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Jewish Life in the American West. Edited by Ava F. Kahn (review)

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edgments, photographs. ISBN 0-8165-2409-2, \$35.00, cloth; ISBN 0-8165-2382-7, \$17.95, paper.)

Patricia Preciado Martin is a prolific, award-winning author. She has published several books, was designated as Arizona Author of the Year in 1997, and received the Distinguished Public Scholar Award of Excellence by the Arizona Humanities Council in 2000. *Beloved Land*, her latest book, follows the pattern set by her earlier works in that it is a collection of oral histories enriched by vivid photographs. And while the book does not offer a scholarly argument per se, its importance lies in the power of the stories shared by the interviewees. Thus, Martin allows her subjects to tell their own histories as eloquently and meaningfully as could any author.

In the first interview, for example, Carlotta Parra Rodriguez Sotomayor, a 91-year-old woman, tells a story that resonates throughout the Mexican American historical experience. "My father's mother and his stepfather had a ranch that they homesteaded on River Road and Stone Avenue, where the Starbucks Coffee Shop and On the Border Restaurant are now" (p. 3). The irony of one of the icons of the new low-wage, service-oriented economy and corporate "Mexican" restaurant sitting on land once owned by a Mexican is vibrant and powerful. Thus the first story in the book sets the stage for a series of poignant, insightful personal accounts, each in its own way shedding more light on the southern Arizona Mexican American experience.

Just as the words of the subjects stand powerfully on their own, numerous photographs also enliven and inform these tales. The original photos dating back to the turn of the century as well as the recent photos taken by José Galvez add power to the people and their experiences. Indeed, Galvez's prize-winning skills make a profound addition to this work.

The ultimate value of this book lies in the visual power of its photographs and the emotional power of the stories. The storytellers open a complex world of beauty and pain that hold relevance for readers of every background. Mexican Americans will recognize and *abuelita* or a favorite *tio* or *tia*. Non-Hispanics will get a glimpse of the hardscrabble life faced by these folks, and in the process, gain a greater appreciation for the ways in which these individuals survived in a hostile environment while maintaining their values, culture, and traditions. Individuals interested in learning more about the history and cultures of the American Southwest will benefit greatly from reading this book. Scholars, however, will not find much in the way of analysis or interpretation. Martin provides no deep historical or sociological context for the book's vignettes. Interpretation is left completely to the reader as Martin allows the words of the speakers to provide any necessary commentary—a job they do very well.

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Anthony Quiroz

Jewish Life in the American West. Edited by Ava F. Kahn. (Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books, 2002. Pp. 144. Foreword, illustrations, photographs, afterword,

selected readings, acknowledgments, index. ISBN 1-890771-775. \$22.50, paper.)

Jewish Life in the American West: Perspectives on Migration, Settlement, and Community was originally the catalog for an exhibit at the Autry Museum in Los Angeles. It was reprinted after the exhibit moved to the Eiteljorg Museum in Indianapolis.

Ava F. Kahn's Introduction explains that the emphasis in American Jewish history has been on "eastern urbanites" (p. 16). Also, Jewish historians have focused on local or state history. A notable exception has been Moses Rischin, coeditor of the *Jews of the American West*. *Jewish Life in the American West* seeks to "build on that work and advance its scholarship thematically" (p. 16).

Four essays cover the period from the "California gold rush to the closing of the gates of immigration in the early twentieth century" (p. 26). The authors examine American Jewish culture in its early stages, emphasize the diversity among Jewish immigrants, tackle stereotypes of American Jews, and place the Jewish experience in a larger historical context.

In "American West, New York Jewish," Hasia R. Diner dissects the stereotypes of American Jewish life created by popular culture and scholarship, while arguing that the West made Jews more American. Ava Kahn's "To Journey West: American Women and Their Pioneer Stories" presents the stories of four western Jewish women with experiences different from their eastern counterparts. "The Jewish Merchant and the Civic Order in the Urban West," by William Toll, explores the civic and political opportunities afforded to Jewish businessmen in western communities. Finally, Ellen Eisenberg's "From Cooperative Farming to Urban Leadership" uses the history of a Russian family to illustrate the group experience of immigrants who attempted communal agrarian life but later settled in urban areas.

During the decades covered, remarkable growth occurred in the American Jewish population. Jews went west for the same reasons that others did: a desire for adventure, the quest for economic security, the search for a healthier climate, and the prospect for land ownership. The West seemed "a promised land" at a time when life in Europe was becoming increasingly difficult (p. 14). With the gold rush, a pattern of settlement was developed in San Francisco that was later reproduced throughout the West, as Jews established themselves and their institutions. Western Jews became leaders. Among the more dramatic examples were Solomon Bibo, who held the position of chief after marrying an Acoma woman in New Mexico, and Simon Bamberger, the first Democratic, non-Mormon governor of Utah. They and their co-religionists were "an integral part of the western story," and the West was "an integral part of the . . . American Jewish experience" (p. 8).

Many photographs of western Jews and their communities enhance the book. Also helpful is a list of selected readings on western Jewish history.

American Life in the Jewish West concludes with an Afterword by Moses Rischin. This reviewer agrees with his summation that these original essays bring

the reader "closer to an understanding of the western Jewish experience" and pave "the way to further inquiry and exploration" (p. 137).

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Harriett Denise Joseph

San Antonio at Bat: Professional Baseball in the Alamo City. By David Kind. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004. Pp. viii+232. Acknowledgments, illustrations, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 1-58544-345-X, \$40.00, cloth; ISBN 1-58544-376-X, \$18.95, paper.)

Baseball has recently experienced a resurgence rivaling its own popularity during the post-World War II era. This revival has produced numerous books aimed at both the general public and academicians with topics ranging from elites to journeymen.

David King, a *San Antonio Express-News* sports writer, adds to this proliferation with his chronicle of professional baseball in San Antonio. As clearly written as his newspaper contributions, the book begins with the inaugural season (1888) of the Texas League and follows with a brief examination of the Alamo City's teams (black and white), players, owners, and fans over the next 115 years. Initially, King questions local support of an entity that produced "more than its share of truly awful ballgames, hapless last-place clubs, mediocre players, and inept owners" (p. 3). Readers, however, will never doubt the writer's conclusion while perusing eleven chapters that reveal the glories and the gaffs that make the "bush leagues" appealing. These tidbits expose King as a true fan, one who glories in the grand and the routine. And *San Antonio at Bat* is a book that can be enjoyed by fans, both of San Antonio and of the minors.

Others will find a quick reference to facts (nicknames, managers, players, season records, etc.) in the many appendices, but will encounter difficulties in other areas. King tells "the what" well but rarely examines "the why." When "something went strangely awry" (p. 49) in 1919 and the Black Aces captured the headlines from the Texas League all-white San Antonio Aces, King offers no explanation beyond the implication that San Antonio would support a winner regardless of color. Later, when discussing integration, King writes, "While San Antonio had a reputation for racial tolerance the rest of the league was not quite as accommodating" (p. 112). But the reader must infer what set San Antonio apart from other Texas League cities, such as nearby Victoria and Austin.

When he does offer more, his explanations are limited. He attributes minor league success to the parent club's willingness to spend. For example, he states that Amarillo, 1961 Texas League champion, "benefited from the big check-book of the parent New York Yankees" (p. 117), disregarding any discussion of the "Bonus Rule" in effect during the 1950s and early 1960s that forced teams to keep "bonus babies" in the majors or of the value of prestige in signing prospects. He also offers little discussion of other significant changes in the structure of the game, only touching on the changing purpose of the minors, its near extinction, and the recent "Golden Age."

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