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ISAR is an important resource for American Studies; Tim Miller tells about an important product of its work. **THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AMERICAN RELIGIONS**. Edited by J. Gordon Melton. Detroit: Gale Research, 1987, \$165.00. The Institute for the Study of American Religion, headed by J. Gordon Melton, the editor and author of this impressive tome, is devoted to the daunting task of documenting all of American religion. Since the larger and better-established religions tend to maintain archives of their own, ISAR has concentrated especially on the marginal groups: the ephemeral, the small, the odd, the underrecognized. After nearly a quarter century of accumulation, ISAR's resources are second to none, and this book demonstrates that.

The Encyclopedia of American Religions brings together basic information on all of the major and hundreds of the minor American religions. The volume is organized by "families" (ranging from the Western Liturgical family, including Catholicism and Episcopalianism, to such families as "Ancient Wisdom" and "Magick").

Part I provides introductory essays and bibliographical resources for each of the twenty-two families; the far longer Part II is a directory which provides a few paragraphs of background on each group plus listings of numbers of members, publications, educational facilities and the like. Multiple indices help make the work accessible.

This reference volume deserves a place in virtually every school and public library.

News of two massive research/reference projects reaches us from Chadwyck-Healey Inc. The first is the **CATALOGUE OF MANUSCRIPTS IN THE HOUGHTON LIBRARY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY** in eight royal quarto volumes (Alexandria, Virginia, 1986). The catalogue is \$1600; the catalogue plus inventory, \$2300. This is a most useful tool for Americanists, of course, because of the Houghton's powerful collections on important nineteenth-century New England historical figures and on major authors.

Then there is the **NATIONAL INVEN-**

TORY OF DOCUMENTARY SOURCES. It is divided into several parts—the first covers Federal Records (The National Archives, The Smithsonian Institution Archives and the several presidential libraries (1600 microfiche with printed index, \$3950); the second, the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress (900 microfiche with printed index, \$2750); the third, state archives, libraries and historical societies,

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VIRGINIA, NEVADA, SATURDAY, JULY 2, 1874.	
<p>SAD FATE OF AN INVENTOR</p> <p>A gentleman who has just arrived from the borax fields of the desert regions surrounding the town of Columbus in the eastern part of this state, gives us the following account of the sad fate of Mr. Jonathan Newhouse, a man of considerable inventive genius. Mr. Newhouse had built what he called a "solar armor," a device designed to protect the wearer from the fierce heat of the sun in crossing deserts and burning alkali plains. The armor was made of a long close-fitting jacket made of common sponge and a cap or hood made of the same material; both jacket and hood being about an inch in thickness. Before starting across a desert this armor was to be soaked with water. Under the right arm was hung an India rubber sack filled with water with a small ... tube leading to the top of the hood. In order to keep the armor moist, all that was necessary to be done by the traveler, as he walked over the burning sands, was to press the sack occasionally. A small quantity of water would be forced up and thoroughly saturate the hood and the jacket below it.</p> <p>Thus, by the evaporation of the moisture in the armor... might be produced almost any degree of cold. Mr. Newhouse went down to Death Valley, to try the experiment of crossing that terrible place in his armor. He started out into the valley one morning from the camp nearest its borders, telling the men at the camp, as they laced his armor on his back, that he</p>	<p>would be back in two days. The next day an Indian who could speak but a few words of English came to the camp in a great state of excitement. He made the men understand that he wanted them to follow him. At the distance of about twenty miles out into the desert the Indian pointed to a human figure seated against a rock. Approaching, they found it to be Newhouse still in his armor. He was dead and frozen stiff. His beard was covered with frost and—though the noonday sun poured down its fiercest rays—an icicle over a foot in length hung from his nose. There he had died miserably, because his armor had worked but too well, and because it was laced up behind where he could not reach the fastenings.</p>
	

A tall tale, from *What Time Is This Place?* See p. 120.