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Fall 2005

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Eva Eckert
Connecticut College

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Eckert, Eva, "Review of *Perilous Voyages: Czech and English Immigrants to Texas in the 1870s* by Lawrence H. Konecny and Clinton Machann" (2005). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 779.

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Perilous Voyages: Czech and English Immigrants to Texas in the 1870s.

By Lawrence H. Konecny and Clinton Machann. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004. xii + 183 pp. Maps, photographs, illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Perilous Voyages exemplifies the fact that one can learn much about immigration by focusing on specific journeys. As Konecny and Machann show, this focus enables readers to view immigration as a set of complex decisions of troubled individuals rather than as a movement of masses. The authors have unearthed critical historical materials that shed new light on Texas immigration. The book communicates not only valuable facts but also excitement over discovering previously unpublished materials of narrative interest and historical power: Texas travel adventure in the diary of William Wright (April-May 1879), oral history about the voyage of thirty-six Moravians (1873), and Kingsbury's pamphlet glorifying Texas.

In the late 1870s Texas, recovering from a depression, was seeking farmers and laborers through extravagant advertising. Among those attracted were migrants from the Moravian province of Austria-Hungary and from Britain. *Perilous Voyages* offers an in-depth study of the very different journeys of these two ethnic groups who came at the same time but for different reasons and with diverse goals.

The main body of the book is composed of primary texts introduced by brief commentaries. The introduction elaborates on immigration models and provides historical background on Texas, especially the history of the railroads that pulled the migrants inland by the promise of "cheap and fertile" land the

railroad companies owned. In their promotion the companies used material such as William Kingsbury's pamphlet advertising land along the Galveston-Harrisburg-San Antonio railroad. The visionary description of Texas as land where the destitute prosper is seconded in letters of several Texas settlers. Kingsbury's idealistic and exaggerated description serves as a counterpoint to the traumatic voyage of Moravian immigrants culminating in a shipwreck near the Bahamas.

One third of the book is given over to Kingsbury's description, while the authors' commentary is limited to three pages. The oral history account in chapter 6, inspired by Moravian letters and recorded by third and fourth generation descendants, is unaccompanied by detailed annotation of the folklore narrative or a broader historical context. This lack of historical background, however, is balanced out by fascinating facts illuminating train travel and by emigrants' documents, such as those confirming release from military obligation. Chapters 7 through 9 provide uncommon insights about the ship that carried the Moravian group, including technical equipment, ship history, and the hazardous conditions to which the travelers were exposed. Reconstruction of the shipwreck, based on newspaper records, is impressive. The authors expose deplorable ship conditions, shocking at the time when cross-Atlantic migrations were commonplace. The final chapter provides a powerful counterpoint to the shipwreck narrative: an account of the Moravians' actual settlement in Texas.

While desirable, a more detailed annotation of the oral history and textual sources would render the book less accessible for its target audience, the general reader. On the whole, Konecny and Machann offer a powerful chapter on Texas immigration history. **Eva Eckert**, *Department of Slavic Studies, Connecticut College*.