

and literature was not clearly drawn. In addition to thorough scholarly research, historians attempted to penetrate a period by immersing themselves in it as much as possible, and from this, dramatizing events. For them, the recreation of the spirit and emotion of a time was as important as the facts. This powerful, compelling and still remarkably readable form of historical writing virtually disappeared when scholars attempted to make history a science and to remove irrationality, emotion and bias in favour of the cold facts which they believed would reveal eternal laws of historical behaviour. Yet the emotional and the factual are but two aspects of the same human experience and now, in large part because of the revival of aural history, the two are being reunited in a new humanist history which is both soundly factual and humanly passionate. This work, however, is being carried out largely by journalists and creative writers rather than scholars, and while this provides a fresh perspective, the soundness of research and judgment in cases such as Haley's has not been sufficient to give the works the status they deserve.

Nevertheless, the increasing faith of the scholarly community in the truth and value of oral tradition and aural history is revealing the history of groups such as blacks, women and aboriginal peoples and the personal lives of ordinary and famous people neglected by paper-bound historians. This trend can only improve the writing of history and restore to all people a reassuring sense of their own identity and a common human link to the past. Whatever the verdict on its factual basis, Alex Haley's *Roots* is a significant step in the regeneration of black American pride and in the movement toward a new and, perhaps better, humanist history.

Janet Cauthers  
Aural History  
Provincial Archives of  
British Columbia

#### **The Written Word Endures: Milestone Documents of American History.**

Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Programs, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1976. 112 p. illus. (part col.) \$12.50 and **Sounds of History from the National Archives** (Audio cassette) Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1976, 58 min. \$3.50. Both *The Written Word Endures* and *Sounds of History*: \$14.00.

*The Written Word Endures* is a free translation of *littera scripta manet* on the seal of the National Archives, but we are offered much more than a collection of textual manuscripts. The editors have singled out twenty-five "milestone documents" from the Declaration of Independence (1776) to the Marshall Plan (1948) each of which, they claim, has cast its shadow over events in American history. These events are themselves represented by archival materials which are not, however, limited to the written or printed word. The captions are graceful and informative. A brief narrative provides the story line.

The claim of the press release publicizing the book, that this is "the first comprehensive illustrated history of the nation told exclusively through archival materials," is rather pretentious. Essentially we have here a series of twenty-three portraits not of people but of documents. The oldest are in colour set off against period inkstands, faded flags, and time-worn leather volumes. The documents show their lines and creases as befits their age and, if the compositions are reminiscent of certain advertising techniques, I have no quarrel since this is the current fashion; portraits seeking a wide appeal must be fashionable, as every artist knows. The younger documents are usually in matter-of-fact businesslike black and white scattered in artful disarray or simply revealed *en face* as facsimiles usually are. Others

again are taken quite effectively from what I can only describe as a bookworm's-eye-view from the bottom of the page.

The subjects of these portraits are quite literally "household words" for, as the Archivist of the United States points out, "many of the documents have been familiar since grade school." Familiar, yes, but only as a printed transcript or reference. The aim of the editors is to convey the form, texture and significant visual features of the originals, and in large measure they have succeeded. Just as the portrait convention does not always require the entire body of the sitter, so we must sometimes be content with the first or some other significant page. The character and "likeness" is successfully conveyed and this I perceive as the principal objective. Both the writing and print of this series is readable despite reduction. The documents illustrating the subsidiary or subsequent events are more varied to include good (though sometimes rather small) reproductions of maps, paintings, and contemporary photographs. The occasional use of a modern photographic cliché is unfortunate and breaks the tension of striking juxtaposition (for example, pages 17 and 23).

Many of the "milestone documents" are portraits of "worthies," but their importance sometimes exceeds their visual interest. The less weighty items, as so often happens in archival exhibits, have a way of stealing the show. The original drawing for Eli Whitney's cotton gin patent shows an elegant little wooden engine destined to be more destructive to society than a fleet of battleships, and the full-page colour plate was richly deserved. However, I do hope the document went for repair after the photograph was taken, for it is in a sorry state. Or is this a little misplaced romanticism of the kind that resisted the removal of plant life and moss from the crumbling stone of English cathedrals? I hope not! Some of the early photographs are stunning, in particular the interior of a covered wagon and a "slave pen" looking from the outside as cosy as a corner store. But why reproduce a rather battered negative (page 65) to represent Matthew Brady's photography?

