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Peer reviewed

Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn: The Upper Arkansas, 1832–1856. By JANET LECOMPTE. (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1978. xii + 354 pp. \$14.95)

In this carefully researched book, Janet Lecompte has made a significant contribution to western history; specialists in the history of Colorado and the fur trade will find it indispensable. Granddaughter of the founder of the Francis W. Cragin Collection in Colorado Springs, Lecompte has shown herself worthy of her legacy, writing with care, insight, and precision about a little-known period in Colorado's history: the years following the halcyon days of Rocky Mountain beaver trapping and before the Pike's Peak gold rush and permanent settlement.

Lecompte charts the economic and political changes in the Arkansas Valley by focusing on the careers of Alexander Barclay and George Simpson and on the founding, evolution, and decline of three settle-

ments. The highly mobile occupations of trapping and Indian trading gradually gave way to experimentation in agriculture and ranching. The Arkansas valley of the 1840s, writes Lecompte, was a refuge for the displaced; Pueblo was not a trappers' rendezvous, but a place of occupational reorientation after the collapse of the fur trade (p. 83).

While Lecompte does not address the issue directly, she enters into the controversy about the character of the mountain man. Was he a frontier democrat or an opportunist? Those who remained in the mountains in the 1840s were the "dregs of the romantic breed," irresponsible and profligate (p. 5). Pueblo did not last because the residents moved when "opportunities for speculation" beckoned them elsewhere (p. 217).

This is not a highly interpretive work, but Lecompte's familiarity with the primary sources and her thoroughness give the book substance and insight. Her description of Charles Warfield's trip to Bent's Fort in 1837 to recruit troops for an invasion of New Mexico, for example, reveals at once the complexity and subtlety of human motivation in times of shifting political loyalties and economic transformation. Rich with documentation and detail, the book makes data available for fresh, new approaches.

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