

1959

Book Reviews

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Recommended Citation

Society, Florida Historical (1959) "Book Reviews," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 38 : No. 2 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol38/iss2/7>

BOOK REVIEWS

The Florida Handbook, 1959-60. Compiled by Allen Morris. (Tallahassee, Peninsular Publishing Company, 1959. xvi, 486 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. \$4.00.)

Published biennially since 1947, this *handbook* has grown in content and usefulness as a reference book and in interest to the general reader. The core of the volume has always been governmental Florida and related topics which account for nearly half of the book. A complete guide to the various departments, boards, and commissions that make up state government and administration takes up nearly one hundred pages. Closely related are the 16-page State Constitution, with its 33 pages of amendments, and the very necessary 11-page special index to the Constitution. "People in the Florida News," is a section devoted to thumbnail sketches of nearly 300 persons, mostly those currently in legislative, judicial, executive, and administrative posts in the state. Also in this category are statistics of voting in Democratic Primary and general elections for governor, United States Senator, President of the United States, and for various elective officers in the state. Sections entitled "Productive Florida" and "Florida's Names" each occupy about 40 pages; and there is among many other shorter items, a brief section on "Education and Culture." The section on place names and their origin is an eloquent commentary on what has not yet been done in this field. Admittedly not complete, it should serve as a challenge to someone to continue the compilation of what is known and to work to complete the research into the origin of place names in which so much history lies buried.

But the feature of greatest interest to students of the State's history is "Florida in the War, 1861-1865," by Dorothy Dodd, State Archivist-Librarian, which appropriately occupies the first 90 pages in the 1959-60 issue of the *Handbook*. The only general history of the War Between the States is W. W. Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, published in 1913, and long since out-of-print. This article is both more and less than the larger work. If it is less complete as to details of politics and military history, it is at the same time more accurate in inter-

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pretation and full of human interest which comes from the intimate knowledge Dr. Dodd has of the State's history and the people who have made it. It is illustrated with reproductions of some three dozens of old drawings and photographs and a few original charts. The documentation provides an excellent bibliography for any further study of the subject. The article deserves a better fate than to be buried in a handbook, but Mr. Morris should certainly be congratulated for securing such a feature to adorn his reference volume.

CHARLTON W. TEBEAU

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The Whigs of Florida, 1845-1854. By Herbert J. Doherty, Jr. *University of Florida Monographs, Social Sciences*, No. 1. (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1959. 73 pp. \$2.00 Paper.)

In the decade 1845-1854, the Whig and Democratic parties gave Florida its only real taste of a two-party system, and mirrored, in miniature, the political division of the United States. Mr. Doherty's monograph is a much needed inquiry into the history and composition of the short-lived Whig complex.

As was true of the party throughout the United States, the Florida Whigs were a heterogeneous group. Dominated by the landed interests, the lawyer-planter-speculator class drew its primary strength from middle Florida. Prior to the Panic of 1837, the Whigs, then known as the "Nucleus," had controlled the Territorial Legislative Council and continued to control the Governorship during most of the pre-statehood period. Conservative in office, the Whigs encouraged the promotion of credit facilities, especially the chartering of banks whose bonds were safeguarded by the "faith," that is, public credit, of the territory. It was this solicitude for the banking interests, plus the growing interest in statehood, that allowed the Democrats, posing as champions of the people, to seize control first of the Legislative Council and finally the entirety of the newly-formed state government.

From 1837 to 1845 the power of the Whigs in Florida underwent a serious decline, a decline which can be accounted

for by their lack of party organization, internal dissension in their ranks, and the absence of dynamic leadership. The Conservative group was never able to match the tightly knit party organization which was the hallmark of the Democrats, but rather continued to use a system of multiple conventions which greatly cut down on the efficiency of the whole. The passage of time, however, rectified the other weaknesses of the party. The split between the Federal, pro-bank wing and the anti-bank, States' rights Whigs was healed as the banking issue faded from the local scene. And the leadership void was filled by the appearance of Edward C. Cabell, "the most skilled practical politician among the Florida Whigs."

In 1845, Cabell carried on a vigorous campaign for Florida's seat in the House of Representatives vacated by the legislative election of David L. Yulee to the Senate. Although defeated in this, his first attempt, Cabell was elected the following year and served in the House until the breakup of the Whigs in 1852.

By 1847, the Whigs had won control of both houses of the state legislature, but their biggest success came in the election of 1848. Riding the crest of Whig popularity, which on the national scene would sweep General Zachary Taylor into the presidency, the Florida group captured the governorship, the single seat in the House of Representatives, as well as retaining control of the state legislature. Two years later the Whigs were just as successful in a bitter campaign in which they defended the Compromise of 1850 while the Democrats attacked it as a betrayal of the South.

After 1850, as the pro-slavery and anti-slavery extremists ate away the middle ground, the power of the Whigs, both in the state and in the nation, suffered sadly. Little by little the States' rights wing of the party was absorbed into the more radical Democratic group, while the pro-Unionist wing moved into the camp of the Constitutional Union party. Disaster overtook the party in 1852 when Cabell was defeated for his House seat and the governorship was surrendered to the Democrats. Once again, in 1854, the Whigs went down to defeat, the last election in which they were to run a full slate in the state. Florida's all too short experiment in a two party system was at an end.

It should be pointed out that this little book is important not only in that it is an excellent examination of a critical period in Florida history, but also, in that it is the first of a series of publi-

cations in the field of the social sciences projected by the University of Florida. The recognition by that university of the value of such studies will certainly be a great incentive for liberal scholarship and research in the state.

VAUGHAN CAMP, JR.

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True Tales of the Florida West Coast, By Jack Beater. (Workshop House, Fort Myers, 1959. 125 pp. Illustrations. \$1.00 Paper.)

This very interesting and extremely entertaining book is divided into four parts. Part One includes ten authentic tales based on the lives and times of some famous Gulfcoast pioneers, including Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Peter Knight, Bill Collier and others. Part Two relates the lives, deeds, and misdeeds of six eighteenth century pirates who once held sway on Florida's West Coast islands, including a biography of Gasparilla who has now become Tampa's patron rogue. Part Three tells seven true tales of buried treasures and treasure hunting; and Part Four contains eleven stories of business, opportunities, romance, murder, and humor up and down the coast.

Mr. Beater is an excellent writer and his stories of early and recent history along the West Coast are of some value to the historian and are of greater value to the general reader who wants a good yarn. This short book is certainly full of exciting stories concerning heroes and personalities of West Florida. I cannot quarrel with the author over certain points for in a foreword he admits the fact that certain liberties have been taken in names and locations. The book should be included in any library or bookshelf devoted to Florida History for it contains interesting anecdotes not found in other books relating to the area.

Before any reader is taken in completely by the Jose Gaspar account it might be wise to check the movements of the *Enterprise* during 1821 and attempt to prove that the ship came within tow hundred miles of Gasparilla Island during that and any other year.

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