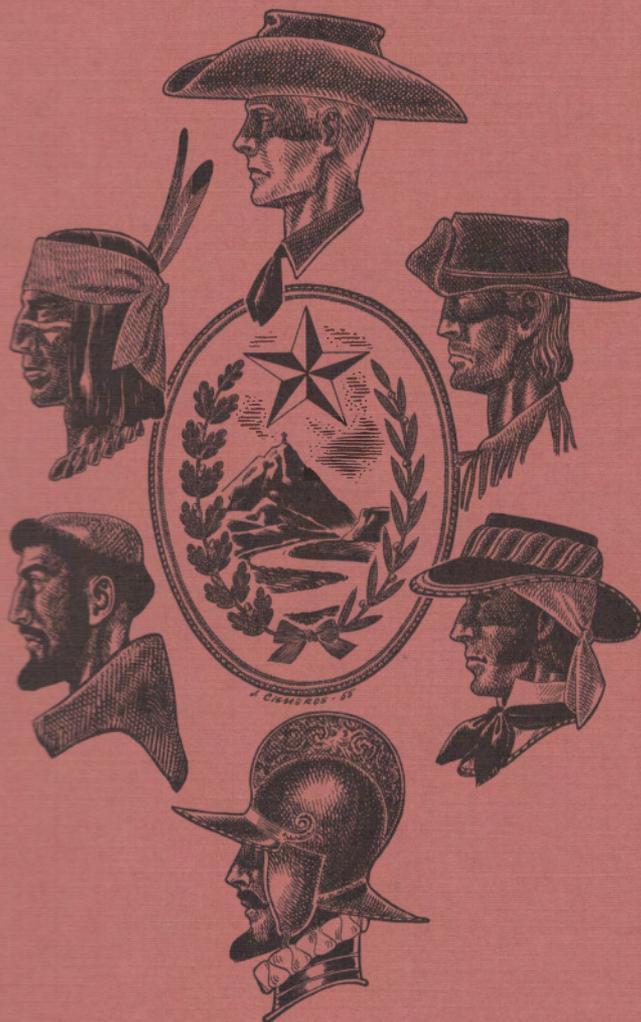


# PASSWORD



THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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# FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS



## WILDERNESS COALITION

*This issue's "title-page insignia" is the logo of the Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition. Organized in 1978, the Coalition is dedicated to "preserving the scenic beauty and wilderness character of the Franklin Mountains." The logo appears in this issue with the permission of the Coalition.*

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# EUGENE THURSTON, Cartoonist

*Portrait of an Artist Getting Started*

by Carol Price Miller

**M**ost people in the El Paso Southwest know about Eugene Thurston's landscapes, those purple mountain scenes set in desert vistas untouched by man, with magnificent clouds in the sky above. Few realize that before he was a painter he was a cartoonist. Eugene Thurston is my grandfather, and he has recalled for me his first steps along the road of artistic endeavor.

As a boy, he liked to watch his friend Dean Harper draw cartoons, sitting at a table with a bottle of black ink, brushes, pencils, pens, and all that white paper. While he watched Dean, he began to realize that he was interested in becoming a cartoonist himself. "So I started practicing." At fifteen years of age, he and Dean were both on the staff of *The Tatler* at the old El Paso High School on Arizona Street. Gene wrote the articles and Dean would illustrate them.

One day he dropped by Dean's house to pick up a drawing to go with an article about the school band. "Dean didn't have the drawing ready. So I drew my own picture of a band, with people blowing on

tubas and beating drums, and it came out OK," says Grandpa. "After that I began doing my own illustrations for the articles I was writing."

He started keeping a scrapbook of drawings by various cartoonists that he admired, like Donahey of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*; A. E. Hayward, another syndicated newspaper cartoonist; Gus Uley and D. R. Howell of *Cartoonaday Service*; H. M. Myers; and Ken Herriman's comic-page strip, "Felix the Cat." He studied these black and white pictures and cartoon strips to get ideas for his own drawings. They gave him clues about how to draw the funny hats ladies wore, the silly shapes of people sometimes, and the antics of cats, birds, and dogs.

The first order of business for a cartoonist was to develop a professional-looking signature. Gene practiced signing "Thurston" in the style of the day to inscribe at the bottom of his cartoons. The signature was very different from the way he would sign his paintings in later years. The popular signature of the time, at least for cartoonists, had long lines sticking out with circles on the end somewhat like lollipops or yo-yo's. Young Gene developed a signature that had yo-yo's coming down off the two T's in his name.

Once the signature had been taken care of, Gene was ready. And very soon there began to appear in *The Tatler* his cartoon strips chronicling the ups and downs of the debate team, the track team, and the football team, as well as the high points of student life. Four other student artists worked with him on *The Tatler*: Maurice Blumenthal, Elliot Chess, Robert Wolff, and Dean Harper.

"We can't thank these boys enough," said the dedication in an article about the staff. "*The Tatler* looked to these boys to help, and they gave it. . . . To us their gifts appear to be marvelous, and if the *Tatler* can help only a few students like these to find themselves, its painful existence is justified." Shortly after this high praise, Dean Harper, at age sixteen, died suddenly, the victim of a freak and tragic accident.

Cartoon drawings were used at the head of each section in *The Tatler*. To introduce the writeups about the football team, young Gene penned sketches of skinny football players chasing slippery pigskins. The section for the sophomore class in 1915 was heralded by his sketch of a young man driving a Model T Ford over a road full of boulders, each one labeled with a required course of study: Latin, English, Math, Spanish, and History. He entitled this drawing "The Rocky Road to Graduation." In a 1916 issue, *The Tatler* sported his self-portrait up



in the corner of the Commercial Club page: a young man with shirt sleeves rolled up, heels hooked on the rung of his chair, working at a drawing table.

Gene Thurston was finding it so much fun to draw that he enlisted in a correspondence course from an eastern art academy.

"The only good art schools were in the East," he says. "Twenty-five dollars I paid for that first course, and that was an awful lot of money back then. It was one of those that gave you an assignment about something to draw, like people sitting on a park bench, and then you sent in the drawing and they critiqued it." Unfortunately, he lent the assignment book to a classmate halfway through the course and never got it back. "I didn't finish that correspondence course in drawing, because I would have had to pay the price for a new course all over again."

But the interest remained, and Gene kept on drawing.

In 1916, El Paso High School was going through an exciting time, getting ready for a big move. Facing the problem of a steadily increasing enrollment, El Paso's only high school was bursting at the seams. The building, which had been constructed in 1902, was so crowded that some of the students had to be sent off to finish assignments outside of school. From the old building, everyone watched as the fine new high school, designed by architects Trost and Trost, was being constructed on the heights above, seven blocks away. It was built in classical style, four stories high, out of brick, tile, and concrete, "as nearly fireproof as a school can be."<sup>1</sup>

The big move would be in 1917, to this half-million dollar building that would hold fifteen hundred students (three times the population at the Arizona Street building) and would also have such wonders as a gymnasium, a stadium, and a cafeteria!

The town was growing rapidly, too, and changing. El Paso, just ten years previously the home of a few thousand people, was now the



hub of north/south and east/west travel routes and the center of United States-Mexico trade. El Paso's population grew from 39,000 in 1910 to 77,000 in 1920. The downtown area was exploding with new building projects. Between 1912 and 1919 the grand Paso del Norte Hotel was built, as well as the Caples, the Toltec, and the Banner buildings, all designed by the greatly respected firm of Trost and Trost. The town was expanding in area, too. In 1914, Pete Kern had staked out a residential development located way up on the mesa. He called it Kern Place, and by 1916 it had a couple of houses, several curvilinear streets graded, and a fancy entrance gate with 333 lights.

El Paso was also experiencing an automobile-craze. Suddenly – or so it seemed – hundreds of “Tin Lizzies,” as well as roadsters and touring cars, were bumping along the rocky streets. There were Hudsons, Overlands, Studebakers, Chandlers, Maxwells, Chevys, and of course Fords. In 1916, to accommodate this new type of transportation, El Paso undertook the biggest street-paving campaign in the nation and built more than eight miles of streets that year, at a cost of \$390,000. According to Grandpa, most of the cars on the streets were Fords – probably because Henry Ford was going for volume sales to get his prices low; at one point, in spite of up-grading to a \$5-a-day minimum wage on his assembly lines, he had his cars priced at \$260 a unit.<sup>2</sup> Those Model T's populated many of Gene Thurston's comic strips and drawings.

By graduating a year late, in 1917 rather than in 1916 as he was supposed to, Eugene Thurston got to be part of the first class to graduate from the new El Paso High School, a class of 77 proud students, and the first ever to get to wear caps and gowns.<sup>3</sup> Years later, Grandpa tells me, “A *Herald-Post* reporter caught me and asked, ‘Why did it take you five years to finish high school, instead of four? You started in 1912.’” The explanation was simple: “I told him it was because I was enjoying myself.”

What Gene enjoyed most at El Paso High was drawing and working on *The Tatler*. As for topics of study in school, “I didn't really have any favorite subjects – it was just a matter of taking them as they came. But there was an English class I liked very much, with Jeanie M. Frank, our senior English teacher. She really inspired all of us.\* Gene was also a yell leader and remembers taking a week-long

\*Editor's note: For extended treatments of Jeanie M. Frank and her teaching career at El Paso High School, see Martha Patterson Peterson, “Dynamic Mrs. Frank,” *Password*, XXXIII, 3 (Fall, 1988), and Judge Morris Galatzan, “Tribute to Jeanie MacCallum Frank,” *Password*, XXXIV, 1 (Spring, 1989), 13.

trip to Austin with the team by train to help yell for the football game. He also worked as an usher at the Wigwam Theater (which later became the State) on San Antonio Street. "I remember getting a lot of good ideas for my drawings from the movie posters," he says.

By his senior year in 1917, Gene Thurston was editor of *The Tatler* and responsible for much of the artwork. One change he made



was to shade in the new masthead that ran across the top of each page with a profile of the new school. Until that year, *The Tatler* had been more of a yearbook than a newspaper, a seven-by-ten-inch journal that summarized the school year and included pictures of graduating seniors and various clubs. Now, in 1917, it termed itself "a mouthpiece of the student body" and began issuing a larger-sized magazine six times a year with stories, pictures and poems, as well as the annual, to encourage the development of the literary department. "I don't know how I found the time to do all that I did that year," says Grandpa. This little verse by Georgia Graham of *The Tatler* staff maybe explains:

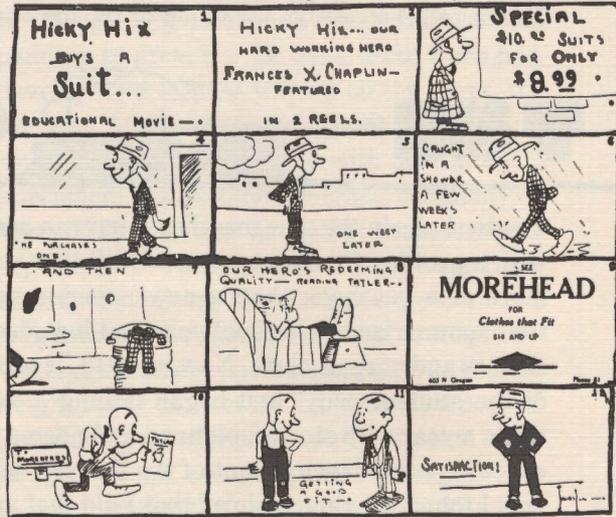
Our Editor digs right in,  
He doesn't shirk,  
His noble brow does freely perspire  
To make our Tatler a live wire.  
He works, he reads, he sits up at night  
To make our Tatler columns right.

