

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Autobiography of Sam Houston.* Edited by Donald Day and Herbert Ullom. (The University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1955. Pp. 298, Illus. \$5.00.)

There appear in our country's history few personalities more intriguing and refreshing than Sam Houston. Although somewhat of an historical enigma, Houston even today, as during his lifetime, is a character of whom everyone has a positive opinion. Perhaps today he would be known as a "controversial" figure. His domestic troubles, his unexpected resignation as governor of Tennessee, his remarkable interlude at Fort Gibson, and finally his misunderstood stand on the secession question, all gained for him a unique spot in American lore.

It is hard to write about such a person. Invariably the biographer becomes so imbued with the central figure of his efforts that he unwittingly joins in the band of the pros or of the cons. The technique of presenting Houston through the means of an "autobiography" is a good one. Editors Day and Ullom have collected in chronological sequence all of the more important papers, manuscripts and letters of this man who did so much to shape the destiny of Texas. Laced firmly together with excellent editorial comments (all of which appear in readily distinguishable italics) and footnotes, this man's own words are presented in a highly worthy manner. The volume makes very good reading; and it would be hard to conceive of a finer access to the character and philosophy of Sam Houston than through its pages.

Regretfully for Oklahomans, Houston's life at Fort Gibson and "Wigwam Neosho" during the years 1829 to 1832 are all but ignored. In their haste to have him reach Texas and his ultimate destiny, the editors rush their autobiographee through the early years much too fast for those readers anxious to linger yet a while at Fort Gibson in Oklahoma.

—George H. Shirk

*Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

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*American Heritage.* The Magazine of History: Publisher, James Parton; Editor, Bruce Catton. (Sponsored by American Association for State & Local History and Society of American Historians, Vol. VII, No. 4, June, 1956. Pp. 112. Illus., color and black and white. \$2.95.)

The unprecedented success of *American Heritage*, the "Magazine of History" sponsored by the American Association for State

and Local History and the Society of American Historians, is attested by the June number, 1956. Paid circulation (annual subscription, \$12.00; single copies, \$2.95) and reader interest have exceeded all expectations since the publication of the first hard-back copy of this bi-monthly magazine in December, 1954. Every number since the beginning has had a beautiful format with striking illustrations in full-color and excellent articles on the American scene, each copy treasured in public and private libraries over the country, and some of the early numbers now listed as rare collector's items. Publisher James Parton with his editorial director, Joseph J. Thorndike, Jr., and Editor Bruce Catton with the associate and assistant editors have kept the high standard of the publication in the current issue.

This June number (Vol. VII, No. 4) has a fine reproduction, in colors on the outside front cover, of the portrait of General John Burgoyne in his scarlet coat and uniform as a British officer, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1766-1767. The theme of the lead article, "Burgoyne and America's Destiny" by Reginald Hargreaves is in the introductory statement: "Stickler for a point of honor, the General marched to defeat and helped lose a War." Opposite this page and more is a reproduction in full-color of John Trumbull's painting (1816-1824) of the surrender of the British at Saratoga on October 16, 1777, a turning point in the American Revolution that brought France to America's side. The caption at one side of this illustration briefs the history of the painting, and indicates the Continentals shown, among them Colonel Daniel Morgan in his white Virginia rifleman's uniform.

The Table of Contents for the June *American Heritage* lists fifteen titles that include in addition to the one mentioned above "A Record Filled With Sunlight" by Allan Nevins, which reappraises John C. Fremont's part in opening the Far West in pre-Civil War days. Another, "It Happens Every Four Years" by Roy F. Nichols, is apropos of the present year of 1956, telling about the early history of our national political conventions, with six pages in color showing old-time convention scenes, campaign banners, posters, campaign ribbons with patriotic symbols and candidate cards. "One Who Survived: Seaman Heyn's Story" is the verbatim account of the sinking of the U. S. S. *Juneau* off Guadalcanal in World War II given by a young sailor who was one of the few survivors.

The last title on the last page is "They Keep Tearing It Down," a reprint of a brief article from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* for July, 1856, which said: "We are not yet 80 years old and there is scarcely one historic house left standing in our greatest City." Evidently, there were people in this country a century ago who were thinking that "a city or nation which forgets its heritage, however brief, soon has none."

*American Heritage* is a distinguished publication that awakens deep pride in the history and the good things here in life today, which inspires to keep America great.

—Muriel H. Wright

*Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

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*Boundaries, Areas, Geographic Centers, and Altitudes of the United States and the Several States.* Geological Survey Bulletin 817, Second Edition. (Washington, Government Printing Office. Reprinted 1955. Pp. 265, with maps. \$2.00.)

Bulletin 817 of the United States Geological Survey, Department of the Interior, was published in 1932. Prepared by E. M. Douglas, it contains a chapter on each state and territory, giving in detail the origin of each state boundary, boundary line, geographical and statistical data for each state. Well documented notes on boundary origins, references and the historical significance of each are set forth; and the volume is a complete hand-book on the subjects set forth in the book's title.

Pages 216 to 219 are devoted to Oklahoma. This section shows the historical background and the reason for each boundary line of the state. Likewise, by referring to the sections on each of the neighboring states, wherein like reference data is to be found on that state's common boundary line with Oklahoma, a very fine work is available on the origin of each of Oklahoma's boundaries.

The Bulletin has long since been out of print, and has been considered by many as a "collectors item." A pocket envelope contains photographic reproductions of the Disturnell map of 1847 and the Mitchell 1755 map of North America.

The Government Printing Office is to be commended for reprinting and thus making available this Bulletin. The extent of the new printing is not known, but it is hoped that there will be a sufficient supply for all who desire to add this valuable reference work to their library.

—George H. Shirk

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