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Review of *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* by Bryan Edward Stone

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and other identities intertwine, influence, and define each other—will especially benefit. Stone aptly applies the modern reconceptualization of the frontier to describe the experiences of Jews—“the quintessential frontierspeople”—in Texas, “a quintessential frontier.”

Throughout the book Stone uses the frontier to organize and interpret the Texas Jewish experience. For example, the Republic of Texas’s location on a geographic frontier allowed Jews to develop an interior frontier wherein they could express or hide their Jewishness in accord with their circumstances. Furthermore, the geographic frontier enhanced Jews’ sense of being both insiders and outsiders in the newly formed state. Living great distances from centers of Jewish life, they identified with the dominant Anglo culture. Their Jewish heritage, however, distinguished them to some extent from the Anglo majority.

Even after the physical frontier ceased to exist, Texas Jews continued to draw on the idea to distinguish between themselves and other Texan and Jewish groups. When immigrants who energetically espoused Zionism and traditional religious and Jewish identity came to Texas in the twentieth century, native Jewish Texans resisted, fearing the newcomers’ more distinctively Jewish lifestyles might upset the unity that had developed between themselves and non-Jews. The effort to balance themselves along an internal frontier also led Texas Jews to become the “consummate insider-outsiders,” a position reflected by both their complicity with the white majority during the civil rights era and their efforts to end segregation. Even today, the frontier continues to be “the essential metaphor of Texas-Jewish life,” despite Texas Jewry being “a modern, self-conscious, globally integrated, socially active, and spiritually rich community.” Whether a physical reality or an internal concept, the frontier has allowed Jewish Texans continually to define and redefine themselves and others.

In tracing the history of Jews in Texas, Stone places Jewish Texans in context with many of the most prominent events in American and Jewish history. He does not assert that this experience is unique or exceptional, nor does he succumb simply to glorifying Texas Jews. Instead, his book combines the best in scholarly standards, challenging popular

The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas. By Bryan Edward Stone. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. xv + 294 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper.

Bryan Stone’s *The Chosen Folks* deserves widespread appeal. Those interested in Jewish studies, Texas history, and immigration will certainly find it a useful analysis. What’s more, those concerned with the frontier—where Jewish, Texan, immigrant,

myths and evenly analyzing historical data, with a narrative ability to tell an intriguing story. I learned a lot and enjoyed doing so.

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Beyond the American Pale: The Irish in the West, 1845–1910. By David M. Emmons. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010. viii + 472 pp. Tables, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.