Florida Historical Quarterly

Volume 40
Number 3 *Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol 40, Issue 3*

Article 6

1961

Book Reviews

Florida Historical Society
membership@myfloridahistory.org

BOOK REVIEWS

The South in American History. By William B. Hesseltine and David L. Smiley. Second Edition. (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1960. x, 630 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. $8.00.)

In the last few years there has poured from the publishing houses a veritable flood of textbooks. This has been a welcome occurrence to most historians, as most of the volumes have been high in quality and have offered colleges a wide choice of readings. However, several fields of history have been sadly neglected. One such has been the history of the South. The need for a comprehensive text bringing the story of the South up to the present has long been felt. That need has now been met, and Professors Hesseltine and Smiley are to be congratulated on producing a readable, balanced view of the region.

The book, descended from the 1936 and 1943 volumes written by Hesseltine, continues to display the fine workmanship of the earlier volumes. Greatly enlarged and revised to bring it up to date, it still carries out the theme originally suggested by the first of the three treatments. The South is here pictured, not as an isolated, separate, and distinct entity, but as a vital portion of an expanding nation. Hesseltine gives ample space to those characteristics for which the South is widely known, but concentrates on showing its development as part of the nation, with its history affected by and affecting that of the country as a whole. The South is treated with sympathy and understanding but its weaknesses and faults are shown along with its strengths and virtues.

Criticisms can and will be offered, but without exception they are comparatively minor and can easily be corrected in the next edition. The majority of the faults to be found are the result of a compelling need to compress so much history into so small a space. It would have been virtually impossible to provide adequate treatment for every aspect of the long history of the South, and still to keep the story in one volume. Still, this reviewer feels that several of the annoying passages could have been eliminated. For example, one might frown at the statement that the Conven-

tion of 1787 inserted the provision for ratification of the Constitution by nine states merely as a means of showing its contempt for the Articles of Confederation. A rewording of the phrase could have eliminated any disagreement.

In another instance, the passages devoted to the tariff in the period 1816-1828 are far from clear. Was it really the "failure of some of their early industrial enterprises" that caused John C. Calhoun and company to alter their stand on the tariff? The whole matter of Calhoun's attitude to the tariff is somewhat unclear, and again another sentence or two or a reworking of the passage (pp. 137-139) would clarify the matter. A third instance is the section dealing with the Congressional election of 1858. Did the Republicans actually gain control of Congress? Or did they merely secure a plurality in the House, and the Democrats retain their hold on the Senate? That election may have foretold the future, but it did not result in the transfer of control of the government to the Republican party in 1858-1859.

These are rather minor points, and may easily be overlooked. But one section of the book leaves this reviewer puzzled. In dealing with the disputed election of 1876 (p. 388), why do the authors limit themselves to a brief mention of the Wormley House Conference? C. Vann Woodward who published *Reunion and Reaction* in 1951, demonstrated that the issues in that famous election were far more complex than any story about the Wormley House could ever indicate. Even if Hesseltine and Smiley should happen to disagree with Woodward, his findings were and are important enough to warrant attention. Surely this is an oversight, perhaps made in haste, or as a result of laboring under the pressure generated by the need to add so much to the older version of the book.

Actually the entire volume leaves the impression that the authors are convinced of the greater importance of the period prior to 1876 as against the era since that date. More space is devoted to the pre-Civil War era than to the post-war period, and this reviewer finds the first half of the book more readable, with more sparkle and life, than the last half. The same is true when comparing the sections dealing with social history with those dealing with strictly political history.

The decision to omit any bibliography is deeply regretted. It is true that the volume of writings on Southern history has in-

creased tremendously, but that is just one more reason to desire a bibliography that would reflect the considered judgment of two men as well known in southern history as are Hesseltine and Smiley.

Despite any of the above criticisms, it still remains true that *The South in American History* will for some time to come remain the best single volume in its field.

