

## Review

Erwin Gudde's most recent contribution consists of two chapters in the *California Blue Book, 1958* (California State Printing Office, Sacramento, Calif.), one on "The Name of Our State", the other on "The Names of California Counties". The California Blue Book, an official, biennial publication, has from time to time printed the "Vallejo Report" of 1850, giving the derivation of the names of the original counties. This report was later supplemented by Prentiss Maslin to include the counties created after the middle of the last century. Gudde now follows in this respectable tradition.

The chapters give, in a concise and readable form, what is known about the origin of the names. The information is based on Gudde's larger work on *California Place Names* with new material added in at least one case.

It is reasonable to expect that Gudde's contribution will last at least as long as Vallejo's.

Fritz L. Kramer

University of Nevada

*How Come It's Called That? Place Names in the Big Bend Country.*

By Virginia Madison and Hallie Stillwell. University of New Mexico Press, 1958. Pp. 129. 8 illustrations, map. \$ 4.25.

Two writers with extensive experience in West Texas have collaborated on this study of place names, primarily confining themselves to the three Texas counties of Jeff Davis, Brewster, and Presidio — the Big Bend Country. Their search for factual material has not only led them to interviews with local inhabitants and newspaper files, but to tracking down individuals who played active parts in giving the original names but who no longer live in easy reach. The authors were lucky enough to find some of the early surveyors still alive and to have surveyors' notes and memories as source material. We are fortunate in having the book done so early — in another generation much of this information would be unavailable.

The book contains entertaining glimpses of early life in West Texas and incidents of folkloric interest as they touch upon the

story behind the name. In general the book represents journalistic reporting in consonance with the title, that is, it is designed for reading rather than as a reference book. It is written in an easy, conversational style, although by the end of the book the initial words of the title are repeated enough to surfeit the unexacting — 16 times by a quick re-check, after the title page.

End papers contain a map that helps locate many of the names discussed in the text. A nine-page index locates nearly all the proper names used. Eight pages of illustrations show attractive views of some of the places described. Both content and appearance make it an attractive addition to the small shelf of name studies of the Southwest, and a good souvenir for visitors to the Big Bend country to take home. Our literature will be much richer when each section of the Southwest has a similar monument.

The curiosity of travelers about the origin of local place names is traditional, and the more outlandish the name, the more likely the arousal of interest. An inquiring traveler may very well pass Heath Canyon, the McKenney Hills, and Cooper's Store with a shrug. A hurrying traveler may even take a place name that clearly describes a local natural formation with no more interest than the time necessary to verify its accuracy: Hot Springs, Sugar Loaf Peak, Pummel Peak, and Rio Conchos seem reasonable enough and spread a satisfying rather than titillating aura. But who could travel (by mule train, Southern Pacific, automobile, or map) past Persimmon Gap, Robbers' Roost, Butcherknife Spring, or Lost Mine Peak without wanting to be the author of this book?

As we may well understand, the emphasis in this work lies on the Anglo-American penetration and settlement of the region, and on names as they exist today. The earlier names, Indian and Spanish, are lightly treated, perhaps because they deserve a separate study, one that will necessarily come from documentary material rather than interviews. A great deal of documentary material exists, beginning with José Antonio Pichardo's *Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas* (4 vols, University of Texas Press, 1932—1946) and moving on to local archives in Texas and Mexico, but that study lies more in the academic and historical field than in that of names.

Jack A. Dabbs

A. & M. College of Texas  
College Station, Texas