

Martin Ridge, ed. *History, Frontier, & Section: Three Essays by Frederick Jackson Turner*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993. Pp. 116. Cloth, \$22.50; paper, \$9.95.

Since Carl Becker's essay on his mentor appeared in the mid-1920s, more has been written about Frederick Jackson Turner than about any other American historian, including Frances Parkman and Henry Adams. Works by Fulmer Mood, Wilbur Jacobs, Richard Hofstadter, James Bennett, and Ray Billington have carefully documented the life and times of the great Wisconsin scholar. Their conclusions about Turner the man are identical to Becker's. The Turner magic boiled down to personal warmth, imaginative teaching, and originality of thought. And the influence continues even today, as evidenced by an excellent review article, "The Frontier Trail: Rethinking Turner and Reimagining the American West," by John Mack Faragher, that appeared in the February 1993 issue of the *American Historical Review*.

The main outline of Turner's life is familiar. Born in Wisconsin in an area still on the frontier, the budding scholar learned to enjoy strenuous outdoor activities and developed a strong interest in the past. An excellent student at the fledgling University of Wisconsin, Turner was hired to teach history immediately after completion of his B.A. degree. Required to undertake further study as a condition of permanent employment, Turner went east to Baltimore to enroll in the legendary Johns Hopkins program where virtually all the first generation of professional American historians received their training. With a Ph.D. and secure in his Wisconsin teaching post, Turner in 1893 electrified the stodgy American Historical Association with his seminal paper on the frontier. That single paper established Turner as an original thinker and made him a power in the profession. The "frontier thesis," as it soon came to be called, provided a secular explanation for American development and put an emphasis on new world conditions rather than old world influences. In the years between 1893 and 1910, Turner worked successfully to turn Wisconsin into a center for historical research.

Leaving Wisconsin for Harvard in 1910, Turner turned his thoughts to the influences of sectionalism, his second original idea. He spent the remainder of his life refining the "sectional thesis." In World War I, he served briefly with the Board of Historical Service. Retiring from Harvard in the early 1920s because of failing health, Turner moved first to Maine, back to Wisconsin, and finally to Pasadena, California, to the idyllic surroundings of the Huntington Library. There he died in 1932, considering himself a professional failure because he had never written a "big book."

Turner developed his ideas not in books but in essays. Thus it is appropriate that Martin Ridge, a Senior Research Associate at the Huntington Library, should edit three of Turner's best known and most influential essays. The editor's lengthy introduction provides a cogent analysis of Turner as historian, scholar, and teacher. The book is enriched by an outstanding collection of photographs. The essays demonstrate that Turner was a "pioneer" if not a "master" at aligning history with the social sciences rather than with literature. Turner viewed history as a practical problem-solving discipline. Not surprisingly, his favorite presidents were the historians Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.

Ridge's volume is potentially usable in a number of classes. It could be assigned as a supplement in a survey class, or it could obviously be used in classes in the westward movement, although the textbooks in that field are heavily Turnerian. The most appropriate use for Ridge's volume is in a junior/senior-level historical methods class. This reviewer hopes that Ridge will next turn his editorial skill toward a volume of the essays of Walter P. Webb, another disciple of the frontier thesis.

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