

1964

Book Reviews

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Recommended Citation

Society, Florida Historical (1964) "Book Reviews," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 43 : No. 1 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol43/iss1/7>

BOOK REVIEWS

Aristocrat in Uniform: General Duncan L. Clinch. By Rembert W. Patrick. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press for the Florida Historical Society, 1963. xi, 226 pp. Preface, illustrations, notes, map, bibliography, index. \$5.50.)

Few persons outside of the states of Florida and Georgia ever heard of General Duncan L. Clinch. This fact alone is ample justification for the publication of a full length study of his career. And in the competent hands of Rembert W. Patrick the General receives sympathetic but fair treatment. Clinch was not a glamorous or dashing figure; he did not slaughter frontier Indians or Spaniards in abundance; he did not sway great masses with rousing oratory; he was not a party to any great scandal. He was a competent frontier soldier with a decided sense of duty, a successful planter, and a not so successful Whig politician. Patrick correctly labels him as "a regionally important but nationally neglected man." He failed to gain the recognition awarded other frontier warriors such as Andrew Jackson, Winfield Scott, Thomas Jesup, or Edmund P. Gaines, but he performed a service which under the circumstances might have been just as important as that performed by these better known figures.

Clinch's military career began in 1808, and continued until his resignation from the army in 1836. During that period he attained the permanent rank of colonel, and for distinguished service he was breveted brigadier general. His active service was on the Florida frontier, where Indians, outlaws, and all types of adventurers had their day because neither Spain nor the United States was willing to spend the time and effort necessary to establish order. Clinch fought no decisive battles; he retired before the close of the Seminole War. But his name was associated with the destruction of Negro Fort in 1816, and the Battle of Withlacoochee in 1836, a skirmish which a victory-hungry press pronounced "a great victory." Clinch was given the title of "Hero of Withlacoochee."

But Osceola, the Seminole warrior, was not impressed. To Clinch he sent a statement of determination: "You have guns

and so have we; you have powder and lead and so have we; you have men and so have we; your men will fight, and so will ours until the last drop of Seminoles' blood has moistened the dust of his hunting grounds."

The Seminole War continued, but General Clinch, frustrated, distrustful of volunteers under General Call, and resentful of the arrival of General Scott, retired from active service to try his hand at politics. But one term in Congress and an unsuccessful race for governor of Georgia convinced him of the desirability of private life as a rice planter. Largely through inheritance from his marriages, he amassed a fortune in land and slaves before his death in 1849. Never truly tested in battle and failing to gain more than local political prominence, General Clinch passed from the memory of all but family and friends; his services to his country, however, deserve more recognition and a place in recorded history. Professor Patrick has done a commendable job of rediscovering General Clinch.

JOSEPH H. PARKS

University of Georgia

The History of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

By Leedell W. Neyland and John W. Riley. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1963. xi, 303 pp. Foreword, preface, illustrations, bibliography, appendix, index. \$6.50.)

Just as the Negro was being disfranchised in Florida after Reconstruction, the State legislature in 1887, for reasons the authors do not make clear, established in Tallahassee the State Normal College for Colored Students. Led by Thomas DeSaille Tucker, a remarkable African-born Negro who was graduated from Oberlin, and aided by the Federal Morrill Act of 1890, the little institution offered a broad liberal education, and, by the turn of the century, was producing a major proportion of Florida's Negro teachers. But, as is often the case, each step forward for the Negro seemed to be followed shortly by a step backward. White politicians, again with motives that should have been explored, forced Tucker's resignation and transformed the school into the Booker T. Washington mold of vocational training with most of its work in subjects like farming, woodworking, dress-making, and barbering.

Under the long administrations of Nathan B. Young (1901-1923) and J. R. E. Lee (1924-1944), the school inched forward. The authors tell a poignant story of the cruel economies that were necessary, the pitifully inadequate facilities, and the humiliating eagerness with which the presidents begged for aid. As late as 1944, there were some 800 students, and only a single faculty member with a Ph.D. degree. After the Second World War, progress was marred by unsavory corruption within the institution, but since 1950, under the much-praised leadership of George W. Gore, achievements have been spectacular. In 1953, the institution became the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, and today has an enrollment of over 3,000, a faculty with approximately fifty Ph.D.'s, and fully accredited programs in arts and sciences, agriculture, home economics, education, engineering, law, nursing, and pharmacy, plus a graduate program leading to the M.A. degree in education.

The authors develop their story around careful evaluations of succeeding administrations and around the sometimes conflicting theme of progress. Two good chapters on student life emphasize the stern regime of manual labor and religious devotion during the early years, and the special importance of athletics and musical activities today. A good chapter on the alumni reveals remarkable achievements in such professions as teaching, medicine, and the ministry, and a lack of achievement in the business world.

The authors might have given their story far greater significance by some reference to the history of the State and to the development of higher education in other institutions. Except for the personalities of its presidents, there is almost no analysis of the forces which helped or hindered the school's development, no fundamental questioning of changing educational aims, and no attempt to probe the mind and aspirations of the Negro. Historians, like colleges, are in danger of withering on the vine unless they dare to ask the big questions.

The style, although lucid, is marred by an embarrassing misuse of words, a painful overuse of cliches, and a careless inconsistency in capitalization.

