

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Winter 1983

Review of *Oklahoma Memories* Edited by Anne Hodges Morgan and Rennard Strickland

Brad Agnew

Northeastern State University

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



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

Agnew, Brad, "Review of *Oklahoma Memories* Edited by Anne Hodges Morgan and Rennard Strickland" (1983). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1723.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1723>

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.

Oklahoma Memories. Edited by Anne Hodges Morgan and Rennard Strickland. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981. Illustrations, index. xii + 308 pp. \$16.95 cloth. \$8.95 paper.

There is something inherently suspicious about a work of nonfiction edited by two scholars that will not cure insomnia. When their book proves to be compelling, the reader assumes either that it has been ghostwritten or that the editors' credentials are specious. Since the pay of scholars would preclude their hiring a ghost and the academic credentials of Anne Hodges Morgan and Rennard Strickland are bona fide, the reader has little alternative but to accept *Oklahoma Memories* at face value and enjoy one of the most interesting books on Oklahoma published in recent years.

Anne Hodges Morgan, a Ph.D. in history from the University of Texas who is currently serving as vice-president for programs of the Kerr Foundation in Oklahoma City, and Rennard Strickland, who received the J.D. and S.J.D. degrees from the University of Virginia and currently is research professor of history and law at the University of Tulsa, have collaborated in the editing of twenty-seven memoirs and recollections of Oklahomans, spanning an era from before the Civil War to the present. The editors rejected the restraints of "timid historians" and included anecdotes and colorful stories they might once have discarded as too melodramatic or "so absurd as to be too strange for the realm of fiction." The result of their bold departure from the narrow confines

of historical scholarship is an anthology of readings that will appeal to anyone interested in the history of the Sooner State.

Geographically, the selections range from the wheat fields of the Panhandle to the cotton plantations of the Choctaw Nation. Economically, they span the spectrum between dirt-poor tenant farmers in Harrah and oil-rich tycoons at the Skirvin in Oklahoma City. And socially, these autobiographical accounts cover a gamut including an oil-field waitress of questionable virtue and the straight-laced members of the women's clubs devoted to cultural enrichment. Not only were the passages skillfully selected to recall the flavor and feel of the past, but they also were chosen because of their readability. The result is a personal and occasionally moving commentary on Oklahoma. While readers might wish for more thorough sketches of the authors of many of the selections, they will appreciate the index, which most anthologies lack.

Oklahoma Memories has an emotional impact found more often in novels than in historical literature. The reader shares the despair of a pioneer homesteader who made the '89 run and labored to build a better life for his children, who then rejected his values after oil was discovered on their farm. Alice Mary Robertson's recollection of the Christmas following the deaths of her twin sisters is poignant testimony to the sacrifices endured by white missionaries in their struggle to bring the word of God to the Indians. And Edith Krepp's memoir of her full-blooded Kiowa grandfather captures the pathos of the demise of the way of life of the Indian people.

The twenty-seven selections not only appeal to the emotions; they are a treasure trove of anecdotes, insights, and observations concerning the state, its people, and their past. While teachers of state history should consider *Oklahoma Memories* an invaluable supplement to their textbooks, anyone interested in Oklahoma should find the selections engrossing.

BRAD AGNEW
Department of History
Northeastern State University
Tahlequah, Oklahoma