

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

1992

Review of Historical Atlas of the American West

Frederick C. Luebke

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, fredluebke@comcast.net

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Luebke, Frederick C., "Review of Historical Atlas of the American West" (1992). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 692.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/692>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Historical Atlas of the American West. By Warren A. Beck and Ynez D. Haase. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989. Maps, appendix, references, index. iii + 78 pp. \$29.95.

This book is another in the well-known series of historical atlases published by the University of Oklahoma Press. Most are defined by states; this one attempts the huge task of treating the entire western half of the United States, including the Great Plains.

The first several maps present physiographic features—topography, climate, flora, fauna, and the like. Then follow a series on European explorations, land grants, trails, routes, and roads. The second half of the atlas includes the expansion of the United States across western lands, wars, and a variety of topics relating to Indian affairs. Railroads receive temporal development but thereafter history disappears from this volume. Topics treated in the final third range from contemporary configurations of counties to the distribution of crops, minerals, federal lands, and military installations during World War II.

In general the maps are neatly executed and the accompanying text is clear and concise—necessary virtues for a book of this kind. Although errors can be found, given the vast scope of the volume, none seems important. For example, the authors can hardly be blamed for not knowing that “Kearney” is the city and “Kearny” is the man and the fort, or that Council Bluffs, a city in Iowa, has not the same location as the Council Bluff of Lewis and Clark.

But the principles that guided the selection of topics remain a mystery. It is as though the history of the American West is little more than frontier history; twentieth-century development is largely ignored. Intricate maps of eighteenth-century land grants in southern Texas are included, but the contemporary extent and use of federal government lands, for example, are not. Sheep trails are mapped but interstate highways apparently are not important. A detailed map of the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 is offered, but the huge shifts of pop-

ulation to twentieth-century cities of the West are ignored. Suffice it to say that no clear sense of the ongoing history of the West emerges from this historical atlas.

FREDERICK C. LUEBKE
Department of History
University of Nebraska-Lincoln