and employees that bring to life the Sternbergs and the experience of shopping in their stores. Snippets illuminate how the Sternbergs dealt with antisemitism and boycotts arising from the civil rights movement, or illustrate their aid to other Jews fleeing the Nazis or their later civic philanthropy. This interweaving of experiences is what enriches the story.

This handsomely designed book, well-written and edited, and illustrated with black-and-white photographs and quoted reminiscences, should appeal to many readers. Those interested in business history, the rise and fall of department stores, family history, and Jewish history will all find something of value. Hans Sternberg has successfully made the transition from a businessman to an author, but there is no doubt that the writing was a labor of love.

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In recent years, the story of Texas and its Jews has attracted the attention of serious scholars. While their work has focused on narrow topics like the state’s rabbis or the various subjects in the recent collection of essays, Lone Stars of David, no one has yet published a serious overall history of Texas Jews until now. Bryan Stone’s The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas offers a fresh and unique description of the Jewish experience in a state that straddles the South and the West. Previous attempts at a general history have generally been filiopietistic and uncritical, focusing primarily on prominent Jewish Texans and their contributions to the state. Stone moves far beyond such provincial analysis and presents an insightful and rich, if not comprehensive, account of Jewish life in the Lone Star State.
Stone relies heavily on the metaphor of the frontier, common in western history, which he defines abstractly in terms of identity rather than in Frederick Jackson Turner’s classic formulation. Stone conceives of cultural identity as a set of frontiers, and Texas Jews, according to Stone, have struggled to define themselves and negotiate a balance between being Jewish and being Texan. Living on the periphery of the Jewish Diaspora, Texas Jews defined themselves in contrast both to other American Jews and to their gentile neighbors. Stone compares the Jews in Texas to those in other frontier regions and finds much in common. He does not make simplistic claims of Texas uniqueness, as previous writers have done. Instead he shows how Texas Jews fit into the national context of American Jewish history. This does not mean Stone ignores the state’s cast of colorful characters. He provides profiles of distinctive Texas figures including the country music singer and political raconteur Kinky Friedman; Waco’s possum-eating rabbi, Berenhard Wohlberg; and Breckenridge’s Charles Bender, the cowboy Zionist, who caused a stir when he visited Israel in his cowboy boots and hat.

Rather than a traditional survey, Stone offers a series of chronological vignettes that shed light on the theme of the frontier and how it shaped Texas Jewish history. Some are well known, such as the Galveston Movement, which sought to distribute Jewish immigrants around the country through the Texas port, and the Basic Principles controversy of Houston’s Beth Israel, in which the leaders of the classical Reform congregation sought to exclude Zionists and traditional Jews from full membership. In other cases, Stone unearths new material that adds a fresh perspective on the subject, including Houston’s Henry Dannenbaum and his conflict with national Jewish leaders in New York over supposed Jewish involvement in international prostitution rings, and the remarkable diary of Alexander Gurwitz, a devoutly Orthodox Jew and Hebrew scholar in San Antonio.

One of Stone’s biggest achievements is to debunk several myths about the presence of Jews in early Texas that have often been based on assumptions about vaguely Jewish-sounding names rather than hard evidence of Jewish identity or ancestry.
Stone, for example, shows convincingly that Samuel Isaacks, often credited as the first Jew to settle in Texas, was not Jewish.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of The Chosen Folks is its analysis of how Texas Jews related to the Ku Klux Klan and the civil rights movement. Stone describes Ku Klux Klan Day at the Texas State Fair in 1923 as well as the curious involvement of prominent Jewish businessman Alex Sanger in the festivities. Caught in the middle between Texas governor Pa Ferguson and his Klan-backed opponents, Jews were forced to choose between identifying with the white majority of Texas or with their more narrow concerns as Jews. Stone argues that the rise of the Texas Klan highlighted the differences between Jews and other white Texans, making the clever and insightful point that “Jews were Anglos, perhaps, but they could never be Anglo-Saxons” (194).

The issue of southern Jews and the civil rights movement has been well trod by historians, few of whom have looked at Texas. But as Stone shows, Texas offers an interesting case study. He argues that Jews were “racial middlemen” (196), who used their difference from the white mainstream to take the lead in brokering compromises to avoid the violence of massive resistance. He describes how prominent Jews in Dallas, like Julius Schepps and Sam Bloom, argued that integration made economic sense and that resistance to federal authority would be disastrous. Jewish-owned department stores, like Neiman-Marcus, that had been staunch defenders of segregation, were the first to end discrimination when the federal courts had ordered integration of the city’s public facilities. This active leadership role complicates previous portrayals of southern Jewish merchants as passive victims of larger social forces.

While Stone’s method of focusing on symbolic events and fascinating characters makes his book a delight to read, it does prevent him from offering a comprehensive survey of the Jewish experience in the entire state. For example, after learning of the important role Jewish business elites played in bringing about peaceful integration in Dallas, the reader is left wondering whether similar events played out in Houston or San Antonio. Did small-town merchants differ in their approach to the civil rights
movement, and, if so, how? In addition, Stone spends most of a chapter looking at newspaper editor Edgar Goldberg and his Houston-based Texas Jewish Herald, but does not examine the other Jewish newspapers in the state, including Fort Worth’s Jewish Monitor, which briefly had a Yiddish section.

Despite these omissions, The Chosen Folks offers the first substantive analytical history of Texas Jews. Southern Jewish historians will find its use of the “frontier” to be quite helpful and applicable to their own field. For students of American Jewish history, the book constitutes a worthwhile addition to the growing literature of hinterland Jewish communities. In the end, Stone makes a strong case that, however remote the frontier of the Diaspora where Texas Jewish history unfolded, its lessons strike deep in the heart of the American Jewish experience.

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In this well written, deeply researched, and often nuanced book, British historian Clive Webb analyzes the causes, characteristics, and consequences of far-right resistance movements in the South during the desegregation crisis of the 1950s and 1960s. Webb shows how right wingers’ thoughts and behavior blended in with centuries-old cultural norms where whites assumed their innate racial superiority and African Americans “knew their place.” For both whites and blacks there was no ambiguity about societal expectations.

These dynamics changed, however, after the Supreme Court declared segregated public education unconstitutional in 1954. The decision left white southerners shocked, aghast, and demoralized. It was the most serious attack on their way of life since the