of nineteenth-century Texas and political biography in no way detracts from what is a very readable, insightful, and engaging study of one of the Lone Star State's most intriguing and dichotomous leaders.

Sean P. Cunningham
Texas Tech University


The Jewish Diaspora is perhaps one of the greatest ethnic migrations in history and led to the settlement of Jews in nearly every part of the world, including Texas. However, as with most ethnic migrations in the late nineteenth century, settlement patterns tended to be concentrated in urban areas, owing to chain migration patterns as well as to the presence of established enclaves in the larger cities. The Texas immigration experience, on the other hand, poses a different story in that there were no established communities when larger numbers of Jewish settlers arrived. Texas was, in a sense, truly a frontier for ethnic migration. In *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas*, Bryan Edward Stone explores how the presence of this frontier impacted Jewish settlement in the Lone Star State and how the immigrants sought to sustain and maintain their culture in such an environment—which often meant adaptations and compromises to the traditional Jewish way of life.

Stone argues that although there were earnest attempts to create Jewish settlement schemes in Texas—not unlike the German *Adelsverein*—most Jews did not consider the area as a first choice, instead preferring densely populated east coast cities, such as Boston and New York, as prime locations for settlement. The main reason, he maintains, is that Texas was a "frontier" region and offered few amenities for Jewish life—clerical access; availability of Kosher foods; and, above all, camaraderie—that the urban centers offered. A few adventurous early Jewish settlers, such as Nicholas Adolphus Sterne, to whom the author refers as "proto-Jews," exercised and observed few, if any, Judaic customs, traditions, or cultural practices.

After the Civil War, as immigration to the United States from
Eastern and Southern Europe increased, enthusiastic promoters attempted to convince Jewish settlers to forgo the urban centers and settle in Texas—which they promoted as a new “Zion.” This “Galveston Movement” succeeded in bringing a sufficient number of Jews into the area, creating a fledgling ethnic community. By the early 20th century, the Jewish communities in Galveston, Houston, and Dallas grew to sufficient sizes that Judaic religious services and rites became accessible in most parts of the state.

The Jewish communities in Texas were quite vibrant as evidenced by the maintenance of several periodicals and benevolent organizations, as well as their share of internal politics. In the book Stone explores several issues pertinent to Jews at the time: the decision to support the international Zionist movement (the creation of a Jewish state), the choice to embrace “Reform” or “Orthodox” Judaism, and the debates on further settlement into the state. In the end, Stone maintains that the Jewish communities—despite their internal divisions—united in the face of issues such as the rise of nativism, the Second Ku Klux Klan, Nazism, and support of the Civil Rights Movement after World War II.

Throughout the book, Stone addresses the issue of the frontier within the Jewish-Texan communities. Here, he points out several compromises that Jews made while they embraced their “Texanness”: using former gubernatorial candidate “Kinky” Friedman as an (perhaps extreme) example of this effort to sustain both Jewish and Texan identities. In researching the work, Stone relied heavily on dependable sources, such as oral accounts and personal correspondences, as well as the bourgeoning ethnic Jewish American press. The result is an excellent, groundbreaking account of an understudied ethnic group in Texas. *The Chosen Folks* addresses a need for more contribution to ethnic studies in Texas historiography.