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Women in Texas History by Angela Boswell (review)

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American Southeast. The authors deal candidly with issues in the primary documents as well; Riggs and Belt open chapter 6 with Methodist itinerant J. P. Evans's account of an 1830s Cherokee community: "Their dwellings generally consist of small log huts, too insignificant to need a description" (p. 111). Riggs and Belt use this quotation to demonstrate how archaeology can fill gaps in the written record. Other authors use primary documents to confirm their findings and guide their excavations, demonstrating how both history and archaeology can contribute to understudied topics like nineteenth-century Native American architecture.

Because much of the book is based on ongoing archaeological research, there are conjectures and tentative conclusions. Though she suspects otherwise, Ashley A. Dumas concludes her essay on African American influence on Native American architecture by stating there is currently no hard evidence "that the roughly contemporaneous spread of notched-log construction and the use of black slaves among Native Americans for American-style agriculture was anything other than coincidence" (p. 183). Indeed, much of the final chapter is devoted to discussing future avenues of research. One of the most intriguing possibilities is greater connection between southeastern Native American architecture and that of Iroquoian and Algonquian peoples in the Great Lakes, Midwest, and mid-Atlantic regions. Instead of looking at these regions as separate, the authors encourage future scholarship to look at the links between these different peoples and to especially pay attention to the role of the French in changing architecture. In keeping with the interdisciplinary methodologies utilized, Benjamin A. Steere ends the book by calling for a more purposeful analysis of anthropological theories, especially that of strategic adaptation, in archaeological and historical work in the Native American Southeast.

While the general outline of the authors' arguments—that Native Americans selectively adopted the aspects of Euro-American culture that they deemed useful—is familiar to scholars of early America, the authors bring attention to an overlooked aspect of that strategic adaptation by focusing on domestic architecture. Using archaeological methodology and anthropological theories, the authors highlight another avenue of historical inquiry into how southern white, African, and Native American people interacted with one another, and they offer new insights into how different southeastern log cabin builders viewed their homes.

Georgia College

JESSICA L. WALLACE

Women in Texas History. By Angela Boswell. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2018. Pp. xx, 345. \$37.00, ISBN 978-1-62349-707-1.)

Angela Boswell's *Women in Texas History* is a narrative account of Texas history told through the experiences of women, spanning from the prehistoric period to Senator Wendy Davis's marathon filibuster for reproductive rights on the floor of the Texas legislature in 2013. Throughout the book, Boswell's gendered focus intersects with racial, ethnic, and class categories of analysis, providing an ambitious and highly inclusive examination of the state's history.

On this approach, Boswell notes that “this book pays special attention to the differences in the lived experiences of Native Americans, Tejanas, African Americans, Anglos, Germans, and Asians. Other categories that shape women’s identity, such as class, religion, political ideology, and sexuality are also explored” (pp. xii–xiii). Recasting a state’s narrative history through the lens of sex and gender is not entirely new (see Albert L. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* [Albuquerque, 1999]); however, Boswell tackles the entirety of Texas history, shifting the focus away from overly familiar characters and events from the state’s past.

Downsizing male-centered topics, like the Texas Revolution, the Texas Rangers, and the oilmen behind the Spindletop oil strike, to mere paragraphs or even sentences allows more room for Boswell to highlight less-covered historical terrain. For example, she details the intricacies of frontier farm life, from soddies to captivity threats, detailing the types of work women conducted inside and outside the household. She contrasts plantation elite women’s responsibilities with those of yeoman farmers’ wives and, further still, with the work of black slave women. In the early chapters, the rigors of the Texas landscape are ubiquitous. As the book progresses, Boswell spends a great deal of time tracing women’s activism in all its forms—from more muted church activities to marches and protests—beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and continuing to the present day. In developing her narrative, Boswell relies on existing scholarship, which, she acknowledges, leads to uneven coverage of some periods and persons. For example, there are ample studies of southern women’s experiences during the Civil War (especially plantation mistresses’), but there is much less scholarship on the frontier perspectives of Native American women, especially regarding life-jarring events like warfare and dislocation. In contrast, Boswell ably draws on the extensive publications on women’s activism during the Progressive era (focusing on clubwomen, suffragists, and heritage preservationists) to provide an in-depth examination of both well-known and unknown female activists.

