

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Winter 1998

Review of *A Hundred Years of Heroes: A History of the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show* By Clay Reynolds with Marie-Madeleine Schein

Mark Busby
Southwest Texas State University

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



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

Busby, Mark, "Review of *A Hundred Years of Heroes: A History of the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show* By Clay Reynolds with Marie-Madeleine Schein" (1998). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2065. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/2065>

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.

Madeleine Schein) fulfills its subtitle's function and provides much more. Reynolds traces the famous show in Fort Worth from its beginning in 1896 through a series of changes including the addition of meat packing giants Armour and Swift in 1903, the new Livestock Exchange Building in 1908, the first indoor rodeo in 1918, the responses to the vicissitudes of the Depression, the flood and gasoline rationing of the 1940s, the move from the north to the west side of Fort Worth, the change from corporate to city sponsorship, and the continuing success of the show today.

Although the title suggests that the book will glorify the men who made the Southwest Exposition successful, this is not a book of hero worship. Certainly the important figures—Marion Sansom Sr., Marion Sansom Jr., S. Burk Burnett, Amon Carter Sr., Amon Carter Jr., John Justin, Edgar Deen, John B. Davis, Van Zandt Jarvis, W. R. "Billy Bob" Watt Sr., and W. R. "Bob" Watt Jr.—appear throughout the pages, but Reynolds places emphasis on the larger historic forces to which they responded more than on their individual abilities. Behind the history of the stock show is a full history of the American cattle industry, the growth and changing face of rodeo including the rise of the Cowboy Turtles Association, and the internationalization of the livestock industry.

One of the difficult and admirable aspects of the book stems from the big flood of 1942, which destroyed most of the early stock show records. As a result Reynolds and Schein had to recreate or speculate about the actual early history of the show. Even the date it began is obscure. But the important and interesting details—from Bill Pickett's unique method of bulldogging by grabbing the steer's lip with his teeth, to Quanah Parker's dress, to the shift from front to side chutes for horseback riding—are all here.

Because this book was commissioned by the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show, the fact that it does not provide a trenchant examination of its subject is not unexpected.

A Hundred Years of Heroes: A History of the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show. By Clay Reynolds with Marie-Madeleine Schein. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1995. Photographs, index. xvi + 315 pp. \$29.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

This book by noted Texas novelist Clay Reynolds (with assistance by researcher Marie-

Still, Reynolds often suggests some of the problems with the show—its inherent racism in the early years when cowboys like Pickett were always identified as “Negro,” its embrace of the Klan, its attraction of and to the sleazy side of Fort Worth, and its industry-making zeal. The book, therefore, tells the positive side of the story with enough of the underbelly to avoid being pure promotion and with a strong sense of historical context.

MARK BUSBY
Center for the Study of the Southwest
Southwest Texas State University