

Lone Star in Type

"Bibliography of Texas 1795-1845: Part I, Texas Imprints 1817-1845," by Thomas W. Streeter (Harvard University Press, 2 vols., 616 pp. \$20), is the first third of what will be an exhaustive catalogue of work published in and concerning the land of the Lone Star as province, republic, and state.

By John T. Winterich

WHEN Thomas Wentworth Streeter took his bachelor's degree at Dartmouth College in 1904 (he had been born in Concord, sixty-five miles downstate) it is reasonable to assume that among the goals he projected for himself he did not include the compilation of a bibliography of Texas. True, the only New Hampshire-born President of the United States had worn a brigadier general's star in the war that had brought Texas into the Union, but the parallel was remote, and so was the event. But destiny was astir. Tom Streeter entered the broad arena of the world from Harvard Law School, and his concerns came eventually to center in the Southwest, and so did his historical and bibliophilic interests, which took on breadth and stature. The scope and vitality of those interests is attested by the fact that Mr. Streeter has served as president of the American Antiquarian Society and of the Bibliographical Society of America, and as chairman of the board of fellows of the Pierpont Morgan Library.

With the publication of the two volumes of his "Bibliography of Texas 1795-1845," distinguished alike in editorial competence and appearance, Mr. Streeter's *magnum opus* is only a third down the ways. A second part will list material relating to Texas published in Mexico during the half-century covered, and a third part will describe comparable material published in the United States and Europe. Part I, obviously, in addition to its transcendent historical importance, carries the most romantic appeal. For there is no reason in the world why bibliography and romance should not walk hand in hand.

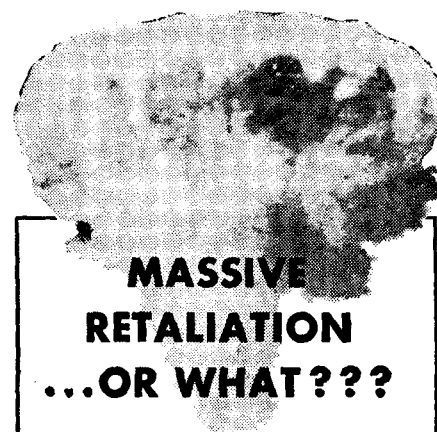
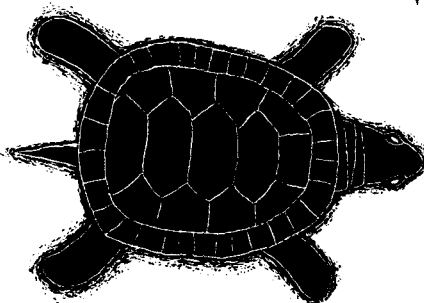
The probable first piece of Texas printing was a proclamation issued at Galveston early in 1817 (and very likely produced aboard ship) in which Francisco Xavier Mina sought to rouse the Mexicans of the countryside to his cause. Mina, born in Spain, had never been in the Americas before, but he had come to stay. Six months later he was captured by Government troops

and shot. He was just short of twenty-eight years old. His revolution blew up, but he was Texas's first Texas-printed author.

Early printing in America, depending on date and place, was likely to be concerned with religion, law, politics, journalism, exploration, or settlement. (Belles-lettres had to wait.) The first Texas imprints cover all of these fields in abundance except the first; in the area of religion Mr. Streeter locates only baptismal and marriage certificates. A newspaper, *The Texas Republican*, appeared in Nacogdoches in 1819, but no copies are known. Politics and controversy are common, and often entertaining: witness a pamphlet "Houston Displayed, or, Who Won the Battle of San Jacinto? By a Farmer in the Army," published at Velasco in 1837. Texas even had an early medical imprint in "Essay on the Particular Influence of Prejudices in Medicine, Over the Treatment of the Disease Most Common in Texas, Intermittent Fever; Preceded by a Few General Observations on Medical Theories," by Theodore Leger, M.D., "Late Professor of Midwifery of the Faculty of Paris, Member of the Medical College of Mexico, and Ex-Vice President of the Medical Society of New Orleans," issued at Brazoria in 1838.

A sound regional bibliography is more than a schedule of imprints; it is the record of the life and growth of a community. Here is Texas in her birth-throes. A huge expanse in which there were "perhaps 4,000 people of European blood" when Mr. Streeter's chronicle opens became a republic in 1836, a state in 1845—almost the last of his entries is the state constitution, "Printed at the Office of the 'New Era'" in Austin. It was indeed a new era.

Many of the 670 units which Mr. Streeter describes are of excessive rarity—frontiersmen were rarely archives-minded. The marvel is rather that so many of these fragile products of fragile equipment have survived. Many of them exist in single copies (and a good many of these are in Mr. Streeter's own collection). Taken altogether they recreate a panorama of origins; the dust swirls once more over "Austin's settlement," and Sam Houston rides again.



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CONTRIBUTORS: W. W. Kaufmann (Editor),
Roger Hilsman, Klaus Knorr, and
Gordon A. Craig.

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Belles-Lettres

Continued from page 29

enough and gives us neither a developed thesis nor an adequate chronicle. He seems determined—to borrow a phrase once applied to another contemporary writer on literary topic—"to lean neither to partiality on the one hand nor to impartiality on the other."

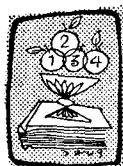
Though he usually avoids explicit expressions of judgment he reveals clearly and in various ways what the judgment would be if he permitted himself to express it—as he does, for example, in his somewhat absurd tendency to point out in the nineteenth-century critics what he regards as saving anticipations of the New Criticism. When William Ellery Channing said that Milton bent language "into the forms demanded by his subject" he anticipated T. E. Hulme. William Cullen Bryant foreshadowed T. S. Eliot by reviving "the poet's function as winnow of the language" while, on the other hand, certain of the opinions of Edmund Clarence Stedman make it unfortunately obvious that he would not have approved "The Wasteland."

All this may be a bit far-fetched, but at least a study which set out seriously to trace the submerged survival of principles destined to flower again in the New Criticism would have a unifying theme. But because Professor Prichard will not stick to any thesis he is obliged to proceed

doggedly with his chronicle by way of such weary phrases as these: "Over the nation as a whole, then, at the beginning of the [nineteenth] century cultural conditions were depressingly weak. . . . Not a few social fermentations were at the same time leavening the American loaf. . . . Adequate appreciation of Wordsworth had, however, to await the voice of Emerson. . . . Notwithstanding his cavalier treatment of Aristotle, Poe realized the value of many artistic principles laid down in the 'Poetics'."

A reader naturally hopes that when he at last gets to the dozen recent critics whom the author admires he will be rewarded with at least some vigorous partisan enthusiasm and some sharp statements. But we are in for only the same pedestrian treatment: "Of all the American New Critics, Ransom is the most significant figure. . . . Tate finds himself accordingly in approximate agreement with Eliot's emphasis on tradition. . . . Brooks joins Ransom, Tate, and Richards in declaring the scientist's question concerning factual truth does not arise in poetry." In such terms Ransom, Tate, and Richards do not sound much more interesting than Gardiner, Palfrey, and Stedman. It is difficult to imagine to whom such pronouncements are likely to be useful.

Writing as a professor (or at least an ex-), it ill becomes me to speak scornfully of "the professors." Many of them have been made to suffer very unjustly. But this book does illustrate what is commonly meant by "academic" and "professorial."



Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

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