

## INTRODUCTION

**R**EGIONALISM, the use of regional characteristics — locale, customs, culture, or speech — whether such use be in literature or in art, serves to preserve the character of a geographic area and its people. Regional literature was already common and widespread in America in the 1930s when many of the series described here were conceived. In 1940, in the foreword and the outline of a course in American regional literature that he taught at the University of Wisconsin, August Derleth (1909–1971) wrote in part:

From 1920 on, the Regional aspect of American literature is marked. The great and spreading interest in America and the American background stems from a number of well-defined influences: 1) post-War disillusionment — taking the form of an immediate depression early in the 1920's . . . and the current depression begun in October, 1929; 2) the rise of influential men in editorial and critical positions powerful enough to blast the conventional tradition of American criticism up to that time. . . . It should be made clear, however, that the unconscious movement called Regionalism is not an end in itself, but a phase in the development of literature with a national tradition. It should be accepted at once, also, that the [American] regions as roughly defined . . . do not have established borders, but are already in fusion, as in years to come, the regions here set down will be nationally fused. . . . It should be understood also that interest in regional American writing can be extended backward to Colonial times, and does, in fact, begin there; but it was not until after 1900 that the regional writing of today began to grow out of Naturalism or Realism in that important period of American letters.<sup>1</sup>

Regionalism is an element in nearly all literature, since most literature involves a locale or setting. The term, however, is usually applied to writings in which the locale is thought of as a subject interesting in itself.<sup>2</sup> By the summer of 1940, as the Depression wore on, regional books were becoming so popular that bookshops devoted entire window displays to them. In an article headed “Regional Books Respond to Bookshop Promotion” in the August 17, 1940, issue of *Publishers' Weekly*, Helen R. Tiffany, a bookseller in Toledo, Ohio, reported, “We have noticed, as probably everyone else has, an increased demand for books about America, both past and present. It has

1. *American Regional Literature: Towards a Native Rural Culture*. A study of the Literature of Rural Life, based on a course given by August Derleth in 1940 for students in the Farm Folk School — College of Agriculture, University of Wisconsin.

2. Shaw, Harry. *Dictionary of Literary Terms*. McGraw-Hill, 1972, p. 319.

grown gradually from the time when books on local subjects brought a limited response, to the present when we find our most enthusiastic and regular customers among those who buy books about American subjects.”

Lewis Gannett’s essay, “Reading about America,” in the May 3, 1941, issue of *Publishers’ Weekly*, began: “From the evergreen land of pointed firs in Maine to the eternal brown of the Mojave Desert, from the immense rain forests of the Northwest Coast to the strange tropical south of Florida, Americans everywhere are looking at their country with new and curious eyes. It is as if we had never seen it before, as if we were Rip Van Winkles rousing from a long sleep, or immigrants ourselves. . . . The new continental consciousness inevitably reflects itself in the books men write and in the books we read.”

Later in the essay, Gannett observed, “It is no accident of Depression that we have today in the WPA *American Guides* our first real series of handbooks to the nation. They have not created this new awareness of our history, our folklore, our local byways and beauty spots; they have expressed it with a completeness elsewhere non-existent. The *Guides* have been appearing almost simultaneously with the stately row of *Rivers of America* books which Constance Lindsay Skinner planned and Carl Carmer and Stephen Vincent Benét carry on. . . . The *Seaports of America* series recently inaugurated . . . has the same pride in the past.”

In his classic work, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, John Tebbel, describing aspects of publishing in the years 1944 and 1945, noted:

There seemed to be no end to the demand for historical fiction about America, and following Rinehart’s lead with its distinguished *Rivers of America* series, new series were appearing on American states, harbors, lakes, mountains, regions, and other topographical attractions. There was a wide popular audience for all these books.

Many of these productions were legacies from the Depression years, when hundreds of unemployed writers, put to work by the Works Progress Administration, had gathered mountains of historical data of every kind in counties and communities across the country. . . . On these and other optimistic notes, 1944 came to an end — like its predecessor, a remarkable year in many ways. Using 15 percent less paper, publishers had nevertheless contrived to produce more books than in any previous year, mostly by making their volumes thinner and lighter.<sup>3</sup>

American regionalism and regional writing became increasingly popular, and the successful *Rivers of America* series established a promising pattern for the many series that followed. In the late 1930s, “Series Americana,”

3. Tebbel, John. *A History of Book Publishing in the United States* (Bowker) Volume IV, *The Great Change*, 1940-1980, pp. 57-58.

non-fiction books in series with American themes and settings, were being planned by established publishers such as Bobbs-Merrill and Doubleday, Doran, and by such newly-formed houses as Duell, Sloan and Pearce and Hastings House.

