

Vigilantes, A Chronicle of the Rise and Fall of the Plummer Gang of Outlaws in and About Virginia City, Montana, in the Early 60's. By HOFFMAN BIRNEY. (Philadelphia: The Penn Publishing Company, 1929. Pp. 346. \$3.50).

Hoffman Birney has retold the story of the road agents and vigilantes of Montana with an attractiveness of style that makes the book worth while. The author's description of events closely follows the accounts in Dimsdale, *The Viligantes of Montana*, and Langford, *Vigilante Days and Ways*. While the earlier books left unnamed most of the Vigilantes, Birney not only names them but gives brilliant characterizations of them. James Williams, Paris Pfouts, John S. Lott, A. B. Davis, Charles Beehrer, who were hardly known as Vigilantes, come forth in this book as leaders of the movement. John Fetherstun, Neil Howie, and John X. Biedler are shown in a new light. Biedler's traditional heroism is somewhat dimmed by a portrayal of his blood thirstiness, and Williams is appropriately pictured as one of the fine men of the old West. Birney places Wilbur F. Sanders in more intimate association with the Vigilante organization than has ordinarily been done and he may be right. In addition the author has collected stray bits of information about the Vigilantes that gives the reader a better understanding of them.

Birney has made lengthy paraphrases and quotations from *Forty Years in the Frontier as Seen in the Journals and Reminiscences of Granville Stuart*, from *Henry Edgar's Journal*, and from other contributions to the Historical Society of Montana, but has avoided specific references to his sources of information. He has used the extensive collections of the Montana Historical Library and has doubtless consulted many old timers. He does not hesitate to use his imagination and reports conversations and describes events apparently on no authority whatever. Sometimes he is inaccurate as naming Virginia City, the first capital of Montana (p. 42) and Frenchtown in the Bitterroot valley (p. 305). He has studied carefully the immediate subject without attempting to understand the whole period. There are few typographical errors. One *Missouri* for *Missoula* (p. 302) should be noted. The book is well printed on attractive paper. It will doubtless be a long time before a better book will be written on the Vigilantes.

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