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## Book Review

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## BOOK REVIEW

WYOMING HISTORICAL BLUE BOOK, A LEGAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY  
OF WYOMING 1868-1943

By Marie H. Erwin. (Denver: Bradford Robinson Printing Co.  
1946. Pp. xxiii, 1471. \$12.50.)

Official government publications often appear in blue covers and are called "Blue Books". States of the United States commonly publish Blue Books every two years. Nebraska, for example, has published an official manual every two years since 1915. Each biennial volume runs to four or five hundred pages and outlines the history, governmental organization and governmental services of the state.

Wyoming has finally followed the example of many other states. The compiler, Mrs. Marie H. Erwin, before she left state employment last October, had served as document librarian in the State Library for a dozen years and had served two periods as State Historian. Eight years ago she began the preparation of the *Blue Book*. The result of her labors is a seven-pound volume of almost 1500 pages, which takes Wyoming from earliest times down to 1943.

That the work has finally been completed is due to Mrs. Erwin's tireless energy; to the advice, encouragement and assistance of Dr. Lester C. Hunt and Senator J. C. O'Mahoney; to W.P.A. help in the early years of the project; and to financial assistance from the 1943 Legislature and the University of Wyoming.

The Table of Contents lists thirteen sections, but these may be grouped for convenience in three divisions: before the Territory; the Territory, 1869-1890; and the State, 1890-1943. Mrs. Erwin first traces the evolution of the U. S. Constitution. Several documents are quoted in full: Magna Carta (1215), The Petition of Right (1628), the Habeas Corpus Act (1679), the Bill of Rights (1689), the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the U. S. Constitution. The *Nebraska Blue Books* go back no farther than the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution, and that is probably far enough. Mrs. Erwin justifies the inclusion of the other documents by stating that they have "so greatly influenced our way of life."

The second section in the first group traces the acquisition of lands, 1803-1850, which ultimately were to make up Wyoming. Thirty-five maps show the Wyoming country under various jurisdictions, 1620-1868. Again doubts arise as to the propriety of including certain documents. Quoted at length are the Louisiana Purchase Treaty, the 1819 treaty with Spain, the Oregon Treaty of 1846 and the treaty ending the Mexican War.

In the mass of material dealing with the organization and administration of the Territory we have Mrs. Erwin's most important contribution; for she has rescued much detail from threatened oblivion. There are pictures and biographies of Territorial officials. There are few finer collections of 19th century beards and mustaches! Much history reposes in the election returns. Lance Creek precinct in 1882, at that time in Laramie County, gave three votes for

constable to John Kendrick. Carbon County returns for 1886 show Casper precinct (Natrona County was not created until 1888) voting as follows for constable: Harry Baggs, 7; B. B. Brooks, 7. Thus humbly began the political careers of Kendrick and Brooks. Ghost towns live again in these pages with the listing of ballots cast at Cummins, Sherman, Carbon, Bryan, Almy and many other precincts. These are but small details on the broad sea of election statistics, but perhaps they suggest that many people who have lived for some time in Wyoming can spend pleasant hours thumbing through the pages made meaningful by many familiar names.

Lawyers with an interest in history will appreciate the pages given to the Territorial Judicial Department. Included are the Rules of the Supreme Court (1887), the names and terms of judges, maps showing changes in judicial districts, and the Rules of the District Courts (1882).

There are 14 pictures of buildings used at various times by Territorial legislative assemblies. Wyoming legislators rarely knew where the next session would meet until the first part of the capitol building was completed in 1888. It was sometimes difficult to find space to rent.

The Constitution making period is well covered. The unsuccessful 1888 memorial asking for Statehood, pertinent bills in Congress, Governor's proclamations, the State Constitution, biographies and pictures of members of the Constitutional convention, the memorial asking that Statehood be granted with permission to use the Constitution submitted, and the remarkable speech of Delegate to Congress J. M. Carey urging that Congress "admit a young, a proud, and noble people" are all included.

Students of Wyoming History will always be grateful for the 300 pages of Territorial information. The sections are tightly packed and yield much that without Mrs. Erwin's patient search might never have been preserved.

The third group of sections covers the State since 1890. Here appear pictures of members of the State Legislature, 1890-1943, and accompanying data, pictures and biographies of the principal elective officials, and much detail about the organization and operation of State Government. In the election returns the votes cast for unsuccessful candidates are listed. One observes that in 1919 Nels Smith ran ahead of Hunt (Elwood C.) and was elected Weston County Representative in the Legislature.

A chart presents the organization of State Government in 1943; another shows the steps in the progress of bills in Senate and House; another gives executive boards; still another shows appointments by the Governor. There are beautiful plates of the State Flag, State bird, and State flower in color.

Included are pictures and biographies of justices of the State Supreme Court, rules of the State Supreme Court corrected to 1935, rules of the State Board of Law Examiners, judicial districts and the State Constitution, 1943. Constitutional amendments submitted to the people and rejected are given as are Constitutional amendments adopted and the votes they received. In the period 1890-1943, twelve amendments were adopted and sixteen, rejected. It is interesting to note that of the sixteen, rejected, thirteen were approved by a

majority of those who voted on the amendments, but were nevertheless rejected because not enough voters balloted on the amendments. In 1912, for example, the people voted on an amendment which would have provided for the initiative and referendum. The results: For, 20,579; Against, 3,446. Total vote, 42,296. Rejected.

Mrs. Erwin has crammed her book so full of information that it is impossible to touch upon all phases. It is a work that can be richly rewarding to many Wyoming citizens, young and old. Perhaps the *Blue Book* is a little rough in spots. The arrangement and indexing leave something to be desired. Some of the documents included might have been omitted. But it is nonetheless a most valuable work. Mrs. Erwin dedicated the volume to her husband, Birney J. Erwin "Who had unbounded faith in Wyoming and her people." Mrs. Erwin is endowed with no less faith. Future Wyoming generations will praise her for showing her love for Wyoming in this fashion.

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