The earliest of these series is the *American Landmark Series*, ten volumes of "Camera Impressions" of New England cities and towns published by Hastings House from 1938 to 1942. The series features the work of photographer Samuel Chamberlain. Walter Frese founded Hastings House specifically to publish Chamberlain's work.

*The Seaport Series* consists of twelve volumes published by Doubleday, Doran (later Doubleday) between 1940 and 1947. There was no general editor of the series. The books were written by established writers and journalists of the day and recount the histories of major seaports in the United States, Canada, and Hawaii. (Canadian subjects appear from time to time in Series Americana, in the *Rivers of America* and the *American Lakes* series, for example.) To Doubleday's credit, the series flourished despite wartime restrictions on paper use and pervasive personnel shortages.

The *American Folkways Series* is perhaps the best-known and most successful of the post-Depression era regional series. Conceived by the three partners of the newly-founded Duell, Sloan & Pearce and edited by Erskine Caldwell, the series was launched in 1940 with the publication of *Desert Country* by Edwin Corle. Caldwell's literary fame, his keen interest in regional life in the United States (which he later described as having completely absorbed him), and his hands-on approach moved him to assemble a group of talented, respected writers for the series. The twenty-eight volumes address folkways in much of the nation; and, for the most part, the books sold well both regionally and nationally. Many of the series authors were well-known to those living in the region addressed, but others, such as Wallace Stegner and Stanley Vestal, had established national literary stature, thus creating a wider market for sales of the books. The *Folkways* series maintained popular appeal for nearly two decades. Its final title was published in 1958.

Vanguard Publishing produced two series: the *American Mountain Series* and the *American Customs Series*. The *Mountain* series, edited by geologist Roderick Peattie and written by scientists and local experts of the day, includes nine volumes published between 1942 and 1952. The books provide detailed, scholarly portraits of the major mountain ranges in the United States. The *Customs* series, published between 1946 and 1949, includes seven titles. The series is light-hearted and includes engaging information and anecdotes that might well have been lost had it not been published.

*The American Lakes Series* comprises ten volumes relating to major lakes in the United States and Canada published by Bobbs-Merrill and edited by the historian Milo Quaife. The first five volumes in the series cover the five

Great Lakes. Later volumes cover Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Champlain and Lake George, the Great Salt Lake, Lake Okeechobee, and the Sierra-Nevada lakes. The publisher's announcement of the series noted in part that the volumes would be "written for the general reading public by historians of known scholarly standing" and would "provide an accurate history of the role the individual lake played in the settling of its environs, the development of American commerce, and the noble and thrilling role it may have played in the wars of America." While the *Lakes* series fits in well with the regional literature produced at the time, the series itself had a rather short life — from 1944 to 1949.

In 1944, Duell, Sloan & Pearce took regional writing to a new level with the *Regional Murder Series*. Edited by Marie Rodell, at the time the head of the Bloodhound Mysteries department at the firm, each volume is a compilation of non-fictional accounts of murders that occurred in a major American city. Sixty-six crime writers and journalists contributed to the series. The nine volumes were published from 1944 to 1948, and cover murders in New York, Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Charleston, Detroit, and Boston. Each book in the series is identified as a *Bloodhound Book*.

In 1947 and 1948, Bobbs-Merrill published three volumes in their *American Trails Series*. Edited by writer and Lincoln historian Jay Monaghan, the series experienced a short life. Fourteen years later, *The American Trails Series* was revived in concept by McGraw-Hill under the general editorship of A.B. Guthrie, Jr., a well-known Western writer. McGraw-Hill published fifteen volumes in their *American Trails Series*, from 1962 to 1977, including histories of the Oregon Trail and the California Spanish Mission Trail, as well as some on trails that were not wholly American, such as the El Dorado Trail and the Siskiyou Trail.

