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Quivira: Europeans in the Region of the Santa Fe Trail, 1540-1820. By William Brandon. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990. Maps, illustrations, epilogue, notes, index. 338 pp. \$34.95.

The subjects addressed in this book are familiar ones: Spanish exploration of the American Southwest and eastward through the Great Plains, and French exploration westward from Louisiana. According to the jacket blurb, William Brandon offers "a closely written synthesis" of these explorations, examining them through a lens provided by a region that he variously calls a frontier and an ancient trade route. Unfortunately, while much of *Quivira* is synthesis, written as a gossipy digest of historical events occurring in an ever-enlarging region during a three-hundred-year period; little of it is "closely written."

The Quivira of the title provides only a vague structure for this chronicle of historical characters and the events they experienced. The stated focus, the region of the Santa Fe Trail, is extremely diffuse. While Brandon at first describes his region of focus as a narrow corridor between the pueblos along the Rio Grande and Quivira along the Arkansas River; it eventually grows to include within its purview the entire middle portion of the United States.

Brandon describes the region of the trail in his pre-contact discussion as a trade route between the "long grass prairie" and the "short grass plains." The former, according to the author, was populated by people "perhaps calling themselves collectively the Chahiksichahiks" (p. 9-10). He refers to this trade route in succeeding chapters as an "ancient east-west frontier" that Europeans, in particular the French and Spanish, attempted to "penetrate." The initial confusion as to whether the subject under consideration is a frontier dividing two regions or a trade route connecting the same two regions remains unclarified even in the epilogue.

This book pretends to be a scholarly compilation examining the historical record from a different perspective, shedding new light on old

documents, but it does nothing of the sort. It is replete with endless sentences that cry out for an editor but say little of any import. A typical example of Brandon's writing style is the complete sentence which I previously quoted only in part, "In the long-grass prairie lands bordering the short-grass plains on the east a profusion of little towns now came into being occupied by neighboring groups of prairie peoples perhaps calling themselves collectively the Chahiksichahiks, residents for many generations here and there along the edge of the central plains, possessors of a whole ragbagful of rainbow remnants of temple mound song and ceremony—mystical, moving, barbaric, often beautiful" (p. 9-10). Wondering who the Chahiksichahiks were, I consulted the endnotes and found that "prehistoric names" were "drawn from Swanton *Indian Tribes*" (p. 257). The manner in which this book is referenced is exceedingly annoying, since there is no indication on the page itself that there is any reference at all. To query a point, one must search the endnotes for the page number in question (if it happens to be listed) in the hope that whatever is written removes the source of confusion. In this case it did not, but I did find in John Swanton's *Indian Tribes of North America* that Chahiksichahiks was one of the names that the Pawnee at one time called themselves and others they considered civilized (Swanton 1952:289). This is but one example of how Brandon inappropriately generalizes from particularly obscure facts.

Brandon's compilation of events drawn from standard sources is filled with hyperbole and misrepresentation. While it is true that he employs archival documents in the sections dealing with French exploration, his recording of Spain's efforts in the New World seems to be gleaned entirely from published sources. The author acknowledges the assistance of the staff of the Archivo General des Indias in Sevilla, but he cites no original manuscripts and all referenced documents are from published translations. Brandon's manner of historical exposition, often chatty and frivolous, combines with his ornate writing style and some disturbing

attitudes to make reading this book an annoying and frustrating exercise.

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