

PACIFIC NORTHWEST AMERICANA

Waldman's "Americana"

Book collectors are finding Milton Waldman's *Americana, the Literature of American History*, a most informing and readable book. This volume gives in concise form an account of the principal books that record the history of the discovery, conquest and colonization of America. The value of this delightful account of early printed narratives is enhanced by bibliographical anecdote and occasional words of counsel. The following passage is quoted from the Foreword: "A word about prices. Price is a question that inevitably crops up where rare books are discussed, and I fancy that they interest the public no less than the collector. Hence I give them frequently, but with the distinct understanding that they are not there for the purpose of airing my belief that rare books are a good investment. One hears a good deal about books purchased for ten dollars and sold for a thousand. There are such cases, but they are altogether exceptional, and signify nothing . . . When I cite the rapid increase in the value of certain books, it is merely because such increases are the arresting exception, not the rule."

Prices of Western Books

So much has been said of recent years about the advance in prices of Western Americana that Mr. Waldman's statement might not seem to check with the facts. It would be easily possible to compile from the auction records of the last few years a set of figures showing a phenomenal increase in prices. It is quite possible on the other hand to prepare a similar list showing declines from the spectacular prices of previous years. A notable example of such decline may be cited in the case of Johnson and Winter, *Route across the Rocky Mountains* (*Checklist* 1966) which has a record of three sales in the past five years, as follows: 1920, \$770; 1922, \$590; 1923, \$316. Another example is that of Thom, *Claims to the Oregon Territory Considered* (*Checklist* 3971) which has the following American auction record: 1919, \$19; 1921, \$30; 1922, \$10; January 1923, \$15. In July 1923, the writer found eight copies of this item in original condition, uncut, for sale at the establishment of a well known London dealer at eight shillings each.