


1957

Book Reviews

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Recommended Citation

Society, Florida Historical (1957) "Book Reviews," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 36 : No. 3 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol36/iss3/6>

BOOK REVIEWS

Seminole Music. By Frances Densmore. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 161. (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1956. xxviii, 218 pp. Plates, index. \$1.00)

THE MATERIAL IN THIS Smithsonian Institution publication includes 243 Seminole Indian songs and analyses of Seminole music, together with some of the history and many of the customs of Florida Indians. The book is rich in legends and stories related to Frances Densmore when she visited the Seminoles in 1931, 1932, and 1933 to record their native music. It is unfortunate for the rest of us that this manuscript was delayed in publication until 1956. It would have enriched the writings about the Seminole which have appeared during the past decade.

This bulletin does not include recordings made in 1954, but it adds much to the comprehensive studies of Indian music in the Americas which have appeared under Frances Densmore's name in numerous bulletins published by the Smithsonian and other documentary institutions. Her analyses of the songs will be of interest to all students of American folk music. Songs with dances are usually sung once by the leader, she says, then his helper joins him in the singing as the dancers circle the area. The author comments on the humming sound of the labial M which is characteristic of Negro folk music as well as Indian folk songs.

The 243 songs include many used at the two important tribal gatherings, the Corn Dance in the spring and Hunting Dances in the fall, both of which are preceded by an ancient Buffalo Dance. Social dances include songs with Bird Dances, Summer Dances, Winter Dances and Childrens' Dances. There are songs used in treatment of the sick, preceded by the ceremonial blowing through a reed into the "medicine," creating a soothing, soughing sound and a froth "to cool the sick person inside." There are songs for Success in Hunting, Success in the Ball Game, Drinking Songs and Songs of Friendship, but most appealing of all are the narrative songs-stories with singing intervals-which have been translated by Panther in their

entirety. Such stories are THE OPPOSUM AND HER LOST BABY, WHY THE RABBIT IS WILD, THE WHITE CORN legend, legend of the FLOOD, and the legend of the TWO BROTHERS.

Musical instruments used by Florida Seminole are described in detail. There are the rattles, made of coconut shells containing seeds; tin cans with pellets of dried mud; small hand drum used in the Corn Dance, a water drum used in songs of the Ball Game, and a Cypress Knee Drum used in the Stomp Dance. With these instruments the rhythmic units, at times indeterminate, are emphasized. Words to the songs are, for the most part, obsolete and the meaning is unknown, but when they have been known they were translated for this collection.

In the process of securing recordings of native songs by Charlie Billie and Panther (Josie Billie) of the Big Cypress Seminoles, and by Billie Stewart and his wife, Susie Tiger, of the Cow Creek group near Brighton, the author has made note of the customs, stories and legends which form a dramatic background for the songs and dances. As for the history of the Seminole in Florida, it might be noted that the research pre-dated the Sturtevant report discounting the white parentage of Osceola.

Since the Seminole picture in Florida has changed considerably since the early 1930's, it would be advisable to read, along with this bulletin, the new publication, *The Seminole Indians of Florida*, issued by the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, which tells of current economic, educational and cultural trends, combining the old with the new Seminole family life. The two bulletins will prove illuminating and enchanting.

MARY HELM CLARKE

Miami, Florida

The Negro and Southern Politics; A Chapter of Florida History.

By Hugh Douglas Price. (New York, New York, University Press, 1957. 133 pp. \$5.00)

THE SUBTITLE of this book is truer to the contents than is the title. Though the events it relates are very recent, the book is "A

Chapter of Florida History.” It is about the Negro and about politics, but the word “Southern” in the main title is a considerable extension upon the book’s contents. The author says that a comprehensive survey of Negro registration, voting, and political participation in the whole South “would obviously be desirable,” but he has had to limit his study to Florida.

This smaller project is, of course, an important one, and Mr. Price has done his work so well that Florida historians and political scientists will long be citing his book. He begins by briefly reviewing the history of the rise and fall of the direct primary as a means of disfranchising southern Negroes. Then he presents clearly and concisely, but fully, the results of his own original research: the rise, extent, and nature of the Negroes’ political activity in Florida after they were legally able to vote in Democratic party primaries.

The number of Florida Negro registered voters rose from 20,000 in 1944 (all Republicans) to 137,535 in 1956, of whom 128,437 were Democrats. There was white resistance to Negro registration, especially in old “Middle Florida,” in the counties between the Suwanee and Apalachicola rivers; but by 1956, only eight counties in the state had less than 10 per cent of their adult Negroes registered, while twenty-five counties had more than 50 per cent Negro registration. Mr. Price concludes, then, that Negro political activity in Florida is state-wide, not merely big-city phenomenon.

