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Review of *The American Far West in the Twentieth Century.* By Earl Pomeroy.

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The American Far West in the Twentieth Century. By Earl Pomeroy. Edited by Richard W. Etulain. Foreword by Howard R. Lamar. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. xxv + 570 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $35.00 cloth, $25.00 paper.

After publishing his pathbreaking study *The Pacific Slope: A History of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada* in 1965, Earl Pomeroy embarked on the even larger task of writing a history of the American West in the twentieth century. The present volume is the result, deeply researched by Pomeroy over four decades and completed after his death in 2005 by his student and friend Richard Etulain.

The book is a fascinating mix of carefully presented details and wide-ranging topical coverage. Pomeroy expanded his "Pacific Slope" vision to include Alaska, Hawaii, the rest of the Rocky Mountain states, and five of the Great Plains states, but omitting Texas because he judged it more southern than western. After an introductory profile of "The West in 1901," the text breaks into four chunks. Four chapters deal with economic development, including family farming and industrial farming, industrial mining, petroleum extraction, and manufacturing. Two chapters examine "rails, roads, and cities," meaning the interaction of expanding transportation systems and commercial cities. Two chapters cover social relations (immigrant communities, religion, education) and two more examine local and state politics and the national influences of western political initiatives.

One of the pleasures of the book is the arresting juxtapositions that pop up as Pomeroy burrows into a topic. Radio evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson and politician Ronald Reagan appear on adjacent pages as masters of broadcast media. Henry Huntington's electric railroads are followed by the Lincoln Highway Association, linking innovative suburban and transcontinental transportation technologies of the early twentieth century. Cotton plantations transform the San Joaquin Valley in one paragraph, sugar transforms Hawaii in the next.

If there is a single theme to this book, it is that the western territories and states have changed just as much, and just as rapidly, after 1900 as they did before. The 1890s marked some important turning points in the development of the West, but they did not bring an end to western history. To the contrary, the West continued to grow, change, and develop in all of the twentieth-century decades—as it does

still in the present century. A second theme is the waxing of California as a center of gravity for the West and the nation, an idea taken and amplified from *The Pacific Slope*.

Pomeroy and Etulain (whose skilled editing and fine-tuning make for a seamless whole) have given us a dense book with 400 pages of text and 128 pages of notes in very fine type; it will be a first point of reference for many topics. In addition, David Wrobel has provided a bibliography of recent scholarship that Pomeroy was not able to consult. Readers of *Great Plains Quarterly* can be assured that North Dakota gets as many index entries as Nevada, Oklahoma as many as Oregon, South Dakota as many as Idaho, and Nebraska a few more than New Mexico.

It is also worth offering some comparisons with other recent books. Richard Etulain and Michael Malone, *The American West: A Modern History, 1900 to the Present* (2nd ed., 2007) covers much of the same territory, with fewer details but more accessibly for students. Elliott Barkan, *From All Points: America's Immigrant West, 1870s-1952* (2007) and my own *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (2008) offer greater detail on some of the specific topics but are obviously less comprehensive. I would have benefitted greatly from having Pomeroy's book at hand, and I have no doubt that it will be of service to an entire generation of scholars.

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