With help from the other *Tatler* artists and writers, Gene populated those issues with plenty of comical figures, cartoon strips, poems, and stories. He also helped sell ads for the back pages of the *Tatler*. "The U.S. Army Favors the Dodge Brothers Motor Car," said the advertisement for the Lone Star Motor Company. The White House and the Popular – El Paso's two fashionable department stores – ran ads in *The Tatler*, as well as El Paso Trunk Factory: "Across Plaza, Next to Crawford Theatre, Bell Phone 1054."

When the Morehead Company, "a gentlemen's clothing store" at 403 North Oregon wanted a drawing for its ad, editor Thurston presented the firm with a whole cartoon strip: "Hicky Hix Buys a Suit." The twelve-block cartoon is subtitled "An Educational Movie in

2 Reels." The hero, played by "Francis X. Chaplin," first buys a plaid suit on sale in some other store, at the special price of \$9.99 (marked down from \$10.00). He walks around town in it and gets caught in the rain, whereupon it becomes shapeless and about half its original size. So Hix hikes up the hill to Morehead's, where he gets carefully fitted and emerges a new man.

Gene really had fun in those days with his drawings, but if someone had told him in 1916 what his future would bring, he would have been very surprised, because his father wanted him to become an accountant. So he diligently studied his numbers, somehow passed Miss Goldstein's math classes ("I had to



take every course with her twice, because I didn't study," Grandpa confesses), and prepared for a career in business. But he also kept on drawing cartoons. And he sent these cartoons off to many of the magazines from which he had collected samples for his scrapbook.

When the magazines sent him rejection letters, he put those in his scrapbook. "The editor of *LIFE* regrets that he cannot use the enclosed," said one, this statement softened by "the rejection of a contribution does not necessarily imply that it is lacking in merit." The editors of *Film Fun* and *The Parisienne* magazines in New York also regretted that "we are unable to use a drawing at this time."

A rejection letter from *Vanity Fair* magazine in New York shows that young Gene was not confining his material to the high school scene, but (like any cartoonist, indeed like any artist) was making use of red-hot current events. Addressed to "Eugene Thurston, Esq.," the letter reads: "Thank you very much for permitting us to see your sketches of the Mexican question. We are only sorry that we cannot make use of them, clever and amusing as they are."

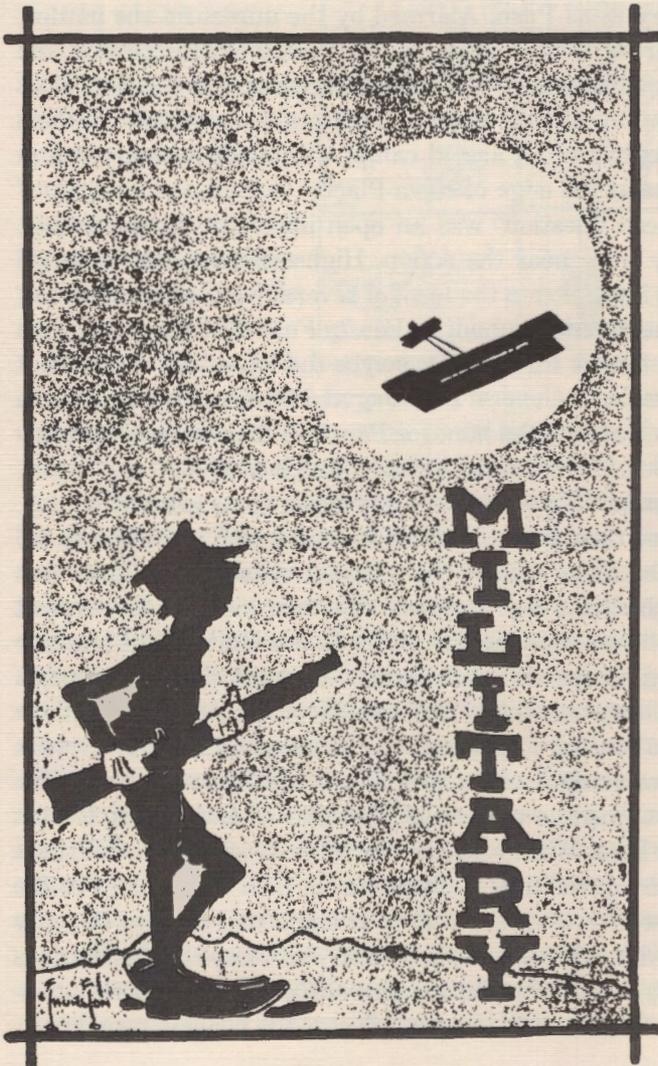
The "Mexican question" referred, of course, to the revolutionary strife that was tearing Mexico asunder. Ever since 1911, from its ringside seat at the border, El Paso had been watching the drama un-

fold. Madero, Orozco, Villa, Huerta – all had supporters and all wanted to take over the government. At one time Mexico, in complete confusion, had four presidents at once! (Heady stuff for a cartoonist.) Known at the time as “the land where peace breaks out once in a while” (according to historian C. W. Hackett), Mexico was causing much consternation on the American side, the situation becoming especially tense during the years 1915-1917. Juárez was the largest Mexican city on the border, and its capture was essential to the rebels. Because of relentless fighting among the factions and the tumultuous winds of political change, refugees were streaming across the border seeking sanctuary in El Paso. Alarmed by the unrest on the border, President Woodrow Wilson sent 20,000 United States troops and 15,000 national guardsmen to join the 5,000 regulars at the Fort Bliss Military Reservation. Troops were moved into the city, and El Paso took on the character of an armed camp, with soldiers quartered in tents on the mesa at the edge of Kern Place.<sup>4</sup>

The “Mexican question” was an open invitation to cartoonists, especially if they were near the action. Highschooler Gene Thurston responded to the invitation in the form of several “clever and amusing” sketches which he dared to submit to *Vanity Fair*. But the young man wasn’t yet ready for the big time. Or maybe the “question” was too hot to handle . . . what with General Pershing and company being down in Mexico at the time and on the hunt for Pancho Villa, who had brazenly attacked Columbus, New Mexico, in early March of 1916.

As the class of '17 moved closer and closer to its graduation day, El Pasoans shifted their attention from the revolution in Mexico to the big conflict on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>5</sup> War fever was sweeping throughout the city. The new volunteer men’s cadet corps at El Paso High School was made one of the Junior Units of the Reserve Officers Training Corps. Retired Colonel Gerrard had been put in charge of the military training of the boys, favorable recommendations had been made to the War Department by its inspectors, uniforms were purchased, drill was begun, rifles were issued, and ammunition was released for target practice under the direction of Lieutenant Robert Coker from Fort Bliss. Word was expected from Washington that there would be compulsory military training for all high school boys in the near future. There were women cadets at High, too, dressed in spiffy white uniforms with sailor bows at the neck. The United States Marines recruited actively, even in the back pages of the *Tatler*. And on the inside pages, Gene Thurston’s cartoons reflected the new military fervor.

Upon leaving school, *The Tatler* cartoonists split up. Maurice Blumenthal had to go to Los Angeles to help with his family's business; Elliott Chess went to Canada to join the British Air Force, and the other *Tatler* draftsman, Robert Wolff, just "quietly disappeared." Grandpa thinks that these *Tatler* artists did not continue their drawing when they went off to work or war, because "that was business – and the drawing was a pleasure." He, however, was lucky. He got to combine business with pleasure for the rest of his life, drawing, painting, and eventually becoming an art teacher and distinguished landscape artist.



*Eugene Thurston, student editor and illustrator of The Tatler, created this drawing to introduce the new "Cadets Section" in a 1917 issue of the El Paso High School publication.*

But it takes a while to get yourself known. Finally, in 1917, the *El Paso Herald* printed a political cartoon of his on its editorial page. The large drawing showed the American Red Cross reaching out to help the people in Europe. He sent a copy of the cartoon to the art school where he was taking a correspondence course at the time, the Landon School of Illustrating and Cartooning in Cleveland, Ohio. Mr. Landon wrote back, "I want to say frankly that for your first work published, the drawing is really well handled . . ." And to add encouragement: "As your work improves keep showing your drawings . . ."

Now out of school, Thurston worked in the accounting office of the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad long enough to get a travel pass, and then headed for New York to enlist. In September, he went to the draft board and was assigned to a new camp in South Carolina. There, the recruits were given the job of stringing fences with their bare hands. "You had to go to town to get gloves, and they wouldn't let us leave the camp." But luckily, after seeing the blisters on Gene's hands and learning that he could type and knew accounting, the sergeant moved Gene inside to work at a desk. "But I only stayed in the army for a short time. I had signed on for the duration, and the war was winding down. They took us all back to New York on December 31st, fed us a lot of food we hadn't seen for a long time, and then we went off to celebrate New Year's Eve and freedom in Times Square. Then I had to pay my own way home."

Back in El Paso, Thurston was offered a job with his father, T. A. Thurston, and partner, C. M. Grider, Certified Public Accountants, in their office at the City National Bank Building. "My father told me I'd make no money as an artist and should be an accountant instead. But after seeing that I was sincere about art, he paid for correspondence courses for me, good courses over a two-year period in commercial art training out of Philadelphia and New York and in the industrial arts from the Federal Schools in Minneapolis."

While studying his correspondence art courses, Eugene Thurston continued his employment as an accountant for his father's firm. He also did some "moonlighting" once in a while: he started making greeting cards and worked on commercial art at the International Engraving Company on South El Paso Street near the Bijou Theater. It was run by the Wilson brothers, Buford and Floyd. "I learned a lot about engraving, etching, and all that by hanging around there," says Grandpa. "The Wilson brothers made line cuts for the newspaper and other businesses around town. They'd work on their cuts and I'd work

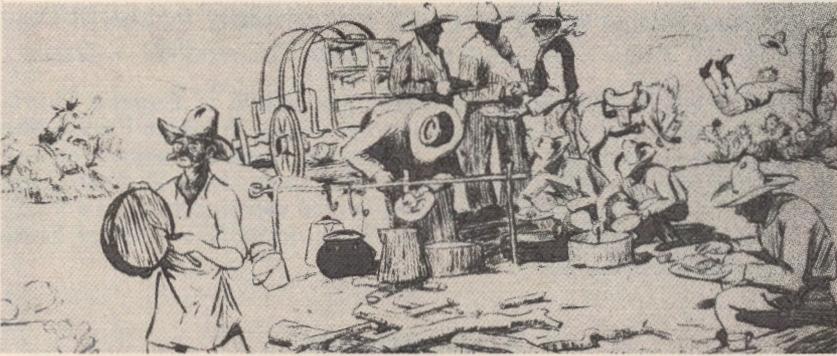
on my drawings, and then I'd get some of them printed up." The Wilsons' press was for straight printing. It could print line drawings and engravings using screens with dots to get dark and light shadings, but it could only print black and white. After experimenting with the Wilsons' commercial press for a while, Thurston started experimenting on a lithograph press.

