

Reviews

Exploring With Frémont. By Charles Preuss. Translated and edited by Erwin G. and Elisabeth K. Gudde. (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1958. Pp. 162, 16 illustrations, map. \$3.95)

The Guddes and their interest in Western Americana are well known to the readers of *Names*. It was this interest as well as the concern with the role of Germans in the exploration and settlement of California that sent them on a thirty year search for the diaries of Frémont's cartographer. The fruit of their labors is a real contribution to the history of the West.

Perhaps the greatest value of the book lies in the close-up it gives of the always controversial Frémont. Writing not to impress officialdom nor to further his own cause, Charles Preuss can be and is quite frank. His highly critical appraisal of Frémont's behaviour and actions, especially at critical junctures, help us in understanding the course of events during a brief but consequential segment of Western history.

Another feature of the Preuss diaries is their factual reporting of the disagreeable details of the journeys, the monotony, the minor discomforts, the frictions. This facet is usually either neglected or overemphasized. Preuss partook in Frémont's journeys not in a spirit of adventure or even scientific curiosity but from economic necessity. This alone tends to bring sharply into focus the contrast in personality and attitudes of the two men.

Preuss' maps for Frémont are not only classics of Western cartography but also primary sources for the toponymy west of the Missouri. It is not surprising that, in editing, the author of *California Place Names* and his wife, herself an active contributor to this topic, pay special attention to place names and comment on them in numerous footnotes.

This book provides also an example of a curious censorship: the editors in keeping with the custom of the period concerned, intended to write geographical names without an accent (Santa Fe, Rio Grande) but the publisher's policy forced the accent upon them. Such inflexible policy does not seem helpful to scholarly research.

Exploring With Frémont, ably translated and edited, will be read with profit and enjoyment by students of Western explorations and Western place names.

Fritz L. Kramer

University of Nevada

Mushrooms, Russia and History. By Valentina Pavlovna Wasson and R. Gordon Wasson. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957. 2 v. \$125.00)

This two-volume set of books is extraordinary, not only in format, but also in content. Let us dispose of the format by saying that the text was printed by the Stamperia Valdonega in Verona, and the illustrations were beautifully executed by Daniel Jacomet in Paris and by Fratelli Alinari in Florence. Unfortunately, a limited edition of five hundred copies makes the work generally unavailable. The books are the result of thirty years research on mushrooms and the part they have played in the various cultures of the world. The research began when Valentin Pavlovna, a Russian emigrée and now a doctor of medicine, and Robert Gordon Wasson, a vice president of J. P. Morgan & Co., were married and discovered soon after that Mrs. Wasson loved mushrooms while Mr. Wasson abhorred them. This led them to seek an explanation for their mushroomic predilections, and the results of their investigations are contained in these books.

The Wassons expound the theory that over the centuries the ethnic groups of the world have been divided into two mycological camps: the mycophobes, those who fear mushrooms; and the mycophiles, those who love mushrooms. It is the fate of those with Anglo-Saxon heritage to be mycophobes, while the Slavic peoples fall into the category of mycophiles. Perhaps this explanation will account for the somewhat cryptic title. So far this mycological preference has not had any ideological implications in the cold war.

In order to prove their contention the Wassons have made intensive studies of the names of mushrooms and their etymologies in various languages. Except for a few chapters in which the Wassons explain the significance of the mushroom in art and the ritual of an Indian mushroom cult in Mexico, the two volumes are devoted almost exclusively to etymologies which they use to justify their classification of all peoples as mycophiles or myco-

phobes. For example, a mushroom with a moist and sticky surface is labeled *maslĭanik* or butter mushroom by the mycophilic Russians, whereas the mycophobic English would call it a slimy toadstool. Through etymological intricacies too complicated to explain briefly here, the Wassons, in a chapter entitled "The Cripple, the Toad, and the Devil," have shown the relationship of these concepts to mycophobia and to "toadstool," a disparaging English word for mushroom. Of particular interest to the professional mycologist will be the chapter entitled "Unscientific Nomenclature," in which the Wassons take to task Linneas' system of binomial nomenclature, pointing out its shortcomings and inaccuracies.

One critic has protested some of the linguistic conclusions of the Wassons and has repudiated them as their own philological inventions. In all fairness it must be granted that they were working in a virgin field of scholarship. It will be the work of future scholars to corroborate or reject their claims. Whatever their findings, this work will stand as one of the greatest in the field of ethnobotany.

Incidentally, Mr. Wasson is a member of the American Name Society.

Eugene V. Muench

University of Nebraska

Who Knows What About Names?

Your secretary frequently receives queries concerning onomatological questions. These he passes on to members of the *American Name Society* who, to his knowledge, are best qualified to answer them. On these occasions he feels keenly the need for a directory of persons and their onomatologic specialties. There seems to be agreement as to the usefulness of such a directory.

Your secretary, therefore, asks each member to supply him with the necessary information for such a directory. It would be most convenient to write on one or more 3 by 5 file cards the following: 1. Name and address; 2. Areas of special onomatologic interests, past and current; 3. Pertinent publications. Any information of this nature concerning non-members would also be appreciated. Replies should be addressed to Dr. Fritz L. Kramer, Mackay School of Mines, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada.

It is hoped that this directory will, in time, become available as a special publication of the Society.