

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.

It would be extremely hazardous to generalize from the records of a few unusual items. If a sufficient number of the more standard items are taken and the record is made to cover a considerable number of years, Mr. Waldman's observations will doubtless be substantiated. The following records on two well known books cover the American auction records of the past ten years:

Townsend, *Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains*, (Checklist 4006): 1915, \$6.25, \$9.25; 1917, \$6; 1918, \$6.50; 1919, \$10.10; 1920, \$12.50; 1921, \$7; 1922, \$11; 1923, \$15; 1924, \$8.

Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians*, London, 1841 (Checklist 629): 1916, \$6.50; 1917, \$19, \$9.25; 1918, \$6.30, \$9; 1920, \$16; 1921, \$9.50; 1922, \$11.50; 1923, \$11.

Records of 1923-1924

Volume XXX of *American Book-Prices Current*, covering the auction season of 1923-1924, has recently appeared. An examination of the titles listed reveals the sale of many items of Western Americana. Some of these, notably files of early newspapers, brought extreme prices. On the whole it would appear that buyers have used greater caution than in previous years. The following records seem to point toward a stabilization of scarce and rare items at a somewhat lower level than the high plane of the two or three previous years:

Anderson, <i>Dominion of the West</i> (Checklist 94).....	\$22.50
Bolduc, <i>Mission de la Colombie</i> , 1843. (Checklist 378)....	25.00
Broughton, <i>Voyage of discovery</i> (Checklist 485).....	36.00
Brown, <i>Political History of Oregon</i> (Checklist 491).....	27.50
Burnett, <i>Recollections and Opinions</i> (Checklist 541)....	10.00
Eells, <i>History of the Congregational Association of Oregon and Washington</i> (Checklist 1091).....	10.00
Kane, <i>Wanderings of an Artist</i> (Checklist 2003).....	27.50
<i>The same</i> . Another copy.....	17.00
Lander, F. W. <i>Remarks on the Construction of a Railway to the Pacific</i> (Not in Checklist).....	10.00
Lee and Frost. <i>Ten Years in Oregon</i> (Checklist 2146)..	8.50
Sproat, <i>British Columbia</i> (Checklist 3811).....	7.50
Stevens, <i>Address on the Northwest</i> (Checklist 3846)....	15.00
Wade, <i>Founding of Kamloops</i> (Not in Checklist).....	10.00
Wilkes, <i>Western America</i> (Checklist 4402).....	15.00