In about 1920 the Rocky Mountain Bank Note Company had become established on East Missouri Street with a state-of-the-art lithograph press. Lithography was a new method of printing which allowed for the rapid and large-scale reproduction of documents and pictures. It was a technical and commercial proposition, but it led to innovation in the field of graphic reproduction, and many artists were beginning to experiment with the lithograph method. There were few presses available to the artists, and they had to experiment on the commercial ones, as Eugene Thurston did. In America, the earliest classes that taught this method were at the Chicago Art Institute in 1929.<sup>6</sup>

Artists soon realized that the new process could capture and transfer onto paper their touch and personality fairly simply. Gene Thurston developed a lithograph process by which he could turn out a print having many overlays of color, a different zinc plate being used for each color.<sup>7</sup> He found that the manager at Rocky Mountain, Nelson Davidson, enjoyed having him around. "Davidson was interested in experimenting with drawings and trying to reproduce some color work on the presses there. We made some nine-by-twelve prints for calendars and also some greeting cards. I remember I sold one print for a calendar to the El Paso Laundry." When Davidson left, Carl Hertzog took over. The experimenting continued, Grandpa tells me, for Carl was also interested in reproducing drawings and colored designs, especially for books.

Meanwhile Gene Thurston had married Anna Lind from Albuquerque. They built a house in Kern Place right on the spot where the military encampment had been located in the days of Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution in 1916. In their Model T Ford they traveled a lot up the Rio Grande valley to the Santa Fe, Taos, and Albuquerque areas – where he studied the Spanish- and Mexican-style homes, the Indian adobes in Santa Fe, and the colorful native people selling their wares among the missions. He bought his own small hand press in Albuquerque for \$25 and installed it in his basement to facilitate a business he had started.

Using his new printing skills, Thurston mass-produced many kinds of greeting cards, each kind displaying in vivid colors a Thurs-



*A drawing made in 1925 by Eugene Thurston for the cover of a greeting card. (Courtesy Carol Price Miller)*

ton rendition of a distinctive Southwestern scene.<sup>8</sup> Some were cartoons featuring kids wearing sombreros and mounted on burros; others depicted cowboys gathered at the chuckwagon or señoritas being serenaded by fancy-dressed mariachis. According to the *El Paso Herald* of December 15, 1925, “The cards when completed give the impression of being hand-painted; and El Pasoans have taken to the idea of replacing their usual snow scenes with typical desert, sun-lit, and gaily colored Mexican scenes.”

Thurston’s greeting-card business was brisk for many years. He had outlets from San Antonio clear up to Santa Fe; and some of the local customers – like D. C. Crowell Insurance, the Chevrolet company, Acme Laundry, Norton Brothers, and Mr. Hardage from the Popular – would order Christmas cards every year. The card business helped support the family during the Depression when accounting jobs were not always handy. “I was pretty good at it, but it became too much for a one-man business,” says Grandpa; “so I just finally quit making cards except for a few. Also, the cost got so high I was ashamed to ask my customers for more money.”

Meanwhile, Eugene Thurston was also drawing desert scenes and snow scenes and painting them with watercolors – getting interested in reproducing the beauty of the desert Southwest. He didn’t do much cartooning after that, except in delightful letters to his children and grandchildren much later on.

My grandfather is well known now – not for his cartoons, but for his paintings and water colors. And it all started way back in 1915

when Dean Harper didn't have that cartoon ready for the El Paso High School *Tatler* article that young Gene Thurston had written.

**CAROL PRICE MILLER**, the oldest grandchild of Eugene Thurston, is the author of *Early El Paso Artists* (Texas Western Press). She has an M.A. in history, an M.A. in English, and has been teaching English at The University of Texas at El Paso and the El Paso Community College for several years. She is now working toward a Ph.D. in Professional Communication and Rhetoric at New Mexico State University.

#### *Acknowledgments*

Many thanks are due to Joe Perez, the unofficial archivist of Mr. Thurston's records, who spent several weeks searching out and organizing the artist's paintings, drawings, and papers.

Under the title "The Life and Times of Eugene Thurston," sections of this article appeared in the Winter/Spring 1992 issue of *Mountain Passages*. The author expresses her thanks to *Mountain Passages* for permitting her to include these sections in the present article.

#### NOTES

1. Anne Kelly, research paper for Dr. Rex Strickland, History 390, Texas College of Mines, undated (Special Collections, The University of Texas at El Paso Library).
2. E. D. Kennedy, *The Automobile Industry: The Coming of Age of Civilization's Favorite Child* (New York: Hitchcock, 1941); Ralph C. Epstein, *The Automobile Industry* (New York: Arno Press, 1972).
3. Mary Margaret Davis, "Plans Roll Along to Reunite El Paso High's Classes of '17-'20," *El Paso Times*, January 25, 1987. At the time this article was written, several classmates of Mr. Thurston were making plans to attend the reunion: Frances Earle Brown, Martha Patterson Peterson, Elizabeth Kelly, Mary Kelly Quinn, Gladys Lundy Fox, Lucita Escajeda Flores, Harold DePew, and Irving Schwartz.
4. El Paso's border problems in 1916-1917 are discussed in C. L. Sonnichsen's *Pass of the North*, Frank Mangan's *El Paso in Pictures*, and John Middagh's *Frontier Newspaper*.
5. Mardee deWetter, "Revolutionary El Paso 1910-1917," Texas College of Mines Master's thesis, 1946 (Special Collections, The University of Texas at El Paso Library).
6. Domenico Porzio, ed., *Lithography: 200 Years of Art, History & Technique* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1963); John Muench, *The Painter's Guide to Lithography* (Cincinnati: North Light Publishers, 1983); Claire Leighton, *Wood Engraving and Woodcuts* (New York: Studio Publications, 1948).
7. "Artist Will Explain Printmaking at Museum," *El Paso Times*, January 17, 1930.
8. See Eugene Thurston, "Sixty-Odd Years in the Greeting Card Business," *Password*, XXIX, 2 (Summer, 1984), 88-93.



# Charles Wright

## *Botanizer of the Boundary*

### *Part II: At the Edge of the Power Struggle in the U.S. Boundary Commission*

by Clinton P. Hartmann

*Editor's note: The reader is reminded that Part I of "Charles Wright: Botanizer of the Boundary" appeared in the Summer 1992 issue and was titled "A Connecticut Yankee in Van Horne's Train." Based on letters written by Connecticut-born Charles Wright to Dr. Asa Gray, the eminent Harvard botanist, Part I told of Wright's arduous journey from San Antonio to the Valley of El Paso in the summer of 1849 as a somewhat unwelcome "botanizer" permitted to travel with the military wagon train commanded by Major Jefferson Van Horne.*

**A**fter returning to San Antonio in 1849 from his botany-blazing trail to far Western Texas, our peripatetic botanizer, Charles Wright, spent the next sixteen months – November, 1850-May, 1851 – searching for a way to return to the El Paso Valley and the Far West. Never idle and always in need of a steady income, he took a job at his "old profession" – teaching, or "pedagogism," as he was fond of calling it. Hired as a tutor in the home of Colonel Claiborne Kyle of San Marcos during the spring of 1850, he received \$125 for his services. In the fall of 1850 and the spring of 1851, "he conducted a

small school in New Braunfels . . . and struck up a warm friendship with Ferdinand Lindheimer," a learned emigre from Germany who in time would become one of Texas' outstanding botanists. Meanwhile he collected plants – mosses for William Sullivant, the Cincinnati-based bryologist, and lichens for the renowned expert Edward Tuckerman of Amherst College. Wright depended upon the sale of plant collections as a major source of income and relied on his mentor, Dr. Asa Gray of Harvard University, to assist him in finding prospective buyers.

Having walked 1300 miles on his first major collecting trip in 1849, Wright had little desire to repeat that feat and was determined to buy a horse. In March, 1850, he informed Dr. Gray, "I have now a good horse, to procure which has somewhat reduced my funds." To replenish these, Wright told Gray in a letter of April 10 that he would go to Austin and "try to sell drafts\* on you . . . though I have no belief that I will succeed. There are few men that understand how a gatherer of weeds and grass can convert them into money." In this same letter he also acknowledged receipt of two letters – one from Professor Joseph Henry, Secretary of the Smithsonian, and one from the Secretary of War – commenting that "no doubt they will be very useful." The purpose of the letters, which had apparently been forwarded to him by Dr. Gray, is unclear. Perhaps Wright intended to use them to help him obtain funds; more likely, they may have been letters of introduction to aid Wright in securing transportation west or in procuring a position in the Boundary Commission.

Uppermost in his mind was the desire to return to the West. "I have made no arrangements for next summer's work other than those of going to El Paso & Desert," Wright declared in the spring of 1850 and accordingly made "inquiries in San Antonio about transportation there," only to learn that "the Authorities (military) will hire Mexican carts to transport their stores. Under these circumstances whether I can get conveyance I do not know." He also planned to write the Quartermaster, Department of Texas, for assistance. "I am ready to go to El Paso by the first opportunity and thence in any practicable way to Desert if I can get conveyance. The prospect is that I shall have to pay 10-15 dollars per cwt [hundred weight] for hauling to El Paso; how much thence to Desert 'quien sabe'." San Antonio had

\*A draft was a negotiable instrument, similar to a promissory note, widely used in Texas at this time since there were no state-chartered banks. Only private money-lenders (banks) made financial transactions. For security, the "banks" accepted valuable property, such as "land, cattle, and slaves," but not "weeds and grasses," as Wright discovered.

become the center for hauling freight going west, and the majority of heads of households listed their occupation as "carreteros," or cart drivers, "who formed the very backbone of the enterprise."

Wright had also sent a letter (probably in February, 1850) to Major General George M. Brooke, Commander of the Department of Texas, "asking for transportation." On March 9 he received a discouraging reply from Brooke which he forwarded to Gray hoping that Gray would intercede for him with his influential friends and "perhaps soften [Brooke's] gizzard." Later that spring he heard about a government train scheduled to depart for the West during the first part of May. But in a letter to Dr. Gray he acknowledged that "It will hardly be possible for me to go with it. My remaining chance will be to go with some California Company and 'slim chance' I consider it."

A lifelong bachelor with a "prickly" personality and "a blunt manner of speech," Wright did not easily win friends. His plants became his friends and he wrote often of them "as old acquaintances." He also found solace in letter-

writing and confessed in one of his letters to what he called his "despondency & bitterness of feeling." Despite his loneliness, however, and all the adversities he encountered while far away from his Yankee homeland ("the regions of civilization"), he held high

*"I am ready to go  
to El Paso by the first  
opportunity and thence  
to Desert if I can get  
conveyance."*

the goals that he had chosen to achieve in his lifetime: "My great desire is to improve myself, increase as much as possible my knowledge of the Sciences to which I have devoted myself . . . and extend the limits of the knowledge of our own natural history."

Unsuccessful in his vigorous attempts to obtain transportation to "El Paso & Desert" in the summer of 1850, Wright returned to teaching that fall. But he continued his search for a way to return to the West. In mid-October he informed Gray that he had "heard of the arrival in the state of the [Boundary] Commissioner [John Russell Bartlett]," who had landed at Indianola on August 17. Gray had evidently approached "Washington officials" in an effort to get Wright assigned to the U.S. Boundary Commission and had earlier cautioned Wright "not

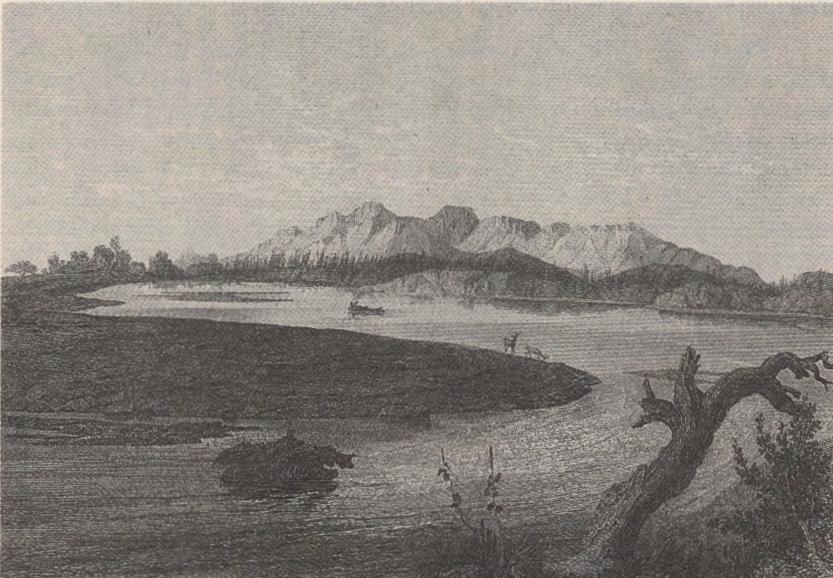
to leave for the West until its arrival." Wright hurriedly dispatched a letter to Bartlett in San Antonio, little knowing that Bartlett had received some 283 applications for various positions on the expedition or that the Commissioner had already employed an "official botanist."

