JIM BECKWOURTH by Elinor Wilson (U. of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1972. $8.95); THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF JAMES P. BECKWOURTH, as told to Thomas D. Bonner, introduction by Delmont R. Oswald. (U. of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1972. $9.75). Jack Burrows of San Jose City College takes a skeptical look at two books about a redoubtable western character.

As a biographical subject, mountain man Jim Beckwourth would appear to have everything going for him: he was part white, part black, and he went West and became an Indian chief. In this day of ideological uncertainty, he touches all racial — and commercial — bases. What he does not have going for him, one assumes from the latest biography, Jim Beckwourth, by Elinor Wilson, is sufficient raw material, the stuff from which a character is rounded out, given form and substance, coherence and continuity. For Mrs. Wilson has padded her book mercifully. Of the 195 pages of text, 132 are partially, or entirely, taken up with lengthy and often superfluous quotes. Beckwourth is, in fact, done in by quotes.

It would be unreasonable, of course, to expect the raunchy old contemporary of Kit Carson, Jim Bridger, Joe Meek and General Ashley to assume a fleshily tactile presence. We do not care to hear him drawling "this hoss," "this child," "this nigger" assailed my ears." One day when he returned to camp he found "to my inconceivable horror and dismay, my comrades were not there." Once he caught up with a lost friend and found him "smoking with as much sang froid as if he had been in camp."

History is the poorer for Bonner's insufferable pedantry. He might have produced a classic of sorts had he told the story in Beckwourth's own gingery lingo. As Jim himself was supposed to have said — leaning on his rifle, no doubt, and waggling a philosophic finger — "when in Rome, do as the Romans do." Waugh!

THE MOUNTAIN STATES OF AMERICA, by Neal R. Peirce, (W. W. Norton & Co., New York, 1972. $9.95). Reviewing this study of the exploitation of the natural resources of the "mountain states" is Senator Gale McGee of Wyoming, who holds a doctorate from the University of Chicago and was a professor of history at the University of Wyoming prior to his election to the U.S. Senate.

It is with no little trepidation that I approach a book review for an academic journal after so many years out of the field. Realizing that my historiography is rusty, I can well recall the hawk-like scrutiny that we employed on the published works of our colleagues. In those days of even lower pay than now, one of the few rewards we had was the glee that came from discovering an improper citation, or, even better, finding an author's failure to consider his own published works.

While Neal Peirce's book is very sketchy and impressionistic, he nevertheless does an effective job in describing with statistics the natural resources in the Rocky Mountain states, some demographics, the tax picture, the political conditions, etc. As the

NEEDED: First-hand accounts (from Indians, troops or townspeople) of "Baker Massacre" (Jan. 23, 1870) and aftermath. Write Ben Bennett, 1720 Big Trail, Walled Lake, Mich. 48088.