WILLIAM SCHELLINGS

Norfolk College of William and Mary

The Siege of *St. Augustine in 1702.* By Charles W. Arnade. *University* of *Florida Monographs: Social* Sciences, No. 3. (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1959. 67 pp. maps, plates. $2.00.)

In the fall of 1702, Governor James Moore of South Carolina led several hundred militiamen and Indians against St. Augustine, the capital of Spanish Florida. The news that France and Spain had become allies had shocked South Carolinians into a realization that joint action between the French, entrenched along the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi River, and the Spaniards in Florida might well mean an end to their hopes of expansion and of continuing their lucrative Indian trade. Governor Moore determined to capture St. Augustine before the allies could use it as a base against Charleston itself.

In a joint land and sea operation Governor Moore reached his objective early in the second week of November. He found St. Augustine an empty town. The enterprising governor of Florida, Joseph de Zuniga y Zerda, forewarned by friendly Indians and by reports from the Spanish posts to the north which had been attacked along the way, had gathered all the inhabitants (and most of their animals) into the fort of San Marcos. There he determined to withstand siege until reinforcements should arrive.

For over seven weeks the Spanish and English forces faced each other at scarcely more than pistol shot distance, neither side able to gain decisive advantage. Dr. Arnade has vividly described this fifty-two day siege from the Spanish point of view, sketching in the English action only briefly for continuity. From documents

(found for the most part in the Stetson Collection at the University of Florida) this Florida historian has reconstructed almost a day-by-day account of the life led within the crowded beleaguered *castillo*, from the moment when Zuniga received his first rumors of impending invasion, on through the dreary, frightening siege to the welcome arrival of the Havana fleet which spelled relief to the Floridians and disappointment and defeat to their Anglo-American neighbors from South Carolina, on, finally, to the rebuilding of the burned town, and the filing of government reports, along with the attempts to find legal settlement of the various claims that had arisen as a result of the siege.

The richness of detail is almost unbelievable-in fact, well-nigh indigestible. This reviewer would like to see Dr. Arnade retell this story in a greatly expanded, more effective form. Such a treatment seems justified by the inherent unity of the subject, its real historical interest and significance not only for readers interested in Florida history but also for those concerned with a clearer picture of colonial America, (both Anglo and Spanish) and finally by the fact that it contains so many human ingredients for a fascinating story. Not only would such a rewriting make this brief, dramatic moment in Florida history available to a much wider audience but it would also make it more satisfying for the serious student of Florida history.

Even so, as it stands now it represents excellent research, with a well-written, scholarly interpretation of the data. It emphasizes the wealth available in manuscript collections in Florida for the writing of its own history and reflects credit on the already distinguished monograph series published by the University of Florida Press. Both the author and the Press are to be commended for the excellent maps and illustrations which merit more attention than they are apt to get in this somewhat limited form.

IONE STUESSY WRIGHT

University of Miami

Hamilton Holt: Journalist, Internationalist, Educator. By Warren F. Kuehl. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1960. ix, 303 pp. plates. $7.50.)

Professor Kuehl has written an interesting and fascinating biography of Hamilton Holt who was born in 1872 and died in

1951. The author divides his book into three sections, each dealing with a different phase of the life of Holt; first, as a journalist; second, as an internationalist; and third, as an educator. Holt was not an overwhelming success in any of his endeavors, because as the author states, "He failed because he was a supreme idealist who set goals which were often beyond attainment. Yet paradoxically he succeeded because he was also a practical man who acted upon his ideals in vigorous fashion."

In 1894 Hamilton Holt, while a graduate student at Columbia, took a position with *The Independent*, a prominent religious weekly magazine. From a position as reporter Holt advanced to become managing editor, then editor-in-chief, and in 1912 he became its owner. Holt was a social and political reformer and championed the rights of organized labor. He thought of himself as one of the leading progressives of the day, but was not typical of the entire movement, and as the author asserts he "refused to contribute either his pen or his journal to the muckraking crusade."