GEORGE H. CALLCOTT

University of Maryland

Pirates, Indians, and Spaniards: Father Escobedo's "La Florida."

Edited by James W. Covington. Translated by A. E. Falcones. (St. Petersburg: Great Outdoors Publishing Company, 1963. xvi, 174 pp. Foreword, introduction, footnotes, index, maps. \$5.00.)

Fray Alonso Gregorio de Escobedo, a Franciscan father at Nombre de Dios mission, arrived in Florida late in 1587, and remained for about ten years. Sometime during this period he began writing an epic poem entitled "La Florida," which was finished, perhaps in Spain, around 1609, if we may judge from internal evidence. In content it presented a series of historical, biographical, and descriptive vignettes on Spanish Florida and the Greater Antilles during the late 1500's and early 1600's. Never published, it eventually came to rest in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid. An English translation of the manuscript has now been published by Dr. Covington and Mr. Falcones who made its charm and fact available to scholarly and popular audiences.

The first 136 folios, not published since they contain no historical material, consist of eight long dedicatory sonnets. The remainder of the poem is devoted to the somewhat sketchily put together vignettes, which span the period from 1587, to the time of the Guale revolt (1597-98). The translated vignettes begin with an account of the voyage of Escobedo's twelve Franciscan companions from Spain to Florida, their arrival there, and their ensuing activities. Escobedo's own adventures in the Greater Antilles form a large part of the succeeding chapters. Many secular sidelights on both Florida and the Antilles are interwoven throughout the body of the poem.

Escobedo's first-hand experiences are interesting-even fascinating-but most of his crucial historical accounts seem to have come from second-hand knowledge. For this reason the poem is not of primary value to the historian, for the documentary sources of the Archivo General de Indias and other repositories give him at least as full and as accurate an historical picture of the times. The anthropologist, however, will consider this translation of Escobedo's poem to be of considerable worth. There is some ethnographic data on the Arawak of the Greater Antilles (presumably the Taino) in Folios 184 and 199-218b. The Timucua of North and Central Florida receive considerable attention in

Folios 326-353b, and South Florida tribes (the Tequesta?) are briefly discussed in Folios 239-245. Though hardly exhaustive, this ethnographic material, some of it new, is of value to the anthropologist, particularly since it forms one of the earliest eye-witness accounts of Indian life and beliefs in Florida.

The Falcones translation is an excellent, quite literal, prose rendition. Each translated folio is preceded by the folio number, and an adequate index is included. Dr. Covington's preface and introduction give the reader a minimum but important amount of background information on the times and the manuscript itself. His critical and documentary notes are carefully and fully done, making it possible for the reader to correlate the contents of the poem with other published sources.

One wishes that the Spanish text had also been published, but, as Dr. Covington quite legitimately points out, printing costs often prohibit that scholarly luxury. In general, the volume will be found a very welcome addition to the ranks of Spanish Florida literature, well worth the considerable time and effort that Dr. Covington and Mr. Falcones have obviously given it. Of first importance to the anthropologist, it will also be of interest to the historian, and even the general reader will find it rapid, fascinating reading.

JULIAN GRANBERRY

University of Buffalo

The Valiant Pioneers, A History of Ormond Beach, Volusia County, Florida. By Alice Strickland. (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1963. 116 pp. Bibliography. \$3.95.)

The Valiant Pioneers is a lively account of early settlers in the area of present day Ormond Beach. It is an especially timely book, interesting to the many new residents who have come to live near the research centers around Cape Kennedy.

The writer has made good use of old newspaper files and interviews with representatives of pioneer families. The story of the first automobile races on Ormond-Daytona Beach is well and amusingly told.

There are important oversights in the background history. While describing plantations of the British period, there is no

New Smyrna, Florida in the Civil War. By Zelia Wilson Sweett. (Volusia County Historical Commission, 1963. 21 pp. Illustrations, documents. \$1.00.)

The title of this small monograph is apt to be misleading for it actually refers to only a single incident, "The shelling and burning of New Smyrna and the 'House on the Hill,' on July 26th, 1863, and a short biography of John and Jane Sheldon, the owners."

"This 'hill' was an Indian shell mound hundreds of years old, into which had been built the massive foundations of some forgotten mansion. This now served as a firm base for the Sheldon home, a house of some 40 rooms built of dressed timber which the Swift ships had brought from the north. It was said to have been the largest hotel south of St. Augustine at that time."

A prior footnote explains, "Swift Brothers of Falmouth, Mass., cut live oak for many miles both north and south of the Inlet, for the years between 1816 and 1874, except when they were interrupted by the Seminole War and the Civil War. . . . There are many places in the vicinity deriving their names from various Swift operations."

It is regrettable that the episodic arrangement of this pamphlet, and the lack of continuity create so many ambiguities as to make it almost unreadable. Paragraph 1 opens with "Today, the 26th of July, 1963, is the centennial . . . ;" while Paragraph 2 flicks us back, "In 1860. . . ." Further along: "On April 27th, 1862, the Confederates fired some timber . . ." and next - "The blockaders may have been bored . . . when on July 9th, 1863 . . ."

The last nine pages are devoted to lists of "The Federal Dead, Confederate Soldiers of East Volusia County" and excerpts from official Confederate and Federal records.

BAYNARD KENDRICK

Tampa Tribune