wife (and later their three children) to a rocky ridge in the Anza-Borrego Desert and tried to establish a primitive home he called Yaquitepec. Beginning in 1939 he found a ready audience for his tales of his life there in *Desert Magazine*. But in 1946 South's experiment in primitive living collapsed, and his wife sued him for divorce. He died two years later.

Throughout his life, Marshal South was a man who evoked strong reactions in almost everyone he met. Love him or hate him, you would never forget him.

One wonders who Wild saw as the audience for this book. Is it the South devotees, with their "irrational ... hero worship," literary scholars interested in the opinions of one of their own, or some other audience (perhaps even lazy feature writers looking for secondary sources to crib)? In any case, as with his *Desert Magazine* book, Wild seems to take it for granted that his readers already

know a good deal about his subject.

He spends little time actually examining South's writings, but leaves no doubt about his opinion of them: "At their worst, South's pieces were horrible — the ravings of an ego-maniac; at their best, occurring far less often, they were pretty good...."

But as with his other book, we find ourselves asking, compared to what? Greater writers than South have failed to live up to their literary philosophy, or to leave us a strictly factual account of their own life. And many audiences beside the *Desert Magazine* readers have been duped by clever tales presented as fact. (One thinks of the adventure serials popular in South's days, or modern "reality" television.)

Wild's book is also overburdened with needless detail, including more than 20 pages summarizing every single article he wrote for *Desert Magazine*. Wouldn't it have been better to suggest that people go and read them for themselves, and form their own opinion about their literary worth and impact?

"I would suggest that whatever we write in some way reflects what we are," Wild opines. These books suggest that having helped expose one famous Southwestern literary figure as a fraud, Wild is looking for new lands to conquer. Along the way, he spends more time on his own analysis than on laying out the simple facts of the matter.

So we must still await full biographies of two deserving subjects—Randall Henderson and Marshal South.

—Phil Brigandi