Wright saddled up his horse and rode to San Antonio to see the Commissioner himself, arriving there on October 12, only to learn that Bartlett had left two days earlier on a "forced march" to El Paso to join General Pedro García Conde (the Mexican Commissioner) and other members of the Mexican Boundary Commission. Although dismayed, Wright managed to meet with Bartlett's brother George, a Commissary with the Commission, who was still in San Antonio. Describing the meeting in a letter to Gray, Wright reported that George "offered apologies for the neglect of me by the Commissioner." The apology, however, offered little comfort, as the remainder of the letter indicates: "It would seem that [Bartlett] had some favorite of his own to appoint to a fat office - Dr. G. Thurber," a fellow Rhode Islander of Bartlett's and a pharmacist who experimented with medicinal herbs. Disgusted, Wright fumed, "you may have benefit of Dr. Thurber's collection but I question whether he will climb hills and wade ditches and pierce thickets as I would do. If he don't don buckskin he will endanger his broadcloth." Wright prided himself on his self-reliance, which included making his own "buckskin rigging for the briars & thorns of Western Texas."

Although the position of "official botanist" had been filled, other positions in the Boundary Commission remained available. And sometime in the late spring or early summer of 1851, Wright was appointed to one of these positions - through the influence of officials at the Smithsonian Institution. The exact date of his appointment is uncertain. Lieutenant Colonel James D. Graham, Chief Astronomer and Head of the Scientific Corps of the Commission, stated in his lengthy report to the Secretary of War, dated August, 1852, that he (Graham) had appointed Charles Wright as an "assistant computer to the scientific corps" on May 10, 1851. However, in a letter dated June 28, 1851, to Dr. John Torrey, the distinguished botanist of Columbia University, Wright said: "I am not formally attached to Graham's party though I am ostensibly." Two weeks later in a letter to Dr. Gray, Wright made the jubilant announcement: "Now . . . I have received my appointment with a salary of \$500 per ann[um] & one ration [per day]." The slowness of the mail may account for the discrepancy in dates, or perhaps Graham backdated the appointment.

Whatever the date of the actual appointment, Wright departed San Antonio with the Graham party in early May of 1851. One or two other small trains joined Graham – all under the protection of a military guard headed by none other than Captain S. W. French, the same officer who had been Assistant Quartermaster on the Van Horne train in 1849. Whether French appreciated Wright and his work any more this time than in 1849, we are not told.

According to Graham, the outward journey took only 37 days, following almost the same route Wright had traveled in 1849. On June 24 the party reached the place called Frontera in the upper El Paso Valley. There, Graham expected to find Bartlett at the makeshift headquarters of the Boundary Commission. Instead, he was greeted with the news that Bartlett had moved his headquarters to the Santa Rita copper mines, east of present Silver City, New Mexico, in order to be closer to the Gila River, included in the survey. Fewer than a dozen men had been left at Frontera, and they were a disgruntled bunch – mainly because they had not been paid for months. Graham was furious,



*Titled "Rio Grande near Frontera," this engraving appears in Volume I of United States and Mexican Boundary Survey, Report of William H. Emory (Washington, D.C., 1857). In late June, 1851, Wright described Frontera as "a single adobe house. . . situated about eight miles above El Paso [del Norte] . . . and . . . rented by the Boundary Commission. . . ."*

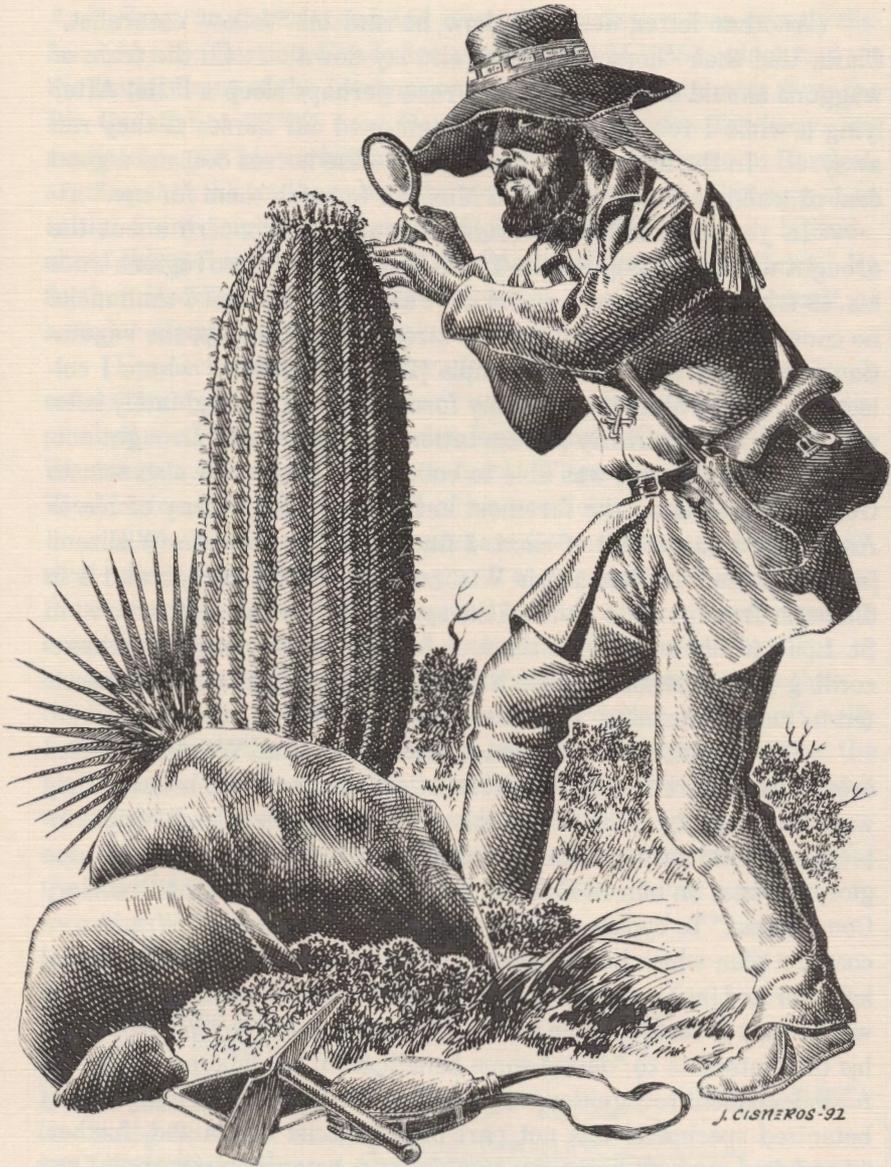
claiming that the survey from San Elizario to Dona Ana was incomplete and flawed, that the notebooks were in disarray, and that instruments and papers were scattered about or missing. His outrage probably intensified when he came to find out that Bartlett had spent a considerable part of his El Paso Valley sojourn (from November, 1850, to mid-April, 1851) enjoying the hospitality of James Magoffin at Magoffinsville and making leisurely trips to Hueco Tanks and environs.

While Graham was busy sorting out the mess that Bartlett had left behind, Wright took time to catch up on his correspondence. To Lindheimer he mentioned that he was "pretty busy" copying his field notes, but also admitted that he was "doing little or nothing except writing letters." To Dr. Torrey he sent a description of the Commission's headquarters: "Frontera is a single adobe house some two hundred by one hundred feet in dimensions including the court or open enclosure. . . . It is situated about eight miles above El Paso, belongs to a Mr. [Thomas Frank] White and is rented by the Boundary Commission as a kind of camp, storehouse, observatory, etc." In a letter to his brother John, Wright added further details of the Frontera region:

*The valley of the Rio Grande at [this] place from the river to the hills, a distance of several miles, is a most miserable sandy region of mountain branches alternating with stony ridges. The wind generally blows up or down the river . . . and a gentle breeze is accompanied by a cloud of dust. We are likely to eat our "peck of dirt" in a hurry. Mr. Clarke [John H. Clark, the zoologist] & myself have adopted the oriental custom of sleeping on the flat roof of the house & find it very pleasant. No insects are there to annoy us and it is not uncomfortably cool. We live upon mutton, bread (pilot bread & fresh-baked from Mexican flour, not a little gritty) & coffee, sweetened with Mexican sugar at 50 cts a pound — the high price not due to its excellent quality but to its scarcity.*

During the fifteen years that Wright spent in Texas, 1837-1852, unfortunately only six letters to members of his family remain. They are of a non-technical nature, unlike those to his "chimney-corner" botanist friends, ensconced in universities. For instance, a letter dated July 3, 1851, to his brother John tells of an incident that occurred on the outward trip at Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos River: "A wire bridge had been constructed though out of repair, and while making the repairs one of the wires was broken. Notwithstanding . . . half of the train . . . crossed . . . before another wire broke & one fool fellow rode his horse in to drink . . . when in he went rider, gun and all. The rider escaped and saved his gun . . . and recovered his saddle from the drowned horse."

CHARLES WRIGHT



*This drawing by José Cisneros, commissioned by Clinton P. Hartmann, is an imaginary depiction of Charles Wright at work in the El Paso area of the early 1850s, Wright's facial features taken from a photograph. The "Botanizer of the Boundary" is shown studying a "barrel" cactus (found abundantly in the Franklin Mountains) and wearing a type of "buckskin rigging" that he proudly claimed as his own handiwork. Among the rocks nearby is one of Wright's "constant companions," a book.*

Another letter describes how he and his "fellow naturalist," Clark, tied their "horses together and lay down . . . till the train of waggons should over take us, and rest, perhaps sleep a little. After lying a while I rose up which act frightened our horses & they ran away. . . . In the morning . . . hunting . . . the horses cost me a good deal of walking and \$5 paid to a Mexican to catch them for me."

In yet another letter Wright revealed his concern about the drought which had plagued the Trans-Pecos and El Paso regions since his '49 trip: "The country around [El Paso] is so dry that I shall make no considerable collection. . . . The streams are dried up, the vegetation is parched up. . . . The Limpia [Davis Mountains] where I collected . . . most abundantly on my former travels . . . had lately been swept up by fire & nearly all vegetation was destroyed." Drought notwithstanding, Wright was able to collect 579 plants. He also sent to George Engelmann, the foremost authority on the botany of North America, "a barrel full of cacti. I find here *Echinocactus Wislizenii* [now classified as *Ferocactus Wislizenii*] at least 4 ft high and 3 in diameter from point to point of the spines." When the cacti arrived in St. Louis (it did not include the four-foot specimen) many of them according to Lindheimer, whose English was fairly limited, were "wrotten to mash," meaning "rotten to mush."

