

Correspondence of James K. Polk. Volume III, 1835-1836. Edited by HERBERT WEAVER and KERMIT L. HALL. (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1975. Pp. xxxvi, 836. Preface, illustrations, index. \$25.00.)

The third installment of the *Correspondence of James K. Polk* continues the high standards set by Herbert Weaver and his associates in preceding volumes. Their most laudable practice is in keeping editorial notes to the minimum necessary for adequate identification of persons, places, and events. Long excursions into peripheral and almost irrelevant matters are completely absent in this sound work. As a result, many historians will actually live to see the Polk correspondence completed. If only the same could be said for some other major editorial projects.

The book contains the full texts of five hundred letters and summaries of nearly two hundred others, with the location of each original and mention of whether it has been published previously. Letters are presented in the full flavor of the original with only minor modernizations in punctuation. Each correspondent and other person mentioned is briefly identified where possible, as are events and obscure localities; seldom do editorial notes exceed three or four lines. It would be convenient to have life dates for individuals, but otherwise the notation is excellent. As is usual with correspondence of this nature, only one-seventh of the letters is actually from Polk. Those to him are mostly from Tennessee, but there is a wide scattering of correspondence from members of Congress around the country.

The frenzied activity of the 1836 presidential campaign is obvious from the fact that the two years preceding the election occupy the entire 836 pages. These letters clearly show the rapidly widening split of the Jackson party into pro- and anti-Van Buren elements. Polk's own position was particularly tender because Hugh Lawson White, the most popular man in Tennessee after Jackson himself, was one of the anti-Van Buren candidates. Polk tried to steer a middle course between angering the White men by opposing their candidate, and destroying the unity of Jackson's organization by encouraging the local sentiment for White against Van Buren. Polk early proclaimed, and constantly held to, a preference for White as Jackson's successor only if White received the legitimate nomination of a united Democratic party (which was out of the question from the beginning). He was greatly concerned that White's cause was being taken up by the Whigs chiefly to divide the Jackson men.

Striving for party loyalty, Polk incurred the displeasure of the "whole-hog" White supporters in Tennessee and fully expected them to mount a strong opponent against his reelection to Congress in 1835. He escaped this danger and went on to win election as Speaker of the House in December, but White's personal popularity was sufficient to carry Tennessee against Van Buren in 1836. Polk did his best to hold the state in line, exchanging numerous letters with Democratic leaders in the counties and aiding in the creation of loyal Democratic newspapers to offset the heavy Whig preponderance in the state's press. Though unsuccessful at this time, his correspondence from Tennessee and elsewhere shows him emerging as a major party figure in the state and nation.

The overwhelming focus of these letters is politics, yet ordinary life shows through from time to time in Polk's business dealings and family affairs. One sees many things in the volume which bring to mind the problems of today: the constant clamor of minor politicians for patronage; complaints about slow mail service; the limited rights of women; dunning letters about students' unpaid bills at college. Yet frequently the reader is yanked back to the antebellum years by a reference to Indian lands being overrun by illegal white settlers or to slave children being bought and examined like livestock.

There are no flaws in the production of the book by Vanderbilt University Press, although the price has jumped 67 percent from the first volumes.

Department of History
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas

JAMES H. BROUSSARD

Siskiyou Trail: The Hudson's Bay Fur Company Route to California.
By RICHARD DILLON. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975. Pp. xv, 381. Maps, illustrations, acknowledgments, introduction, selective bibliography, index. \$8.95.)

The Siskiyou Trail attains its rightful place in the history and geography of the United States in this excellent book by Richard Dillon. The author has managed to fill a void in our appreciation of the overland routes which led to the eventual settlement of the North American west. Writing with a flair that does justice to his subject,