

BOOK REVIEW

Charles Schreiner, General Merchandise: The Story of a Country Store. By J. Evetts Haley. (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1944. Pp. X, 73. Table of Contents, list of eighteen illustrations, Verification and Acknowledgement, Index. \$3.50.)

Someone has said that institutions are but the length and shadow of men. The sage that said there is no history, it is all biography, was thinking along the same line.

A book, a very unique, interesting and readable book, has come to our desk which gives life and strength to these statements. It is called *Charles Schreiner General Merchandise; The Story of a Country Store*, by J. Evetts Haley and issued by the Texas State Historical Association, Austin, Texas. The typography and design are by Carl Hertzog, El Paso, Texas so the book is a complete Texas product as it is the story of the expansion of a country store in Texas told by a Texan and put forth by Texas forces.

The appeal is based upon that nostalgia which every thinking and somewhat mature mind holds for that place where in a peculiar looking building some man had dared to accumulate a strange blend of products such as sugar and coffee, vinegar and molasses, nails, hinges, calico, trace chains, sarsaparilla and in some furtive corner a barrel of good liquor, and called it a General Merchandise Store or the town grocery. Here the people of the town and country came to buy and to barter, to enjoy exchange of opinions, dispense news and take back to their homes a few "goods" and a strange sort of cheer which welded a community together with genuine Americanism.

The contents of this simple volume is put forth under the headings; I. Rocky Land and Rugged Men. II. Customer's Account. III. Accounts of Customers. IV. The Schreiners as Storekeepers. This store was set up by Charles Schreiner, a Texas Ranger out in the hill country of Texas and open for business on Christmas Eve, as recorded, in 1869. The first day's business was slim one for Christmas Eve in the business done that day:

George Holliman, Sr.	\$2.00
7½ lb. coffee	
John D. Wharton	1.50
2 qts. of Whiskey	
Chas. Schreiner	1.00
one dollar cash.	

But from the day the shadow of Charles Schreiner lengthened through fifty years until today after a half century and more, the little weather-beaten store of 1869 is a splendid modern emporium of trade, Charles Schreiner Co. of Kerrville.

As the tale of this marvelous man, Charles Schreiner is told the author weaves with it the wit, the humor, the hardy-hood and remarkable character of the men and women that traded with him, that were neighbors to him and played their part with him in making what is now the marvelous empire of Texas.

It is a small book in number of pages, only seventy-three in the text, but it has all the sparkle and compelling interest that attend the stories of American pioneers such as Boone, Crockett, Houston, and others of their kind.

The author, J. Evetts Haley has given to the book world, three recognized classics of the range: (1) *The XIT Ranch of Texas*, (2) *Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman*, and (3) *George W. Littlefield, Texan*.

A biographer says:

"Haley lives at Spearman, Texas, where he is owner, manager, and 'Colonel' of the JH Ranch, which stretches out along the Canadian River in the Panhandle, stocked with fat white-faced heifers, 'facing south and slanting into the sun.' He grew up in West Texas and has been closely connected with 'cow-business' all of his life. He is a six-footer, frequently described as 'a .45 on a .38 frame,' a reference equally applicable to his rangy frame or to the powerful western punch of his literary style.

"His graduate work in history was done at the University of Texas, where he was for several years a member of the Department of History.

"He has written for the *Saturday Evening Post* and numerous other periodicals.

"He is the best informed person in Texas to write on the manifold activities of Charles Schreiner who was cowman, sheepman, merchandiser, banker, Texas Ranger, railroad builder, and philanthropist."

—Charles Evans

Oklahoma Historical Society