The question of who owned the plants that Wright collected arose as an issue between Wright and Graham. The latter believed they were the property of the Commission "till after publication." Wright interpreted Graham's position to mean that Graham wanted "all due glory [to] rest on him as Head of the Scientific Corps of the Boundary Commission." To bypass what he termed "military power," Wright concocted a plan which he divulged to Gray: "There will be some [plants] left over and [as Graham] knows nothing of the number of specimens it will be easy to reserve some for me." Wright was not beyond protecting his own interests to "derive some benefit from my labors." His desire for independent recognition was based on the fact that his gathering of botanized specimens was not part of his official duties and, further, "that I find my own horse my own paper & botanizing materials."

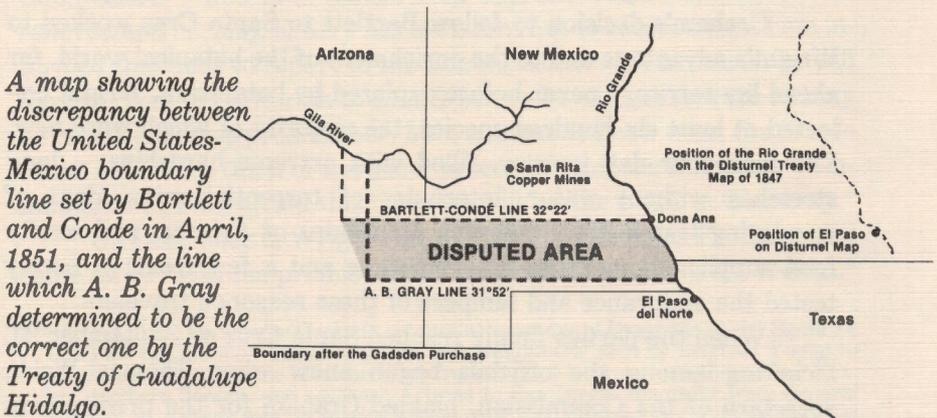
When Graham arrived at Frontera and did not find Bartlett, he was led to believe that Bartlett would be returning there shortly from the copper mines. Later, he learned that Bartlett had no such intentions. Meanwhile, Andrew Belcher Gray, the Chief Surveyor for the Commission who had traveled to Frontera with Graham, did not wait, but left for the copper mines in mid-July.

Gray, an experienced and reputable surveyor, was greatly disturbed by the Bartlett-Conde decision of April 24, 1851, which had set the Initial Point of the International Boundary (to run west from the Rio Grande) at  $32^{\circ}22'$  near Dona Ana, New Mexico Territory. Immediately upon his arrival at the copper mines, he wrote to Bartlett, arguing that the southern boundary of New Mexico should begin at an Initial Point "eight miles above El Paso, or  $31^{\circ}52'$  north latitude, about thirty-five miles south of the Bartlett-Conde Initial Point." He further described the Bartlett-Conde point invalid since he himself, as a senior member of the Commission, had not agreed to it.

Upon receiving the letter, Bartlett was infuriated by Gray's refusal to approve the agreement and "affix his signature." He dispatched a special courier, Charles Radziminski (Gray's assistant), to Washington, reporting Gray's refusal. When the dispatch reached Washington, Gray was relieved of his position.

A similar fate awaited Lieutenant Colonel Graham. Upon his arrival (along with Wright) on August 2 at the copper mines, he wrote Bartlett across camp: "I shall be ready at any hour you may name to enter with you upon the duty of reorganizing the scientific corps, or organizing parties, &c. As a preparatory step I have to request that . . . the instructions . . . defining my position and duties, may be officially made known to the corps." Graham also objected vehemently to the placement of the Bartlett-Conde Initial Point on the grounds that it was entirely in error (which in fact it was).

By now, undoubtedly, Wright perceived that he was standing at the edge of a power struggle, which for the time being would be won



*A map showing the discrepancy between the United States-Mexico boundary line set by Bartlett and Conde in April, 1851, and the line which A. B. Gray determined to be the correct one by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.*

by Bartlett – incompetent and inefficient though he was. On September 13, 1851, by order of the Secretary of the Interior, Graham was also relieved of his job. Bartlett, however, did not inform Graham of this action, and Graham did not learn about his dismissal until two months later – indeed, not until the day that his successor, Major William H. Emory, arrived at Frontera: November 25, 1851.

Wright kept a low profile during these power struggles and devoted himself to collecting plants. He penned only three letters during his stay at the copper mines, mainly describing the plants he found and saying nothing about the internecine conflicts – or even the several Indian incursions. (According to Bartlett, Apaches rode into camp and stole horses and mules on August 11; on the 17th they returned to help themselves to more animals; and on the 24th they took most of the mules and about 100 head of cattle.) Not until months later did Wright mention the Indians and then only in passing in a letter to Dr. Gray: “I secured everything [plants] about the mines within a moderate distance (for it was dangerous to venture far on account of the Indians). . . .”

Toward the end of August, Bartlett decided to leave the copper mines and accompany the Mexican Commissioner to Santa Cruz in northern Sonora in search of supplies and fresh fruits and vegetables – men from both commissions suffering from scurvy. To Bartlett's surprise, and probably Wright's as well, Graham decided to follow Bartlett's group of about sixty men – at some little distance – in an effort to persuade General García Conde that the Initial Point was completely in error. Two formal meetings of both staffs on the way to Santa Cruz changed no one's mind.

Graham's decision to follow Bartlett to Santa Cruz worked to Wright's advantage and to the enrichment of the botanical world, for ahead lay territory never before explored by botanizers. Wright collected at least six hundred species, the majority of which were new. The forty-four day journey, filled with extreme hardships – long stretches without water, interludes of torrential rains, days of wandering lost in the Patagonia Mountains of Arizona, and scanty food supplies (sometimes only purslane and a few trout) – sorely tested the endurance and tempers of these seasoned travelers.

When the parties finally reached Santa Cruz on September 23, bickering among the officials began anew when Thomas Webb, secretary of the Commission, blamed Graham for the predicament they were in. A shouting match erupted which led to a “near-duel,”

and on the 28th Graham and his party, including Wright, began their return trip to the copper mines. Bartlett continued farther south into Mexico, then west to Guaymas and on to Acapulco, where he took a steamer to San Diego, and later sailed to San Francisco. He did not return to the El Paso Valley until August 17, 1852.

Of the 700-mile grueling trip from Santa Rita and back (see map, drawn by José Cisneros, pages 182-183), Wright dismissed it without much ado in a letter written from "Camp near Dona Ana" on November 9, 1851, to George Engelmann:

*On the 27th [August] I started on an excursion through a very interesting country. . . . From the Cobre [copper mines] we went to Ojo de Vaca when we left Cooke's road\*\* turning to the right and pursuing nearly the direction of the line where Mr. Leroux (erroneously) supposes it to be an open prairie. On the contrary though less mountainous than the route pursued by the Col. [Cooke] we crossed three considerable ranges before reaching the San Pedro [River in Arizona] and a fourth between that stream and Santa Cruz. We returned by Cooke's road and after tarrying awhile at the Cobre . . . started on the 3rd [of November] . . . for Frontera.*

Wright had not written one letter from the time he left the copper mines until his party reached Fort Fillmore (near Mesilla) in early November. There, on November 8, Graham (still under the impression that he was Head of the Scientific Corps) assigned Wright to survey the river from Dona Ana to Frontera.

While surveying downstream, Wright found time to pen a letter to Dr. Torrey. In this letter, he spoke freely of the discords within the Commission – and even named their source: "Col. Graham has been relieved and . . . Maj. Emory has been sent out to succeed him. I am informed that he is to report to the Commissioner – if in person he will have to cross to California to do it & before he can get to work he may be recalled like his predecessor. I am anxious to know what the people of the old States think of the queer proceedings of the Boundary Commission. . . . I am afraid this business will be like a suit in Chancery."

On December 8, Wright met with Major Emory at Frontera and came away "with the promise that I may collect plants in the season."

\*\*Captain Philip St. George Cooke (a veteran commander of Dragoons on the Santa Fe Trail) led the Mormon Battalion (about 500 "volunteers" sent by Brigham Young to aid the Americans in the Mexican War) from Santa Fe through southern New Mexico, northern Sonora, and southern Arizona to San Diego. His order from General Stephen W. Kearny was "to mark a wagon trail" to California. Several landmarks in the area bear his name.

Graham, having received his official dismissal, left for Washington, taking with him Wright's extensive collection of plants and seeds gathered on the Santa Cruz trip, and then forwarding it to Dr. Gray at Harvard. (Graham's position regarding the ownership of Wright's collection was now completely reversed – and understandably so in view of his treatment by Bartlett.) Dr. Gray, pleased with the collection,

# The Journeys of Charles Wright





already in San Elizario, Wright found the men there "destitute of suitable clothing, shoes, etc. [and] permitted many of them to return to Franklin . . . to procure some." Leaving San Elizario on Christmas Day, Wright and his survey team traveled thirty miles downriver to a point opposite the Mexican village of San Ignacio, where on that Sunday evening Wright witnessed another "power struggle" pertaining to the new Boundary – one that sorely offended his sense of justice:

*About night a Mexican cart (carreta) was about to cross the river with a load of grama grass which had been collected on our side of the river, but was stopped by the Deputy Sheriff who happens to be one of our company, and a fine of 15 dollars demanded as damages for trespass. The owners plead [sic] poverty and endeavored to be released from the fine by getting the Alcalde of their village to intercede for them and to promise that there should be no more trespass. They have been cutting a good many trees about here for "vigas" or beams, and the Dep. Sher. thought it would be well to make an example of this one to deter others from trespass in the future. Our teamsters used up all their grass and I then tried to get an opportunity to tell them that the next morning . . . we would all leave . . . and they could come over to get their oxen & cart. On Monday morning the "Carretero" came over early & before the men were up I found an opportunity of telling the man that we would soon go away down the river. He waited around and made himself useful by assisting the teamster & cook to load the waggon. When our waggons were gone we heard the carreta's screaming as it went off (the wheels make a horrid noise being never greased.)*

Wright and his team continued to the road leading to Quitman Pass. Although the weather was extremely cold and "ice formed along the edges of the river," he was grateful that there had been "no sign of Indians." He remarked that the team had "killed four deer, three black-tail hare . . . and one goose," and he also reported "a great deal of beaver sign along the river – trees of considerable size . . . being cut down . . . and small trees and bushes in great number."

By the end of January, 1852, the weather had relented and the "Mexicans are beginning their farming opening the acequias and watering their lands, sowing their wheat, etc. . . . the cottonwood buds are beginning to swell and the various kinds of pulse [garbanzas and chickpeas] planted by the Mexicans for which they are noted are visible all over the fields."

Although hired as a surveyor for the Commission, Wright disliked surveying and had accepted the job only because it would give him ample time to botanize. To his sister he wrote, "Six times have I traveled the past winter & present spring between El Paso and the

canon [near Indian Hot Springs]. . . . It was discovered that the work was not done in such a style as the Commission desired. . . . I am not qualified to do such work. . . . I cannot sketch in the mountains & ravines & sand hills, trees and thickets, waters and marshes. . . ." More than likely he did not express this feeling to Major Emory, who, Wright said, "treats me with great liberality and I have no doubt of his honor in generosity."

*"I am anxious to know what the people of the old States think of the queer proceedings of the Boundary Commission."*

Turning from "shop-talk" to domestic matters,

Wright asked his sister to send some clothing – not "anything for its nicety or beauty," but rather "something stout and durable." (One wonders what had happened to his "buckskins.") Then came a financial report: "I have drawn none of my salary which must now amount to about six hundred dollars & I have on hand I believe more than three hundred . . . in silver." For the first time since he arrived in Texas in 1837, it seems that Wright felt financially secure.