Perhaps his most lasting contribution as a writer came through his columns in *The Independent* on the subject of world peace. Holt became known as a champion of world peace through international organization. In a day when this subject was seriously considered by only the most idealistic, the editor of *The Independent* became involved in the movement for a League of Nations led by Woodrow Wilson. Though he went down in defeat with Wilson, he spent several years trying to arouse the American people to a keener appreciation of the League and its possibilities.

Hamilton Holt had no background for the last major endeavor of his life, that of an educator. He became President of Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, in 1925. From the start he criticized educational institutions of the day for becoming too large, for emphasizing research at the expense of teaching, and for the lack of contact between student and professor. He set about to make Rollins an outstanding small liberal arts college and attempted to draw around him an outstanding group of scholars and teachers. His first trouble lay in the fact that he was not able to raise the necessary funds for endowment which were necessary to accomplish all the aims he set forth, and sec-

ond, he veered too far off course from traditional educational practices to be recognized as a sound educator.

He abolished the lecture system and experimented with what he called the "Two-hour Conference Plan," which was in essence a seminar or workshop program. All study was done within the classroom, and evenings were free for the students. He abolished the traditional admissions requirements, the four year classification of college students, final examinations, and the usual method of grading. He fashioned new chairs for the faculty by creating a Professor of Leisure, a Professor of Things in General, and a Professor of Evil. His entire plan though sound in some aspects revealed many shortcomings. Though he believed in academic freedom, he was autocratic with his faculty and at one time ran into trouble with the American Association of University Professors. Rollins' physical improvements were one of Holt's lasting contributions to the college.

The book includes interesting pictures of many of Rollins' friends, a thorough essay on sources used by the author, and an adequate index. The University of Florida Press has added another attractive volume to its growing list of fine works.

S. WALTER MARTIN

Emory University

Okeechobee Hurricane and the Hoover Dike. By Lawrence E. Will. (Great Outdoors Publishing Company, St. Petersburg, Florida 1961. 110 pp. Illustrations. $3.00.)

When Lawrence E. Will was young, he was captain of a "run-boat" carrying supplies up the New River Canal from Ft. Lauderdale to his father's new town of Okeelanta, lost in the flat immensities south of Lake Okeechobee. Years later, a valuable citizen of Belle Glade (in that string of thriving Lake settlements, Canal Point, Pahokee, Kreamer, Rorrey and Ritta Islands, Chosen, South Bay and Bare Beach), he had seen the custard apple jungles cleared and the cane and vegetable fields reached out over the drained black mucklands from horizon to horizon. The watery wilderness was becoming an enormously valuable property.

But nothing he had ever seen of hardy men and intractable nature could equal the terror and drama of the hurricane of

1928, in which one raging black night changed green prosperity into a devastation of mud and ruin and two thousand dead bodies.

There is no man alive better fitted than Mr. Will to write the engrossing narrative of that disaster. He has done a wonderful job. He has piled detail on detail, name on name, story on story into an account that is so well written that it becomes a shared experience. No one but Mr. Will could have spent long patient years gathering these infinite details, listening to men's heart-broken stories of fear in roaring blackness and swirling waters, of loss and survival and endurance. He tells hundreds of tales of courage. He knew hundreds and hundreds of the people who died. He knew all the little towns and the way they were making something hopeful out of wilderness. He was there. He was one of them.

When the shrieking gray day drew into dreadful night he saw it all coming and did what he could to warn people who knew nothing of any possible consequences. In the first light of morning he had survived and not much more. With the other survivors he stared out over the ruins of his entire world.

And if that world today under the south rim of the Lake, now guarded by the great rock dike that President Hoover insisted should be built, is again peopled and clean and growing and more prosperous, it is because of the heroic endurance and the indomitable purpose of such men as Lawrence E. Will and the others who nearly worked themselves to death in the days after, changing destruction back into something alive.