Above all, the editors have demonstrated that historical documents of all kinds can be just as enjoyable to view as houses, furniture and costumes and that they too can yield their delights to a perceptive camera. The documentary record underpins all other form of heritage and through works such as this, the public will come to appreciate it as they do architecture without being architects and music without being musicians. Any archives contemplating this kind of publication should study *The Written Word Endures* as a point of departure. It is not so much an illustrated history using pictures as "visual aids" as it is a series of stimulating and involving encounters with a wide range of original records using the commentary as an "aid." There has been plenty of good popular history; here we have popular archives.

Incidentally, the end papers are superb. By simply lifting the corner, the reader (viewer?) is transported to an aisle in the National Archives, wherein the shelves on either side are stacked with great leather-bound volumes from the Treasury Department. The vanishing point draws the eye to the gutter of the book in a diorama of what the heart of a great repository is all about.

I suppose *Sounds of History* can best be described as a "sampler" of recordings of all kinds in the National Archives. The linking commentary by Frank Burke and Elsie Freivogel, both senior archivists at the National Archives, is convincing. They have useful things to say about the value of documentary sound, and its importance over and above the content which can be transcribed, but I cannot accept that such documents are "the living record of a dead past, . . . when we hear the sound we are there." This is commercial hokum which may sit well enough in a publisher's blurb, but not in the story line. Let the sounds themselves, with all their limitations, be their own persuaders.

The excerpts cover a wide range of material both predictable and unexpected. Martin Luther King does not speak—he celebrates—and the ring in his voice matches this metaphor.

Al Smith comes across harsh and hard—it is suggested that this style on radio may have cost him the Presidency in 1928—but we must not listen to yesterday with ears tuned to the low key of television. Radio has been described as a “tribal drum,” limited to one sense and stirring deeply and violently. Hitler knew this very well and his verbal discharge, all the more effective for being picked up in the United States from Danzig, rises clear about the static and the journalist paraphrasing “Mr. Hitler” in English. How ever that may be, the importance of radio is rightly stressed and so is the capacity of a recording to distort. President “Teddy” Roosevelt is much diminished by his piping voice, but what was his delivery really like?

There is a fascinating extract from an address by Charles Lindbergh following his transatlantic flight which reveals a dead-pan humour encouraged by the delighted reactions of the audience—an important dimension lost by the printed word. Will Rogers, as the beloved and privileged court jester, can tilt at one of North America’s most sacred images, the pioneer, and survive. As the dust of the 1930s began to blow he could describe the pioneer as simply “a guy that wanted something for nothing” who was prepared to rob nature and future generations to get it. An hilarious clip of an exchange between Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor and Gracie Allen on wartime rationing is my favourite and stands for all that brilliantly-skewed syntax that used to delight us as necessary relief from the heavy logic of patriotism. There are the old dependables: Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, some splendid corn from General MacArthur, all the more revealing in its sincerity, and a moving, breathy fragment by Carl Sandberg on the Gettysburg Address. Eisenhower and Kennedy do not have the same impact, perhaps because we are still in the penumbra of the events. In the span of history they are yesterday’s news.

The quality of the twenty-five recordings naturally varies a great deal and many of the recent ones are not as good as might have been expected. In music we have in particular been spoiled by high technical standards, and the historic occasion does not always compensate for thin tone. For the archivist, this is an excellent collage of American experiences preserved in the sound of the human voice (and one inhuman voice, the bomb). We are momentarily blinded and must rely on the richness of the overtones for additional perception. However, selections of this kind would be greatly improved by a set of images as a reminder to some and a revelation to others. Either slides or a brochure the size of the cassette would serve the purpose, and also allow for a little more background material to be included.

Hugh A. Taylor  
Public Archives of Canada

**Archive-Library Relations.** Edited by ROBERT L. CLARK, JR. New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1976. x11, 218 p. ISBN 0 8352 0770 6 \$15.95.

*Archive-Library Relations*, notwithstanding its promiscuous title, is hardly an exciting publication. Nevertheless, so far as archivists are concerned, the volume’s virtue rests on one highly pertinent—perhaps unintentional—inference: that the quality of archival or library service depends directly on the confidence built among professionals, a confidence enabling each to be united in purpose but separate arbiters of their routes.

A fistful of articles have appeared during the last thirty-five years dealing with the frontier separating archives and libraries, but this is the first compilation between the same hard covers to produce a cool-headed, clearly written, and competently documented appraisal of the inherent problems. Editor Robert Clark and contributors Frank Burke, Miriam Crawford, Frazer Poole and Robert Brubaker objectively scan the similarities and differences among the two professions in the United States. Clark plainly states the basis of the volume: “archives and libraries exist as cultural institutions for a common purpose: to collect, maintain and make available the written and graphic record of man’s intellect and