He felt professionally secure as well. By mid-April, 1852, he had received preliminary pages of Part I of Gray's *Plantae Wrightianae* and was exuberant over Gray's Introduction, which described the work as "the most important memoir I ever wrote & will indelibly fix our names on the Texas & New Mexico Flora [underline Wright's]." Reports containing praise from others were reaching him also. For example, from Tuckerman, regarding the collection of lichens came this: "Never before I am sure was such a Lichen-flora made of a new country." Wright was also proud to convey that Dr. Parry "speaks of me as 'the pioneer in the botany of the Rio Grande.'"

One more botanizing expedition lay before Wright prior to leaving "far West Texas & Desert": "Major Emory decided to make a quick reconnaissance to 'Lago de Guzman,' about sixty miles southwest of El Paso del Norte," to determine whether the lake was "the receptacle of the waters of the Mimbres [River] or of the Santa Maria which runs in an opposite direction." It turned out to be the Santa Maria – today named the Casas Grandes.

In a letter to his brother, Wright stated that the group left on April 16 by way of the "medanos," or the sand dunes south of El Paso

del Norte, and by Cimieluque [sic], or present-day Samalayuca, and then to the river, Santa Maria. They returned about April 27, made a brief trip back to Fort Fillmore and to the Organ Mountains, spent the next three weeks in Frontera and then headed for "Camp near San Elizario." Here on the 24th of May, he wrote his last two letters from far West Texas – one to his brother and one to Dr. Torrey, each containing a P.S. dated June 7. Wright set his departure date as of June 15th – "so by the last of Aug I may hope to be in Yankeeland"; and to his brother: "We start for San Antonio about the 15th which I hope to reach by the last of July and then home in a month – in time for peaches & apples – and sweet cider hurrah!!"

Wright was back home in Wethersfield, Connecticut, by the fall of 1852. His many years in Texas and the "desert" made a frontiersman out of him, but in his heart he would always be a Yankee. He endured the hardships, dangers, and deprivations of frontier life to pursue his singular devotion to botany. For over thirty years, the lure of plants waiting to be discovered attracted him again and again to fields unexplored. From 1853 to 1854, he was the botanist on an expedition which took him from Madeira to Australia, from Hong Kong to Japan. For another eleven years he explored the hinterlands of Cuba and other Caribbean Islands.

A man who set high standards for himself, Wright did not tolerate any less from others. Work-oriented, he disdained idleness. Goal-centered, he practiced moderation. Although college-degreed and a Phi Beta Kappa, learning was an ongoing process, and books were his constant companions. His footprints have become obscured with time, but his contributions to botany endure. Ironically, his home in Wethersfield, with its gardens of wildflowers from the West, was razed to make way for an Interstate Highway exchange, and his "home" in El Paso has suffered a similar fate. Armed only with pressboards, botanizing paper, pens, books, and a great love of plants, Wright left his imprint forever in the world of botany.

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# A Letter to Nellie

*President Taft Describes his El Paso Visit*

Introduced by William I. Latham

**I**n March, 1987, the El Paso County Historical Society received from June F. Engelbrecht of Cincinnati, Ohio, a copy of a letter written by President William Howard Taft on the day after his 1909 visit to El Paso and his meeting with President Porfirio Diaz of Mexico. In an explanation accompanying the letter, Ms. Engelbrecht stated that she had "come across this [Taft letter] in the Taft home archives."

Addressed to "Nellie," President Taft's affectionate name for his wife, Helen, the letter recounts the busy official schedule of the previous few days. And it also reveals the President's personal response to El Paso and environs and to various personalities he encountered during the time of this "summit" at the Pass.

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On train enroute between  
El Paso, Texas, and San Antonio.  
October 17, 1909.

My dearest Nellie:

I sent you a telegram to-day which merely records my progress; but I thought you might like to hear a little more detailed account of the trip, including the meeting with President Diaz of Mexico at El Paso.

After I dictated the letter to you at Albuquerque, they had a banquet at which a good many local celebrities were given an opportunity to talk, and especially a man named Fall, a Kentuckian and Texan and a New Mexican in experience. He seemed to be a man who liked to cultivate notoriety by saying something rude and out of the ordinary rules of courtesy, and I had to take him and spank him, which I think I did pretty successfully – at least everybody in the party seemed to think so, and it set him down where he ought to be politically. He has had aspirations for the Senate, upon the inauguration of statehood, but I don't think those aspirations are likely to be gratified.\*

From Albuquerque we came through to El Paso, stopping at eight o'clock in the morning for some little time at Las Cruces, where there was a very large crowd. . . . They had made great preparations, and I was glad therefore quickly to dress and to go out and talk to them.

Reaching El Paso about nine o'clock, we had a ceremonious breakfast. . . . Then . . . I proceeded with my body guard to the Chamber of Commerce building, which had been decorated with a view to the reception of President Diaz. We had here congregated a full regiment of Infantry, two squadrons of Cavalry (the three making a regiment) and two batteries of Artillery, under the command of a Brigadier-General. The town of El Paso has a population of about forty thousand, of whom perhaps six or seven thousand are Mexicans. It is a very enterprising place, and while in Texas, is really more connected with New Mexico than it is with Texas, and as it is the crossing place for the business between Mexico and the United States by rail, its business is assuming large proportions. The Chamber of Commerce is a very enterprising body. They took charge of our side of the reception.

Diaz arrived with his suite and with a small escort of his mountain guards who were gorgeously clad in helmets and feathers, and he himself had a uniform with decorations emblazoning his appearance, which quite outshone your husband's civil garb. The old man, who is said to be about eighty years old, is really most remarkable in point of agility, quickness of perception and dignity of carriage. There is great fear, and I am afraid a well-founded fear, that should he die, there will be a revolution growing out of the selection of his successor. As Americans have about \$2,000,000 of capital invested in the country, it

\*Editor's note: President Taft's prediction turned out to be wrong: Albert B. Fall was elected a Senator from New Mexico in 1912 and was re-elected in 1918. In time, however, Fall was "set . . . down" vis-a-vis the Teapot Dome Scandal in the early 1920s. See Nora Henn, "The House on Golden Hill Terrace," *Password*, XXXVII, 3 (Fall, 1992), 127-135.

is inevitable that in case of a revolution or internecine strife we should interfere, and . . . that trouble would present a problem of the utmost difficulty. I am not quite sure at whose instance the meeting was had, but I do know that I received a communication, perhaps directly from the old man, of an informal character, saying how glad he would be to have such a meeting brought about. He thinks, and I believe rightly, that the knowledge throughout his country of the friendship of the United States for him and his Government will strengthen him with his own people, and tend to discourage revolutionists' efforts to establish a different government.

Mack Dickinson, the Secretary of War, and Frank Hitchcock, the Postmaster-General, were with me to assist me in the reception. I had a private conversation with the old man through Mr. Creel, formerly Ambassador to the United States, who speaks English beautifully. . . . I cannot be mistaken from every sign that General Diaz was very much gratified by the interview and the willingness of the United States to testify to its friendship for him. I returned the visit within twenty minutes or more, and was received in the Custom House of the city of Juarez on the other side of the Rio Grande. I experienced no particular emotions in crossing from our territory into that of a foreign government and certainly encountered no danger. Reports of the presence of cranks, socialists and revolutionary people were rife, but Wilke, the head of the Secret Service, was here with a number of agents, and everything was done which ought to have been done to protect us. . . .

Returning from the visit, we had a military review of the United States troops and some of the state troops and civic bodies, and then I made a speech to an audience of perhaps five or six thousand people who had gathered in the park. Then I went back to the hotel and had a little lunch and went to bed and got one and a half hours sleep or more. Then I saw some Yale men and some Ohio people. The Ohio people gave me a sombrero of Mexican manufacture, which will hang upon the wall and form one of a number of reminders of this trip.

Then having put on evening dress, I went across the river again, and was received by President Diaz in the same place, but they had fitted up in the [patio] of the Custom House a most beautiful banquet hall, ornamented in admirable taste and having every appearance of a State salon. The President sat in a big chair on one side of the table, and I sat in a big chair just opposite him. On my right was the Minister of Fomento, and on my left Governor Creel. On Diaz' right was Secre-

tary Dickinson, and on his left the Postmaster General. The dinner was beautifully served and excellently cooked according to the French style. . . .

The Chamber of Commerce of El Paso took occasion, just before the dinner, to make a beautiful gift to us both, which I esteem as highly as anything that has come to me on the trip. They were two golden goblets, one properly inscribed for President Diaz and one for me, and each derives double value from its association with the other. . . .

General Diaz had brought up all their plate and their official carriages, which are handsome equipages, and he had his mounted body-guard of very showy dragoons, as well as some cavalry and infantry. . . . I think the Mexican Government must have gone to great expense in preparation for the welcome, and certainly they manifested every possible pleasure at my coming. I am glad to have taken part in this event, which is unique in the history of the two countries, or indeed in the history of any country in connection with this. I am quite sure that the meeting will make for good in the relations between Mexico and ourselves, and in the strengthening of the power of the existing government there. I told President Diaz that I hoped he might live for a great many years, and that I looked forward when you and I got into private life, at the pleasure of visiting him in the City of Mexico. He seized upon this with avidity that indicated that he would be glad to carry out the proposition, and explained his great regret that you could not be with me at this time.

We left El Paso last night about nine o'clock, and we are . . . hoping to reach San Antonio about half past seven tonight. I shall have a few short speeches to deliver on the way but nothing I hope to trouble me. The alkali dust is rather offensive and I breathed in a lot of it last night on the way. I had to tumble out of bed quite early this morning in order to make a speech to some people who had gathered at Sanderson. I have the feeling that when there are any people . . . willing to get up early to see me, they are entitled to see me. . . .

It is now the 17th which leaves but fourteen days remaining of this month, and ten days in November, which will bring me to the White House and to you. I believe the trip has been a success. It may be that I am not a good judge. It may be that it has not accomplished the purposes which I started out to accomplish. One can hardly tell in respect to this until some little time has elapsed. But whatever happens, it will be a delight to be with you again and to settle down more or less quietly under the roof of The White House. . . .



# A LAND TRANSLATED

## *The Literary Works of Tom Lea*

by Joyce Gibson Roach

*Editor's note: The following essay is a transcription of an address delivered by the author on June 27, 1992, at Jackson, Wyoming. The occasion was the presentation to Tom Lea of the Owen Wister Award from Western Writers of America.*

**A** list of Tom Lea's written work seems short. His reputation rests on four novels – *The Brave Bulls*, *The Wonderful Country*, *The Hands of Cantú*, and *The Primal Yoke* – and one two-volume non-fiction work, *The King Ranch*. It is impossible, however, to separate his writing from his graphic art. In connection with a major exhibit of Lea's work, Harry Ransom of the University of Texas said: "Many critical conclusions relate to his almost incredible versatility. His work in words has made him an unforgettable Texas writer. His hand's depiction of what his mind and his spirit have envisioned is . . . equally distinctive and distinguished." Al Lowman of the Institute of Texas Cultures, wrote: "Tom's art and writing are so entwined that a discussion of one without the other would be incomplete, if not impossible. When he begins a new book his usual first step is to

construct a map of the country about which he is writing. Sketches of the terrain and people may emerge as the story takes form."