E. P. Dutton's *Society in America Series* covers eight major American cities, Boston, Washington, D.C., Memphis, San Francisco, New Orleans, Cincinnati, Dallas, and Baltimore. The publisher's goal was "to portray the individual characteristics, to underscore the idiosyncrasies, and to trace the growth of sectional societies with special emphasis on local traditions and on the personalities who embodied them." In 1947, Cleveland Amory led off the series with his immensely popular *The Proper Bostonians*. Published in October 1947, the book sold sixty thousand copies by December 1949. The series continued until 1951.

*The Mainstream of America Series* consists of twenty volumes published by Doubleday & Company between 1953 and 1966. The general editor of the series was Lewis Gannett. The series includes three books by John Dos Passos and works by Irving Stone; David Lavender; C. S. Forester; Harold Lamb;

and Hodding Carter. In announcing the series, Doubleday noted that each volume would present the past “in terms of people and their stories” without “dull dates, dim figures, lists of battles,” and vowed that the series would make history “as moving and lively as the finest fiction.” The series encompasses a vast range of American history, from the European discovery of America and early exploration to the American Revolution, westward expansion, and industrial development.

In the early 1950s, Hastings House named Henry Alsberg, who had served as national director of the Federal Writers’ Project from 1935 to 1938, general editor of the *American Procession Series*. Alsberg had directed Hastings House’s production of *The American Guide* (1949), a one-volume, 1,348-page condensation of the Writers’ Project guide series. (The book was a Book-of-the-Month Club alternate selection that brought the club its largest-ever dividend.) The publisher described the series as “a new literary series . . . which will center around periods in our history and cultural growth which have not yet been fully explored.” Comprising nine titles, the series was published from 1954 to 1964 and includes volumes on the Know-Nothing movement, the communal movement, early Yankee inventors, and the first Western land rush, as well as three volumes by Mari Sandoz covering cattlemen, buffalo hunters, and beaver men.

In the mid-1950s, Harper Bros. hired Carl Carmer, an editor of the *Rivers of America Series*, to oversee their *Regions of America Series*. Carmer, himself a well-known regional writer, signed up other popular regional writers, many of whom, including Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Thomas D. Clark, had contributed volumes to the *Rivers* series. The publisher’s detailed description of the *Regions* series noted the principal purpose of each series volume as “to bring to life and tell the story of a particular area; its distinguishing characteristics in people, topography and spirit; its achievements and failures; how it began, where it has gotten to and how; and where it may be going,” adding, “History is of course of major importance, but so are personalities, trends, insights.” The first of the fourteen volumes in the series, *Virginia: A New Look at the Old Dominion* by Marshall Fishwick, was published in 1959; the last, *California: Land of New Beginnings* by David Laverder, in 1980.

Stewart Holbrook, a widely respected regional writer, conceived and planned the *American Forts Series* in the early 1960s. Although he died before the first volume was published, he had planned eight of the nine books. In his words, it would be “a series of historical works centered around forts in the United States and Canada that were of significant importance to American history.” Prentice-Hall published the nine books between 1965 and 1973. Like many other Series Americana, the *American Forts Series* pres-

ents a wide swath of American history, spanning as it does nearly four centuries and focusing on many separate regions. The various regional histories presented are not noticeably repetitive of those in earlier series.

The thirteen series described above comprise 163 separate titles published from 1940 to 1980. Taken together, they constitute a unique and compelling self-portrait of America that encompasses its people, history, culture, and natural treasures — its mountains, plains, lakes, and trails — over a broad sweep of time measured in centuries.

Every attempt has been made to make this book easy to use. It is first a reference work and as such must be unfailingly dependable in its presentation of factual material. Users of the book will be able — quickly and easily — to identify a first printing of each title. Later printings, to the extent possible, are reported, with the publisher, year of publication, number of printings, and, when available, the number of copies printed. Scholars may discern interesting historical and literary trends from the collateral information I presented, some of it gleaned from the dust jackets of the books themselves, more from correspondence with series authors, illustrators, and their families and descendants, as well as valuable information from the papers and files of publishers, authors, and editors.

This bibliography covers a span of forty-two years — from 1938 to 1980 — the closing years of the Great Depression, World War II, and decades of postwar national development and economic and social change. Some of the books published during the war years include advertisements for war bonds, notices that encourage the donation of books to the armed forces, or identify books published under the paper restrictions of the War Production Board. Such books are not abridged, but are on thinner paper, with jackets that sometimes are too large for the book. A Doubleday, Doran notice read, “This book is standard length, complete and unabridged. Manufactured under wartime conditions in conformity with all government regulations controlling the use of paper and other materials.” *Tropic Landfall: The Port of Honolulu*, a volume in the *Seaport Series*, was ready for publication when Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941. The prologue, “The Port at War,” was rewritten just before the book’s publication to take into account the attack and its immediate results.

