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Review of Siringo.

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Siringo. By Ben E. Pingenot. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1989. Introduction, illustrations, epilogue, notes, bibliography, index. xxviii + 232 pp. \$29.50.

Anyone who has seen Richard Farnsworth's portrayal of Bill Miner in the *Grey Fox* would identify with Charles A. Siringo: "a nineteenth-century man who had become an anachronism in a twentieth-century world that had passed him by." This is a sad story about a jack-of-all-trades western character who tried his hand as a cowboy, detective, homesteader, and writer. After reading this book, one concludes that he was not particularly skilled in any of these professions—all of them brought him grief.

In a sympathetic, sometimes folksy biography, Ben E. Pingenot traces Siringo's career from a Texas cattle drive in 1877 to Hollywood in 1922. A good portion of the book deals with the Siringo-Pinkerton legal dispute over the use of privileged information. Siringo wrote his *Pinkerton's Cowboy Detective* after he resigned from the detective agency in 1907, too soon

after a jury had found labor leader William Haywood and two others not guilty of conspiracy to murder a former Idaho governor. Clarence Darrow, by exposing the Pinkerton's unethical investigative methods, brought the detective agency under intense public scrutiny. Licking their wounds the Pinkertons sought privacy. The revelation of more misdeeds would have increased their embarrassment, so they waged and won a two-decade-long legal battle against Siringo.

The author's treatment and documentation of the Western Federation of Miners in several long footnotes (179-81), including a mystifying citation from Irving Bernstein's *Turbulent Years*, is somewhat puzzling. Equally unusual is the use of Richard Maxwell Brown's contribution to Howard R. Lamar's *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West* as the authority for western labor history. One also wonders why this work is so heavily documented with informational footnotes that do not really support the main story line. Despite these criticisms, Pingenot offers a new interpretation of Siringo that should be of interest to a general audience.

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