The land Tom Lea writes about and paints is a place many would pay hard money not to visit, let alone inhabit. He writes mostly of the region in and around El Paso del Norte – a separate country of the Southwest – a region distinct and apart from the great myth of the West, although thrown in as a part of it. It is a place better seen from the confines of an air-conditioned car, after midnight and in the winter months. It is a region where even the plants go armed with spines, spikes and points – Spanish Dagger, Ocotillo, Prickly Pear Cactus; where water is only a mirage, where the Indians are not beautiful according to the white man's standards; where two and sometimes more cultures will never get along; where Mexican lifeways are as vigorous as those of the Anglo – and older, too. He describes his kind of Mexico: "My kind of Mexico is lonesome *ranchero* country. I esteem a tough and dusty Mexico of grass-pocketed upland plateaus, thin herds and sinewy men, hard deserts, precious waters, desolate *ranchos* and *haciendas* in ruin, thickets of tall nopal and wicked cardenche, rocks, mountains standing bare and steep with a kind of stony Mexican violence against the brightness of the sky. Under that sky, remote settlements and lonely towns stand quiet in the sun. Their square-faced walls cast sharp cornered patches of cool along the dust of gaunt streets and hoof-marked lanes." He says again of the place on both sides of the border: "It is a thirsty, bare, and mostly empty country. It is tan, not green, it has no abounding grace of fertility and little softness to evoke ease in man's spirit. Its richness is space, wide and deep and infinitely colored, visible to the jagged mountain rim of the world – huge and challenging space, to evoke huge and challenging freedom." And amid the dry and rugged places, parched personalities and thirsty landscape, there is beauty and drama, joy and peace which waters the spirit, slakes the thirst and quenches the fire of reality because the place is translated through Lea's eyes.

There is no difficulty in critically assessing the writing of Tom Lea. *The King Ranch* is considered the definitive study not only of the ranch itself but also of early ranching operations generally. The book is valued for illustrations, maps and information used by many writers seeking authenticity and facts.

Of *The Brave Bulls*, Louis Bromfield of the *Saturday Review* said: "As a work of art, in conception, form and execution, [the book] is

very close to perfection. The author has revealed better than any other writer in our time the peculiar bleak glory and beauty not only of the bull ring but of Spanish culture as well." *The New York Times* praised: "Not even Ernest Hemingway at his best has ever done a better job."

While the bull ring and the culture of the toreador hold center stage in *The Brave Bulls* and the movie which followed, the entire El Paso del Norte culture on both sides of the river forms the backdrop for *The Wonderful Country*. In the story, a fourteen-year-old boy kills his father's murderer with his father's gun. Knowing that he will be hunted down, the boy swims the Rio Bravo and grows to manhood in Mexico. An occasion brings him back to the other side, and an accident keeps him there long enough for him to realize that he is no longer in jeopardy. Coming home has its price, however, and therein lies the story complete with Mexicans, Indians, bandits, the U.S. Cavalry including Buffalo soldiers, and women of several types. One reviewer noted on the jacket of the book: "It is more than an action-story; an old time border balladry sings through it, and a wonderful sense of lonely comradeship of the trail."

*The Wonderful Country* also received movie treatment. One of the important factors in the hero's life is Lágrimas, a stallion of the Barb line, origin of most of the horses of the conquest. In *The Hands of Cantú* horses hold center stage. It is a riveting story told through the viewpoint of Toribio Ibarra, an orphaned boy raised by Diego de Ibarra and sent to Don Vita Cantú for training in horsemanship and horse raising. The novel opens and ends with letters between Ibarra and Cantú, these missives constituting a "frame" for Toribio's first-person narration. While the illustrations are superb in the other two novels, the art work in *Cantú* is literally a pictorial essay. The faces of *conquistadores*, both wicked and sainted, are there; there is youth and old age, priest and native. And always there is the landscape of endless space which invites the reader to step inside the picture and ride with the wild horsemen into the unknown northernmost country of Mexico; into the midst of thorn and rock, sky and cloud; then back again to the peaceful Acuichal, where the Ibarra horses are bred and trained. The style of the story is very different. It is told as a Spanish *relación*, uses a courtly language as if freshly translated from Spanish, and is filled with the rich details of riding appurtenance and equipment, magnificent horses and horsemen.

*The Primal Yoke* is another departure in theme and style. The story concerns a young man who returned to America after World

War II filled with hope. He is glad to be home and goes to the setting around Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to live in the wilds for awhile. The ending is tragic when the hero is killed in an avalanche. Lea refers to the book as his exercise in writing Greek tragedy, and the tale is filled with fate and man's helplessness against it.

Tom Lea was born in 1907 in El Paso. He graduated from high school in 1924 and attended the Chicago Art Institute. He studied there under John Norton, later serving as Norton's apprentice before becoming a commercial artist. He traveled to Italy to study the pre-Renaissance frescoists during the time he worked in Chicago. He moved to Santa Fe in 1933 and worked in the Laboratory of Anthropology for a few years and then returned to El Paso in 1936. He married Sarah in 1938. They had one son. During World War II he served as a correspondent for *Life* magazine, and his assignments took him to the areas of major conflict. He was aboard the USS *Hornet* just thirty-six hours before she went down. He was on the beach with the first wave at the Peleliu landing. After returning from the war, the artist was commissioned by *Life* to do a pictorial history of beef cattle in America. He went to Mexico for the study and while there became fascinated with bull fights. From his interest came *The Brave Bulls*.

The list of Tom Lea's written works seems short. Yet in four novels he covered five hundred years of history in the Southwest and wrote about every Western stereotype of every ethnic persuasion. He spans every emotion and invites the reader through the combination of words and images to come inside the panorama of the Southwest, inside the looking glass of the past. I gladly went and am there yet riding an Ibarra stallion across desert and plain, through danger and adventure, and learning the lessons of history as I gallop. Nothing on Lea's side can be forgotten. Nothing on this side seems worth remembering. Tom Lea is a spectacular addition to the company of Owen Wister Award recipients.

**JOYCE GIBSON ROACH**, a folklorist and writer, is a member of Western Writers of America and the Texas Institute of Letters. She is a three-time recipient of the Spur Award (for both fiction and non-fiction) from Western Writers of America and a recipient of the Carr P. Collins prize for a non-fiction book from the Texas Institute of Letters. She resides in Keller, Texas, and teaches on the adjunct faculty of the English Department at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.



# The Tangled Web of History and Myth

*An Essay-Review*

by Herb Seckler

*Mythology*, n. The body of a primitive people's beliefs concerning its origin, early history, heroes, deities, and so forth, as distinguished from the true accounts which it invents later.

from *The Devil's Dictionary*  
by Ambrose Bierce

**D**avid Weber, sans the sardonic humor of "Bitter" Bierce, writes in his excellent collection of essays titled *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), "In the interest of creating a usable past, all peoples seem to engage in the making of myths and passing them off as historical fact."

In English (and in other languages) there is a whole group of terms signifying a recital in some way at variance with the truth. Thus we have fable, tale, myth, legend, saga. In ordinary usage, no hard fast line is drawn among these terms; they express the idea of a fictitious or untrustworthy account. The historian, however, uses these terms with certain precision.

Myths generally take two forms, one of which transforms physical or moral forces into deities. Another form celebrates in naive fashion

certain happenings of significance in a nation's history; or it may glorify a historical figure. Dr. Weber, knowledgeable in these distinctions, early on points out that "Myth is, of course, a slippery word that has come to have many meanings," and he warns us that he takes "these multiple meanings as a license to use the word imprecisely."

Dr. Weber's purpose in *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest* is not merely to de-mythicize some of our more cherished beliefs – as much as that might titillate us. His is an attempt, rather, to explain how myths have affected history and history created myths. For example, he points to studies that demonstrate how North Americans have recorded gossip and presented it as fact and how in turn historians have accepted these "facts" and offered them again and again to readers, "unaware that they were perpetuating myths rather than writing history."

To write about myths and the history of the Hispanic Southwest without some reference to the Alamo would be inconceivable. And Weber does not disappoint us. More importantly, his essay titled "Re-fighting the Alamo, Mythmaking and the Texas Revolution" speaks to the dangers of mythmaking. And the reader should take away lessons that are very applicable to more current affairs.

Step by step, Dr. Weber takes us through the major assertions which historians have attributed to the Texas Rebellion and points out how these assertions have been both exaggerated and repeated with no convincing evidence to support them. "The lore surrounding the battle of the Alamo," he states, "provides the clearest examples of how the Texas rebellion, like so many major events, has been romanticized to take on meanings that transcend the event itself and its principal characters reduced to caricature." One motivation for these exaggerated notions was certainly wartime propaganda.

In much of mythology there is little more than a harmless story. But as Dr. Weber points out, the danger lies when "those of us who have confused myth with reality come to shape our public policy." And on that point Dr. Weber focuses on Lyndon Johnson, a hero-loving Texan who grew up with the myths of the Alamo. On sending Marines to the Dominican Republic in 1965, Johnson said that it was "just like the Alamo." And the author also reminds us that Johnson "compared Vietnam to a hunt in the woods which must end, in Davy Crockett fashion, 'with that coonskin on the wall.'"

The final essay in Weber's book provides us with an example of how myths have the potential for great and lasting harm. It examines

the writings of early nineteenth-century Anglo-American travelers in the Southwest, and it demonstrates that these writings invariably described Mexican men with contempt – the method usually being a portrayal of this or that individual Mexican male as totally devoid of any virtues whatsoever and as wholly representative of the entire people. In short, these writers were making sweeping generalizations – creating a stereotype. (Weber notes that these same Anglo-American travelers – almost always males – recorded a positive image of Mexican women. Reasons for this portrayal are not too difficult to grasp.)

Weber reviews the arguments which have attempted to explain why these travelers came to hold their contemptuous views of Mexican men. He cites, first, the argument that these impressions arose because the contacts were confined to the border region, which was more backward economically and culturally than the interior of Mexico. Then, after clarifying other arguments that have been put forward, he offers his own thesis: “. . . a closer look at American thought suggests that the stereotype was based, not so much on direct observation or experience with Mexicans, but was in large part an extension of negative attitudes toward Catholic Spaniards which Anglo-Americans had inherited from their Protestant English forebears.”

Weber argues that the Anglo-American stereotype of Mexicans did not originate in the border region. Rather, it was merely nourished there and encouraged to grow. He suggests that the negative image of Mexican men had its origins in the “Black Legend” (*Leyenda Negra*) and that these anti-Spanish views were more than just anti-Catholic. The Black Legend held that the Spanish government was authoritarian and corrupt; and it identified the Spaniard as wicked, wanton, lazy, bigoted, cruel, greedy, and treacherous. Weber contends that the English, French, and Dutch portrayed the sixteenth-century Spanish Empire in just such a way as to justify their own behavior.

Does myth affect history? “The stereotype of the inferior Mexican,” writes Dr. Weber, “lay behind the arrogant sense of cultural and political superiority, known in United States history as “Manifest Destiny.” It has also been used to rationalize the exploitation and mistreatment of Mexican workers in the fields and factories of the United States. And this reviewer wonders whether this stereotype inspires such movements as “English Only” and “English First.”

While Weber’s focus is on the Southwest, the lessons have no borders in time or place. It is imperative that we understand how myths are used to alter history. And that brings to mind myths of more recent

vintage, created and perpetuated for political purpose. For one, there is that oft-repeated assertion that the press, not the miscalculations of Johnson and Nixon, was responsible for the Indo-China disaster. And from the same conflict comes that tiresome pledge of "Never again fighting a war with one hand tied behind our back."