It is a great pity that more such narratives of intensely dramatic local history cannot be written throughout Florida by men who have experienced them. It is a pity that people do not have the patience to accumulate the details of all such narratives and set them down as records of an important past for future understanding. It is the best of ways by which the materials of history are gathered. But it would probably be too much to expect that such local historians could all have the backgrounds of knowledge and experience, like Mr. Will's, combined with the educated writing ability that in organization of material and in descriptive force cannot in any way be improved upon.

As a whole, this little book is one of the best descriptions and narrations of the nature and effect of a hurricane I have ever read. It will take an important place in the literature of hurricanes

as well as in all collections of Florida books anywhere. It is very well illustrated with photographs that add to the total effect.

MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS
(Author of *Hurricane* and *The Everglades: River of grass.)*

The Story of Mount Dora Florida. By R. J. Longstreet. (Mount Dora Historical Society, 1960. xiii, 246 pp. Illustrations, index. $7.50.)

Mount Dora is neither large (3,756 in 1960) nor ancient (less than a century) nor even particularly important historically except to those who live there. It is an average small Florida community not yet overrun by the rush of modern progress. But it is unique in at least one respect. Its history is duly recorded in a book. People who wonder what a historical society may do in a sparsely settled area may well take a look at the work of the Mount Dora Historical Society, founded in 1953 for the express purpose of getting the history of the community written and published. Certainly the momentum built up in achieving this goal will lead to other projects, possibly, if this reviewer may suggest one, a county history.

In a sense this book is a community enterprise. This does not detract from the importance of the author who credits several articles on special topics to a number of different writers. For example, Frederick W. Sleight, archeologist and anthropologist, does a brief account of what is known of Indian antiquity in the region. That this was not an important part of its history does not make it less important that it be included in any effort at telling the whole story of Mount Dora. The book is full of accounts of community enterprises, from the cooperative effort that established the first school house to the history writing project. Here is a story that has happened over and over again in American frontier communities, but few of them have ever made the organized effort to get their history written. This book also reveals the important sources of local historical data. Until a regularly published newspaper begins to record passing events the reliance is chiefly upon personal letters, reminiscences, and documents and public records of school boards, county commissioners, and the like-if these have not been lost or burned;

Moral for people who would like to have the history of their communities preserved: see to the preservation of public and private records. The author is quick to acknowledge the doubtful authenticity of some of the recollections. He rightly regrets that the origin of place names has not been clearly established. If we knew the history of place names in Florida we would know infinitely more about early history.

A battalion of Alabama volunteers passed the Mount Dora region in the Seminole War in 1837. Squatters certainly lived there before the Civil War. But modern settlement begins with the first homesteaders in the 1870's. A narrow gauge railroad from Astor on the St. Johns River brought in more settlers in the 1880's and led to the establishment of a post office, though it was not called Mount Dora until 1883 when some sixteen families were living around the landing. Notes of more than local interest appear from time to time such as the continuing, disastrous effect of the freezes in the winter of 1894-5. Human interest items abound, such as paying the school teacher an extra sum at the end of the term for "teaching, janitoring and incidentals." Any country school teacher is likely to conclude the teacher doubled as janitor as he too often did.

In another sense this is a reference book with many lists of names of people who have held this or that office. An index includes nearly nine hundred names. But these are separate from the narrative and may be used for what they are. There is also a brief account of every organization that has ever existed in the community. Two of these are of particular significance for so small a place. The first annual assembly of the South Florida Chatauqua was in 1887. For twenty years until fire destroyed the auditorium and hotel the Chatauqua brought religious instruction, speakers of national Chatauqua reputation, and entertainment to Mount Dora and the region thereabout. In February, 1949, a little theater group started the Icehouse Players in an abandoned ice house and ten years later the players moved into their own building. Forty-eight full page plates each showing historic buildings or persons, and a number of maps and plats reproduced, add value and interest to the volume.

CHARLTON W. TEBEAU

University of Miami