

W. Eugene Hollon, Frontier Violence: Another Look[1974]

It is the author's theme that the violence of the frontier was a result and not a cause of our violent society. He tries to demythologize the argument that the West was the seat of American violence. . . We have overlooked the violent character of our history in the East. . . and have concentrated on the more dramatic bloodletting of the western frontier. . .

He begins with a look at the level and variety of violence in the American colonies. . . The witch-burnings, the Indian wars, then the anti-British violence; urban violence, and the violence against the Tories and by the Tories, etc. .

This was all eastern and urban in most cases. . .

2. Melting Pot or Pressure Cooker?

Hollon begins with the development of vigilanteism and lynch law that appears in the colonial period and especially during the Revolutionary War. . . This practice then went West with the development of this section. . . See especially Richard Maxwell Brown, "Legal and Behavioral Perspectives on American Vigilantism," Perspectives in American History, V(1971)

He deals also with violence in the antebellum south to keep the South "solid" on racial and slavery views. The violence levelled against the abolitionists. . . The rioting in the Jacksonian period. The Know ~~Know~~ Nothing violence against American Catholics. And the violence against the Mormons in Missouri. . . See especially Juanita Brooks, The Mountain Meadow Massacre(1962)

His conclusion that even before Americans in large numbers began to settle the West there was a record already established of American proclivity toward violence. .

There follow three chapters on Texas, California and the Gold Rush violence, and the fate of the Chinese in the West. . .

6. Gun Culture and the Cowboy Mentality

The role of the Colt 44 in the West. . . Its role in the winning of the West is discussed. The Bowie Knife was the law of Texas. . . And the Colt was the State Constitution. . .

The mystification of the gun: Franklin Orth, VP of the National Rifle Association testifying before Congress in 1968:

"there is a very special relationship between a man and his gun-- an atavistic relation with its roots deep in prehistory, when the primitive man's personal weapon, for often his only effective defense and food provider, was nearly as precious to him as one of his own limbs."

The cowboy as hero--psychotic killers like Wild Bill Hitchcock and ~~Billy~~ the Kid--The violence of the Colt 44 in the Mexican War, and later in the Kansas territory . .

Since 1900 some 800,000 Americans have been killed by guns. . Considerably more than have died in battle in all pur wars since the Revolution . . . Each day an average of 21 Americans are murdered with a gun; 200 are robbed and 150 assaulted. . .

In London, a city that had outlawed guns, in 1972 there were 77 recorded cases of murder. In NY city that same year there were an average of 58 in a typical weekend . . .

7. Genocide--or Manifest ^DDestiny?

Estimates of the numbers of Indians massacred in the US since 1789 vary from 4,000 to 10,000 . . .Of the 370 treaties signed not one was honored by the US Government.

The Other Side of the Coin

In this chapter Hollon demythologizes the exaggerated version of the violent West. . .Points to the overemphasis on frontier lawlessness and violence. . . and to de-emphasise the violence in our cities, . . Not only have we romanized the violent characteristics of frontier life, we have transformed them into vittues and then tried to apply them to the elimination of crime at home and communism abroad. . . .