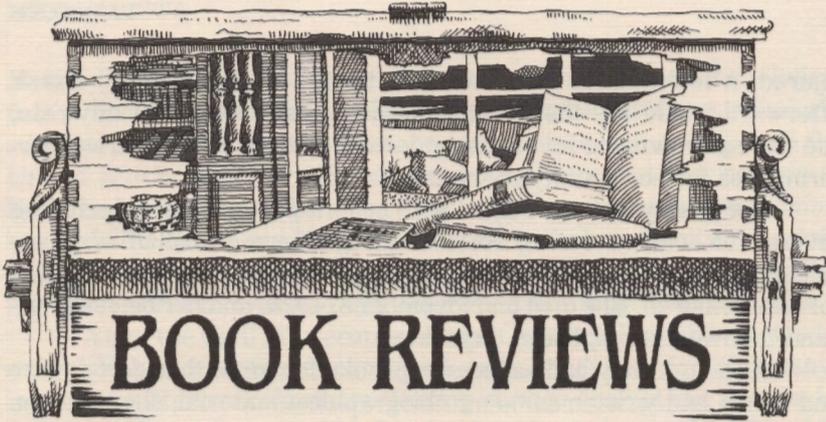
Do the lessons learned from Dr. Weber translate into more transient and everyday events? You bet they do. Let us just briefly examine the creation of a more recent myth.

Politicians, dredging for votes, have created the myth that millions if not billions of dollars have been taken from the United States Treasury to promote pornographic art. So believable was the story that some influential persons vigorously advocated the abolishment of the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA). The truth is that the NEA spent \$175 million last year – a sum that is less than two one-hundredths of one percent of the federal budget. Of that sum, only a few grants of a few thousand dollars have come under fire. On the other hand, virtually all of the money spent by the NEA has made it possible for millions of Americans to see great art exhibits, to hear great music, and to meet with writers, artists, and musicians. The unfounded claim of massive expenditures by the NEA in support of pornographic art is not the creation of a harmless myth. In the words of one commentator, "A nation that cannot afford to finance its arts, is a nation that has lost its perspective, its self-confidence and probably its soul."

Dr. Weber is a historian with an insatiable curiosity born of skepticism. He pursues even the faintest clues with the zest of a detective. And although he does not write in the satirical style of Ambrose Bierce, with his concluding thoughts on the Texas Rebellion he comes close: ". . . it is statements such as LBJ's 'just like the Alamo' that make me uneasy whenever someone says 'history teaches us' such and such a thing, for I know that I am about to hear history being called upon to teach whatever that person wishes it to teach."

David J. Weber is a professor of history at Southern Methodist University and one of the foremost interpreters of the American Southwest. This book had its genesis in the Calvin Horn lecture series at the University of New Mexico. Four of the Calvin Horn lectures appear in this volume in addition to five other essays.

**HERB SECKLER**, a frequent contributor to *Password*, is co-editor of *Mountain Passages*, "a semi-annual journal devoted to Arts and Literature of Southern New Mexico." He lives in Bent, New Mexico.



**ANNIE OAKLEY** by Shirl Kasper. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992, \$22.95

Will Rogers called her "the greatest woman rifle shot the world has ever produced."

Annie Moses, born August 13, 1860, in Ohio, grew up in settings of poverty and hard work. At an early age, she became adept at shooting birds to sell. Her expertise with firearms would bring her worldwide fame. In 1882 she married a fellow entertainer, Frank Butler, who became her manager during a career that included seventeen years with Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. She chose the name Oakley, the source unknown.

Annie's youthful appearance was enhanced by her costume, a full skirt on which she embroidered flowers, leggings she made to fit perfectly, and a big hat with a six-pointed star pinned to the upturned brim. She skipped about and threw kisses to the crowds during her performances of seemingly incredible feats of accurate shooting. Her stunts included firing from horseback and from a moving bicycle. Her daily routine involved lifting loaded seven-pound shotguns to her shoulder about 150 times a day. She was ambidextrous, fast, and continued to be accurate into her sixties when, retired from performing, she taught others to use firearms safely.

Cody's Wild West show traveled to Europe, where Annie became a favorite with royalty and wealthy social leaders. She and Frank were reserved, never drank or cursed, and were regarded as above reproach. She was presented to Queen Victoria who, after twenty-six years of absence from the theater, visited the Wild West Show. Annie also shot a cigarette out of the mouth of the man who became kaiser of Germany, observing later that she might have averted a war had she not been such a good shot.

Her last performance for Cody was on October 19, 1901. A train crash killed many of the show's horses and, although Annie was not

injured, a few months later her hair turned white. She and Frank afterward would say the wreck caused the hair change; at any rate, she wore a brown wig for shooting demonstrations and theatrical performances for some time afterward.

Her later years were filled with benefit performances, including several for soldiers during World War I, efforts on behalf of tuberculosis patients (she melted down her gold medals to help them), and for poor children. She died on November 3, 1926, and her beloved husband followed her eighteen days later.

Although they had saved scrapbooks for more than forty years and Annie had written some autobiographical material, she has been the subject of only four previous biographies – all of them presenting a romanticized version of her life and character. Now, in this first book by Shirl Kasper, a journalist with the *Kansas City Star*, Annie's story emerges as an accurate, thoroughly researched, and compellingly readable portrait of this competitive and resolute woman who triumphed in the masculine world of road shows and firearms.

NANCY HAMILTON  
El Paso

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**DESERT TIGER: Captain Paddy Graydon and the Civil War in the Far Southwest** by Jerry D. Thompson. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1992 (Southwestern Studies No. 97), \$10.00.

*Password* readers were introduced to "Paddy" Graydon in Dr. Thompson's article "The Gallinas Massacre and the Death of Captain James Graydon," which appeared in the Spring 1991 issue. Now they have an opportunity to become better acquainted with this flamboyant character and his brief career in the Southwest of the mid-nineteenth century.

Prior to the author's works on Graydon, the only thing most students of the Civil War in the Southwest knew about "Paddy" was that he authored a plan that went horribly awry. On the night before the Battle of Valverde he sneaked up on the Confederate forces and strapped howitzer shells to the backs of two mules. He lighted the fuses to the shells and hazed them toward the Confederate camp. But the mules turned and followed the Union party back to Fort Craig. The embarrassed conspirators barely escaped the explosion.

But there was much more to James "Paddy" Graydon than that. Sometime in early 1853 he arrived in Baltimore, a young Irish immigrant. In April of that year he enlisted in the First Dragoons. His assignment took him to fight against Indian depredations in New

Mexico Territory and Arizona. Along the way he earned the admiration of his officers and the rank of corporal as he became particularly adept as a scout. In April, 1858, he took a discharge and opened the United States Boundary Hotel, conveniently located just outside of Fort Buchanan. Under his ownership it became "a pretty tough joint, but a good saloon." Graydon gained respect in the community and established a reputation for rigorous enforcement of law and order by chasing down horse thieves and murderers and bringing them to justice.

When the Civil War erupted in the Gadsden Strip, he received a commission as a captain to command an "Independent Spy Company" in the New Mexico Volunteers. During service against the Rebels, he came to be regarded as a "fearless leader of a desperate band" and "a daredevil as reckless as can be." All of this culminated tragically at Fort Stanton on November 5, 1862: "Paddy" Graydon lost his life in a gunfight resulting from his hot-tempered dispute with a civilian visitor to the fort.

As the author traces the career of Paddy Graydon, he paints a graphic picture of military activities on the Southwestern frontier. The rigors of Indian campaigns come to life; events of the Civil War fall into place; participants become people rather than mere names. Extensive notes in support of sixty-three pages of text testify to the author's meticulous research. This book fills an empty page in Civil War history.

FRANCIS FUGATE  
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**EXPLORING THE HOHOKAM: Prehistoric Desert Peoples of the American Southwest** ed. George J. Gummerman. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991, \$45.

Southern Arizona is one of the few places in the world where scholars and prehistoric cultures come together in a melting pot of discovery. That melting pot has now yielded a weighty and pricey volume of eleven essays ably edited by George Gummerman. It shows the Hohokam as a highly diverse culture, very adaptive to the extreme environmental demands of the region and very advanced artistically. The volume is the product of thoughtful dialogue among Hohokam scholars (most of them from either the University of Arizona or Arizona State University) in an advanced seminar held in February, 1988, at the Amerind Foundation and sponsored by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Following George Gummerman's clear and in-depth Hohokam synthesis, ten articles develop specific themes that are valuable and interesting reading. Outstanding among these is the essay by Suzanne K. Fish and Gary P. Nabham, who review the Sonoran Desert's diversity and climate pattern that provided the Hohokam with opportunities for optimum cultural development in a landscape with harsh limitations. This essay – and others in the collection – clearly reveal the Sonoran Desert as a truly rich area in North America in terms of multiseason abundance, diversity, and storability of plant foods. The linear Basin and Range valleys in Southern Arizona create elevation diversity within short distances. People can easily walk to and from different elevations to secure food from the natural environment. It is also an area where there is continuity from the prehistoric Hohokam to the contemporary Piman and Yuman speakers. Most foods attributed to the Hohokam are also eaten today.

This new volume of new information from the abundant recent work on the Hohokam is intended for scholarly readers who don't mind the archaeological jargon and who may wish to delve beyond these pages into earlier studies. Attractively done with ample maps, figures, and tables, *Exploring the Hohokam* shows high quality research that should be duplicated in the El Paso area.

HERBERT C. MORROW  
El Paso

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**TRAGIC CAVALIER: Governor Manuel Salcedo of Texas, 1808-1813 by Félix D. Almaraz, Jr. Illustrated by José Cisneros. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991, \$14.50**

In all fields of historical research, there are some works which deserve to be continually in print and available for readers and scholars alike. Almaraz's work on the late years of Spanish colonial Texas is one of these books.

First issued twenty years ago, *Tragic Cavalier* is a well written, thoroughly researched, and meticulously documented monograph set within the framework of Texas and the administration of Governor Manuel Salcedo. This reprint includes a new preface and additionally features drawings by artist José Cisneros, these illustrations definitely adding elegance to the publication.

In a succinct and insightful first chapter, Almaraz sets the stage for his study of Salcedo and Texas during the first decade of the nineteenth century. The new governor and his entourage enter the scene, and Don Manuel takes on the usual problems of a frontier administra-

## BOOK REVIEWS

tion: erratic weather, undependable food supply, hostile Indians, and a lack of colonists – to name a few. Furthermore, his administration is shown to be complicated by the pressures of expansionism from the United States, by the Spanish government's official neglect of its far-flung Texas colony, and by the unrest in Europe deriving from the Napoleonic era – these several complications prompting insurrections which lead to the murder of Salcedo.

Thus Almaraz's work speaks to a range of historic events that reached beyond a single colonial administration on the frontier. The author makes clear that the situations faced by Governor Salcedo were encountered by most frontier Spanish governors at that particular time. This dimension of universality, rather than the singularity of the Salcedo administration, is what makes the monograph especially significant.

Funded in part through a grant from the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain's Ministry of Culture and several United States universities, this attractive new edition will appeal not only to serious researchers, but also to anyone interested in learning about a surprisingly neglected aspect of the Spanish history of Texas.

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## Briefly Noted . . .

Recently issued from Texas Western Press is a revised edition of its 1974 publication *Dr. Lawrence A. Nixon and the White Primary* by Conrey Bryson. The book tells in fascinating detail the significant achievement of the El Paso physician who dared to challenge a Texas law prohibiting blacks from voting. Mr. Bryson takes us through the long legal process which culminated in the unanimous ruling by the United States Supreme Court in favor of Dr. Nixon (the opinion written by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes) and in the subsequent two decades which would pass before the doors fully opened to the black franchise. Mr. Bryson, a former editor of *Password*, has written a new introduction to this important work.



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