

BOOK REVIEWS

The Witch Deer. By Maggie Culver Fry. (Dallas: The Story Book Press, 1954. Pp. 40. \$2.00)

These poems are of especial interest for Oklahomans. They hold much history which yet lives in the hearts of those who knew Oklahoma in her Territorial days. Four-fifths of the contents treat of our land, our people, and our customs, of only a few decades ago.

The volume takes its title, and its tone, from its first poem. To the Cherokee Indians the death of a fawn-flecked deer indicated change in government. At intervals of many years, two of these deer were killed. After the first was killed, the Cherokees were removed from Georgia to the Indian Territory. After the killing of the second, the Indian Territory became a part of Oklahoma.

Verse subjects are varied. Poem portraits paint immortal Sequoyah and Will Rogers, and the appealing Dr. Jesse C. Bushyhead and Grandfather, George Deerskin. Carefully chosen words welcome the blue-green blades of wild onions, and recall the poignant path marked by willow wands. A brief "Good-Bye" closes the book. But just before this last poem, Mrs. Fry honors Alec Posey, the outstanding Creek Indian poet, in a sensitive recounting of his tragic death by drowning.

A note under "Memories of Post Road Inn" says that Washington Irving once stopped at this inn, located between Fort Gibson and Fort Smith. There is no available authoritative record for this statement. Mrs. Fry took the note from a fictionized legend in "Oklahoma—Yesterday Today Tomorrow," Vol. II, reprinted in "Oklahoma—Land of Opportunity," by Lerona Rosamond Morris, Co-Operative Publishing Co., Guthrie, Okla., 1934, p. 43.

Mrs. Fry, whose love for Indian and Oklahoma lore is reflected in her writings, is of Cherokee blood. She was born at Vian. She attended grade school there and was graduated from high school at Porum. Since her marriage to Merritt Fry, she has made her home in Claremore. Mr. and Mrs. Fry have two sons, now grown. Mrs. Fry has contributed much poetry to magazines, but this is her first book.

—Frances Rosser Brown

Muskogee, Oklahoma

Trails West and Men Who Made Them. By Edith Dorian and W. N. Wilson. (Whittlesey House, New York, 1955. Pp. 92. Ill. Index. \$2.50.)

Ever delightful are stories concerning the opening of the Great West, that land of adventure and romance where trails were laid by men who have become legendary for their exploits. "Colonel" Joe Meek, Kit Carson, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, Daniel Boone, and Jesse Chisholm are historical characters that never fail to create interest among the reading public, and so *Trails West* should be most interesting because all of these, and more, are again brought to life. With Daniel Boone and his road-building crew of "thirty guns" the reader may help in opening the Wilderness Road; or perhaps we would see William Becknell's newspaper advertisement for "men to go westward for the purpose of trading for horses and mules and catching wild animals of every description" and immediately start over the Santa Fe Trail with stocky Kit Carson as our guide.

Tales of ten different trails that were important in the winning of the west comprise this volume. These narratives include The Golden Trail, as Spanish Conquistadores attempted to find fabulous treasures; The Water Trail, followed by the French in their search for a rich fur trade; The Wilderness Road, constructed to open the "dark and bloody ground" for westward migration; Natchez Trace, marked by blazed trees between Nashville and Natchez; The National Road, Uncle Sam's Pike as it was called in 1815; Santa Fe Trail, inspiration for innumerable songs, writings, and movies; Oregon Trail, over which traveled people unmindful of the fact that they were building an empire; Chisholm Trail, grand-daddy of the cattle trails through the Indian country to the uproarious cow towns of Kansas.

Illustrations which mean so much to young and old alike are liberally sprinkled through the book furnishing picture stories all their own. A snowy pass along the Oregon Trail, a blizzard during a cattle drive, men cordeling their boat against stubborn currents, Kit Carson holding off the Comanches, the cheer of a camp fire at the close of a long hard day—all designed to help suggest mental images of places and conditions along the frontier. The double page map showing the route for each trail is easy to read and shows at a glance that practically all of present United States was traversed and explored by these trail riders. Another map showing the types of men who invaded particular areas may be found at both the front and back of the book.

Trails West was evidently written with a young reader in mind, and this reviewer feels that it would be a definite contribution to any school library.

—Lucyl Shirk

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

The Chisholm Trail. By Wayne Gard. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1954, Norman, Oklahoma. Pp. 296. \$4.50)

Few things have found such a firm place in the lore of the Southwest as has the name of Chisholm. Jesse Chisholm was identified for many years with the area of present Oklahoma and operated several successful trading ventures within its borders; yet it is history's fate that his name should be handed down to us in connection with something with which he had but relatively little to do—The Chisholm Trail.

Economic conditions following the War Between the States made it imperative that the Texas ranchers find some practical answer for the marketing of their herds, and long overland trails were the solution. Commencing in 1867 and continuing until the railroads a dozen years later provided a better means of transportation, the Southwest's biggest business enterprise was the mass movement of cattle. It took the keen planning of a shrewd business man, Joseph G. McCoy, to bring all of the needed factors together and in one sense of the word the trail should more properly bear his name.

Wayne Gard has given us a most excellent account of this vast undertaking. The "R. G. 'Smoking Room' Miller of the Dallas Morning News", Gard has contributed countless hours of research in completing a most complete and factual volume. Hats off to the author and to the University of Oklahoma Press for bringing us this volume. Being a newspaper man, his account is drawn mostly from contemporary newspaper sources. In this instance, such is an advantage, for the reader lives again the dust and tumult of the times. For example, the chapter on the frontier life at Abilene is so vivid that the reader actually is afraid to go out on the street without a six gun!

Oklahoma City

—George H. Shirk