

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Story of Tullahassee.* By Althea Bass. (The Semco Color Press, Inc., Oklahoma City, 1960. Pp. viii, 273. Illustrations, index, and map. \$5.00.)

Althea Bass has made a contribution to Oklahoma history in her new book, *The Story of Tullahassee*, using as she has many hitherto unpublished letters and records relating to this mission among the Creek people in the Indian Territory. There have been several historical accounts written on the founding and the work at Tullahassee, and there have been biographical sketches of the Reverend William Schenck Robertson who devoted his life to the Mission yet too often has the significance of the great work been lost in generalities that bear upon the program of Indian civilization and education undertaken by the churches under the sponsorship of the United States Government. Here in Mrs. Bass's story we have real scenes and people who were a part of them eighty to one hundred years ago and more, 1849 to 1881, a period that included the Civil War and its aftermath when life in the Indian Territory saw many changes.

As the Centennial of the Civil War begins a review of this tragic period throughout the United States, a period in which the Indian Territory had a strategic place, four chapters in *The Story of Tullahassee* become significant reading. "Wars and Rumors of Wars" reveals the far reaching work of the abolition movement in the American Board for Foreign Missions with the withdrawal of its support of missions among the southern Indian nations. Another chapter "An Obscure Story of the Civil War" tells some of the details of the disaster and heartbreak experienced by those who remained around Fort Gibson in the Cherokee Nation swept by bitter partisanship among the Indian people and cruel raids. "Exile and Return" recounts the return of the Robertson family from the North, at the end of the conflict to old Tullahassee and the scars of the War seen in the Creek Nation. The chapter "Troublesome Times" reviews the days of deprivation that preceded the reopening of the Mission and the obstacle courageously and cheerfully overcome by the deep spiritual force of that great man, William S. Robertson and his devoted family leading out toward recovery and a new way of life for their beloved Indian friends, the Creeks.

Everyone who is interested in any phase of history on Oklahoma should read *The Story of Tullahassee* for it gives scenes of life and delineations of character and descriptions

of personalities found in no other book. The reader will be abreast of the times finding much relating to the period of the Civil War, the centennial of which begins in 1961 with a five-year commemorative program.

The format of this book on Tullahassee is neat and attractive. Footnote citations of source materials used throughout the text, together with a section of fine prints from rare old photographs and other illustrative materials authenticate this beautifully written story by Althea Bass.

*Frontier Ways.* By Edward Everett Dale. (University of Texas Press, Austin, 1959. Pp. xiv, 265. Illustrations, Index. \$4.50.)

Here are fascinating sketches of the people that made up the van of American settlement in the West, how they came to this part of the country, how they met new conditions, how they overcame their problems, all told in a vein of lively humor yet with the sure authority of Dr. Dale who is widely and well known as the Dean of Historians on the life of the old-time cowboy and pioneer settler on the western prairies.

The necessity of providing food and shelter on the High Plains brought a new way of life from that found in the eastern woodlands, described in the chapters "Log Cabin to Sod House" and "Food on the Frontier" with some thought-revealing anecdotes showing up the calibre of those facing new problems. There were grim hardships, there were death and sadness but descriptions under the heading "The Social Homesteader" point out, too, social pleasure of a kind and relaxation that helped keep the spirit high and zestful. With due respect for all the good work of the Christian churches—usually Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian—far from the old settlements, even the chapter on "The Old Time Religion" is amusing.

In "Frontier Medical Practices," the author says that it is quite true the American pioneers were a vigorous and hardy breed, partly because the weaklings did not live long under conditions of frontier life, "but human beings were subject to ailments and diseases that afflict them today," plus others that were the result of the manner of living. These were the days when some people in the far away country were confident that a mole's foot tied to a string around a baby's neck made teeth cutting easy, or that a buckeye carried in a man's pocket warded off rheumatism. A "mad dog" scare caused the greatest excitement in any community, and the one sure cure if bitten by a "mad" animal (few knew the term *rabies*) was the application of a "mad stone" which someone living twenty or thirty miles away might own. Different teas made at home such as ginger tea, sage tea, rhubarb tea and other teas made from

"red root," oak bark or even sheep droppings were the panacea for general "puniness" in children as well as for the serious digestive upset known as "summer complaint" which, after long months between seasons with no fresh fruit or vegetables to eat, was suffered by youngsters in early summer when they stuffed themselves on green apples, green peaches, green plums, green grapes or green melons and vegetables. Among several patent medicines bought at the local drug store, Castoria was wonderful for children, and grown-ups had surcease from their ills by taking a number of remedies such as Peruna, Swamp Root or Wine of Cardui. In the dugout or the box-house homes, there was perhaps a bottle of "Dr. X's Marvelous Elixir" dispensed at the "medicine show" on the street of the western village, in which the traveling doctor on a truck drawn by white horses in silver mounted harness, with two or three Negro comedians playing a banjo or guitar or violin, began his speech: "Ladies and Gentlemen: I am traveling about the country trying to bring aid to suffering humanity. We have not come here this evening to sell you anything but only to have a good time—" Then one of the comedians would interrupt, "Yum, yum, ain't we a-gwine hab a *good time!*" Other stories throughout the pages of this chapter on early day medical practices are laughable yet are a real part of social history of the American people in the West.

The last chapter in the book is about "Old Navajoe," giving nostalgic memories of this "typical frontier town" that has now vanished but once flourished in the prairie near the tallest peak of the Navajo Mountains in Southwestern Oklahoma.

No other than Dr. Dale, a native son of Texas, who came with his parents when he was a lad to live in Old Greer County, could have written first hand as he has on the cowboy and the pioneer families who lived on this frontier. Everyone, even the historian who is familiar with the story of the American West, should read *Frontier Ways*.

—Muriel H. Wright

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*Oklahoma Almanac and State Encyclopedia* Edited by H. L. Fitzpatrick. (Oklahoma Almanac, Inc. Norman, 1960. Pp. 561. \$2.00.)

The 1961 edition of the Oklahoma Almanac has half again as many pages as had the previous edition; and it is packed full of useful, vital, and also much interesting and worthwhile information. To truly render a service, an almanac should be able to do just what its name implies: that is, have between its covers information on about anything ever needful relating to the subject. This book certainly accomplishes that intended

purpose. Statistics, data, tables and all manner of charts and figures provide information on everything from sales tax collections and football scores to agricultural yields. The State parks are allocated a generous number of pages, complete with photographs and interesting descriptions. Oklahoma history comes in for its fair share of attention. Even cattle brands receive several pages. How all this may be done with such a minimum of advertising is remarkable. In all events, regardless of how, it has been done; and anyone with even a remote interest in Oklahoma and its facts and figures would be the loser without a copy for ready reference. The genial editor, H. L. Fitzpatrick, is to be commended for a job extremely well done.

—George H. Shirk

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