In terms of presentation, the author winnows broader discussions of women’s experiences, both regionally and nationally, to very specific Texas examples, seamlessly weaving her narrative from the macro to the micro level. In addressing family reunification during Reconstruction, for instance, Boswell includes the touching story of Lou Turner, a young black girl “who did not know her mother” and resisted being reunified by authorities with her (p. 100). In another example, Boswell narrows a general discussion of the post–World War II pressures put on women to leave their well-paying factory jobs to Anne L. Baker, a machinist from Waco, who remembered “men implicitly or explicitly asking her what she was doing there: ‘You are taking a man’s job’” (p. 208). The inclusion of these on-point quotations from Texas women transforms Boswell’s survey text into something very special. The last chapter, “Taking Charge: Women to the End of the Twentieth Century,” focuses on the impact of the feminist movement in Texas and its ensuing backlash; Boswell also examines new opportunities for women in the workplace and politics, including the groundbreaking campaigns of Barbara Jordan and Ann Richards.

Ultimately, Angela Boswell's synthesis of women in Texas history is expansive, rich, and thoroughly refreshing.

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

LINDA ENGLISH

Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth: The Rise of Plantation Society in the Chesapeake. By Paul Musselwhite. American Beginnings, 1500–1900. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019. Pp xii, 341. \$50.00, ISBN 978-0-226-58528-4.)

In *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), Thomas Jefferson declared that Virginia had “no towns of any consequence” (p. 251). He attributed this absence to geography. The “navigable rivers” that penetrated the state’s interior enabled trade throughout the Chesapeake and devalued the importance of towns (p. 6). In *Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth: The Rise of Plantation Society in the Chesapeake*, Paul Musselwhite eschews this environmental determinism. Rather, he argues that Jefferson’s remark was an articulation of the Chesapeake’s political economy—one in which planters saw urbanization as a threat to their economic and political power. But what happened when this provincial political economy clashed with its imperial counterpart? Musselwhite chronicles these contested moments, including the English Revolution, the Restoration, Bacon’s Rebellion, and the imperial crises of the eighteenth century, when officials and planters alike fixated on urbanity. Rather than resulting in town building, these debates propelled the development of the Chesapeake’s plantation system. Elites came to view their rural estates—not cities or towns—as civic safeguards.

Musselwhite traces the origins of this political economy to the first three decades of the Virginia colony. Rival attempts to organize Virginia around different urban models—ranging from military garrisons to independent corporate communities—divided the colony’s leadership from the start. After the dissolution of the Virginia Company in 1624, the English crown aimed to bring the Virginia colony into the realm of metropolitan control. It did so by dispensing royal and proprietary grants that promoted urbanization. Planters, who routinely pursued profit and patronage through private networks, viewed these grants as inimical to their interests. They pushed for the creation of a decentralized county court system that enabled their domination of local politics and commerce. These courts, elites argued, enabled civic community just as effectively as any urban form. By granting Chesapeake elites a semblance of political and commercial freedom, Chesapeake officials aimed to cultivate planter loyalty and bring a growing rural gentry under imperial control.

In subsequent decades, elites viewed directives to urbanize as challenges to this county system and, by extension, their local authority. Their first hurdle came with Commonwealth reformers who embraced a new vision of empire that lauded urban corporate institutions. Then the Stuart Restoration ushered in yet another vision—one that was suspicious of independent cities. Conflict over urban development further escalated in 1676, when Nathaniel Bacon and his army seized control of Virginia. As elites consolidated their control of land, trade, and enslaved labor, poorer whites envisioned towns—and the industries they would support—as the solution to the Chesapeake’s economic problems.