Within this bibliography, I present the thirteen series in chronological order, based on the year the first volume in each series was published. Each section begins with an introduction and publishing history, a biography of the general editor, if any, and a publishing chronology and alphabetical listings of the authors and titles. Within each section, the series titles are presented in alphabetical order. A detailed description of the first edition, first printing of each book is followed by a note providing the number of reprints of the first

printing, if any, issued by the original publisher. Some titles were issued in special and limited edition printings. My collection includes most of such printings, but there are a few that I have been unable to acquire or examine. These are listed and noted as “not seen.” This is followed by a listing, “Reprints and Reproductions,” identifying later printings, sometimes enlarged or revised printings by the original publisher, or printings by other publishers.

Biographies of the book’s author and its illustrator, if the book is illustrated, follow. In turn, these are followed by a “Notes on . . .” section, which may contain an account of how the book’s author was chosen or some other aspect of the book. This section is followed by a tabulation of book reviews; a listing of selected writings of the author’s other published works; and a listing of sources used.

Many of the authors, illustrators, and editors were established figures in the world of books and letters. For them, adequate biographical information was readily available. For others, whose talents were perhaps no less, such information is often limited or unavailable. I have done my best to tell their stories, hoping to preserve some record of their work. I encourage those with additional material or information to contact me.



The following notes explain the specifics of each volume’s entry:

**EDITION, YEAR OF PUBLICATION, AND VOLUME NUMBER:** The edition described and its year of publication are followed by a number within brackets reflecting the book’s position in the chronological order of publication of the titles in the series, based on copyright dates and publishers’ advertising.

**TITLE PAGE:** A facsimile description of the title page of each volume is provided.

**COLLATION:** Leaf size measured in inches, the vertical dimension first, then the horizontal, is followed by the number of leaves. Page numbers not actually printed on the page are enclosed within brackets.

**CONTENTS:** The contents of first editions, first printings, are listed in full and described to a useful but not cumbersome degree. Occasionally a book contains preliminary pages that do not fit into the usual collation. To these I have assigned lower-case letters in brackets. Unless otherwise noted, all type is roman and printing is in black. When italics are used in the description, they reflect italics in the material being described. When a color is used in the description, it persists until another color or black is noted.



**ILLUSTRATIONS:** Illustrations are identified as double-page, full-page, or small, and are described in that order, followed by a listing of the book's maps, if any. If an illustration or a map has a title, the title is included in the description.

**BINDING:** The binding is transcribed in quasi-facsimile, with the color of the binding and the Pantone number that most closely identifies it stated. (The publishers' series devices displayed on various bindings are depicted in an appendix.) Spines are read horizontally, i.e., as one reads the titles of most books when they are shelved, from left to right, starting at the top of the spine. Spines that would be read from left to right if the book were lying on its back are described as "read vertically."

**DUST JACKET:** The color of the jacket paper is noted, usually as white or light cream. Jacket colors and the Pantone numbers that most closely identify them are stated. Descriptions of the spines of the jackets employ the same terms, "read horizontally" and "read vertically," as are used for the bindings.

**BIOGRAPHIES:** Biographical sketches of editors, authors, and illustrators are provided.

**NOTES ON . . . :** This section provides details, when available, on how the authors and illustrators of the book were chosen and may include narrative information of a kind not generally found in standard bibliographies. For some volumes, a wealth of such information was available; for others there was little or none.

**REVIEWS:** *Book Review Digest* is the source of most of the reviews cited, but other reviews are noted when available.

**SELECTED WRITINGS BY . . . :** This section lists, in the chronological order of their publication, other published works of the authors, the publishers of such works, and the dates of their publication. This information is intended to give the reader an indication of the nature and extent of the published works of the authors, while placing their work in the immediate series, which is printed in bold, at the proper point among their published writings.

**SOURCES:** This section lists the sources used, including library and museum holdings of the papers of the authors, illustrators, and editors; files and records of various publishers; standard reference works; newspaper files; and correspondence and interviews with authors, illustrators, and editors of the series, their families, and their descendants. Sources are listed in the chronological order of their publication or occurrence.