An analysis of why resistance to Negro voting has been stronger in some parts of the state than in others is one of the most perceptive parts of this book. (Mr. Price finds that the answer is *not* simply greater or lesser proportions of Negro population.) Other interesting and important subjects well explained are the manner in which Florida Negroes have used their new power as Democratic voters to bargain with political candidates, the organization and uses of their voting leagues, and the effects and probable effects of Negro voting on the pattern of Florida politics.

The school desegregation decision, Mr. Price carefully points out, has made it more difficult for political officials and candidates to seek Negro voters’ support or to maintain moderate positions on racial questions. It may, then, have “temporarily

halted" Negro advances in political activity and influence, "but there appears to be little prospect of success for any general attempt to set the clock back."

GEORGE R. BENTLEY

University of Florida

Gunner with Stonewall; Reminiscences of William Thomas Poague, a Memoir Written for His Children in 1903. Edited by Monroe F. Cockrell; with an Introduction by Bell Irwin Wiley. (Jackson, Tenn., McCowat-Mercer Press, 1957. 181 pp. Illustrations. \$5.95)

THE REMINISCENCES of Lieutenant Colonel Poague are superior to most that were written by participants of the Civil War. They are singularly lacking in the bombastic bravado characteristic of veterans' reunions and tall-story tellers. The background and experiences of the author are chiefly responsible for this difference. Lieutenant Colonel Poague was a college graduate and a lawyer when the war broke out; after the war he was successively legislator, school administrator, trustee of Washington and Lee College, and Treasurer of the Virginia Military Institute. This respected and acknowledged leader of his community wrote his experiences in a manner worthy of his position.

In spite of their high quality these reminiscences (like most others) have obvious defects. Some opinions expressed were certainly formed after the war - in a few cases long after the war. In places the author's reactions appear to lack the sharp, well-defined feelings he has expressed in the letters contained in the appendices. The forty years that passed between the actual incidents and the author's effort to recapture them seem to have removed valuable color. Furthermore, he was writing for his family, which necessitated a self-imposed censorship. The long gaps in the story are one of the most noticeable defects. Some of these extend over several months, for which practically nothing was recorded.

One of the major contributions of these reminiscences is information on the use of light artillery by the Confederate army. He points out in several places the lack of knowledge possessed

by infantry commanders in the use of field artillery, and one gets the impression that even the Confederate government had only limited knowledge of its value. During 1861, General Jackson had only four light guns to support his five infantry regiments - an amazing lack of fire-power.

The reader is also brought face to face with the acute shortage of artillery in the Confederate Army during most of the war. Poague recites several instances in which almost superhuman efforts were made to retrieve guns that had been taken by the Union forces. He also refers to an amazing array of different kinds of guns that were used by his batteries at various times: short-range howitzers, long-range Whitworth rifles, ordinary rifles, Parrott rifles, Napoleons, brass smooth bores, twenty-pound Parrotts, and others. A few of these were guns that had been captured and assigned to him by higher authority. He also makes references to other kinds of material captured and utilized by his command and the Confederate forces generally.

On many occasions, though in short supply, guns were held unduly long in reserve, or were overlooked altogether. Poague's guns were not called upon to fire a shot during the first two days of the Battle of Gettysburg and the same was true to a lesser degree at Chancellorsville. On some occasions, such as at Cold Harbor, the guns were rendered ineffective when infantry commanders placed them in unnecessarily exposed positions. These infantry officers also failed to provide support for their light guns on many occasions, especially during the last months of the War.

The author did not hesitate to criticize Confederate officials when he thought they were to blame. While still a battery commander, he had at one time enough men and guns to form a battalion, but was unable to get authority to reorganize his force. He criticizes the poor quality of ammunition furnished, the serious shortages of equipment and even the shortages in rations. He complains about arrears in pay and other difficulties traceable to the bureaucrats. One wonders how these artillery forces managed to function at times, especially during the last months of the war.

These reminiscences include much material on non-military topics. The author was deeply religious, and even in defeat

placed full dependence upon the Lord. His social interests extended into many areas, from the well-being of his own family to that of his men and the South in general. He never lost faith in the "Cause," and even in the last days fought as valiantly as during the early month of the war. The re-election of President Lincoln, in 1864, gave him cause for future worry. The letters included in the appendices show Poague's continuing interests in politics, social conditions, and his community, and demonstrate his understanding of the true nature of conditions during the Reconstruction days.

One somehow gets the impression that Lieutenant Colonel Poague failed to complete his reminiscences. He may have intended to continue them to include the disbanding of the Army of Northern Virginia and his role in the Reconstruction struggle in his neighborhood. This is especially true as he sat in the Virginia Legislature during part of this period. The narrative's ending is much too abrupt for an author of his caliber.

The appearance and quality of the book leaves nothing to be desired. The introduction is more than adequate. The editor has wisely refrained from unnecessary tampering with the original version. The map is very valuable, but is deficient in one respect. Its value would have been greatly enhanced for this volume if more detail had been included to illustrate the last two years of Lieutenant Colonel Poague's campaigning.

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