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Review of *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern West* By Carl Abbott

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D. Nash. In it the author not only documents the critical role cities have played in the development of the West since World War II, but claims that those cities really personify the three mythic images of the West as locus of democracy, opportunity, and individual fulfillment. Defining the West as all of the Great Plains and Pacific States, Carl Abbott examines mid-size cities as well as large, but concentrates on the impact of metropolises like Los Angeles, San Francisco Bay, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Houston on the entire region. One of the book's most compelling arguments is the complete dominance of Western cities over the region's hinterland.

The *Metropolitan Frontier* effectively places recent Western history in an urban context, emphasizing World War II's impact on Western cities and how they shaped and drew the region into a national and international web of unprecedented scope. In addition to examining the postwar economic development of Western cities and showing characteristics common to all, the book explores changes in demographics and politics, stressing the growth of pluralism and the political accommodations this development encouraged.

Arguing the urban West's far ranging significance, the study suggests it has become the national pacesetter and innovator because it has had the "physical and institutional space to allow the full development and expression of new urban trends" (p. xxii). In this way Western cities, assuming the characteristics associated with the openness of the traditional rural west, offer a new Western frontier. Abbott supports this argument with an intriguing look at spatial developments and architecture as well as economic and political change.

Readers familiar with Abbott's other work will not be surprised by this book for it draws on many of his previous writings. Its breadth of coverage, however, as well as the depth of its analysis of recent Western urban development ought to impress any reader. *The Metropolitan Frontier* makes a compelling case for the centrality of cities in the West's recent development and the significance of Western

The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern West. By Carl Abbott. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993. Introduction, maps, black and white photographs, tables, notes, bibliographic essay, index. xxiii + 244 pp. \$29.95.

This important book initiates a new series on *The Modern American West* edited by Gerald

cities in modern America. The author reminds urban historians long disdainful of those cities that they must be taken seriously and seen as complex responses to the challenges of modern life.

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