

FICTION

JOSEPH BRUCHAC

Padoskoks: A Jacob Neptune Murder Mystery

University of Oklahoma Press
Paperback, 206 pages, \$21.95
OUPress.com

Jacob Neptune, a former Special Forces soldier, has a new career as an Abenaki private detective. His giant friend Dennis provides backup to their adventures, so the reader receives two great characters for the price of one. Between the two, they're experts in combat, firearms and underwater demolition. All handy skills, especially when Jacob's old frenemy hires them to look into some deaths caused by what might be a sea serpent inhabiting Puget Sound. It's their idea to take down a Chinese billionaire criminal on the Washington state coast. I'm not sure this is a mystery. The reader knows who the bad guys are from the start, but that's all right. The fun of the story is in

the journey with Bruchac's characters. It's full of wisecracks, plays on words and over-the-top derring-do. I practically guarantee you're going to enjoy this story.

– Carol Crigger

PATRICK DEAREN

Haunted Border

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 274 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Mexican bandits capture two girls during a raid on the Cross C Headquarters ranch in 1917. Jake Graves (the father of one girl, uncle of the other) the ranch foreman and three others pursue the outlaws to free the girls. The story is a combination of the actual Brite Ranch Raid in 1917 and the Mexican legend of Tlahuelpuchi, the Vampire Witch of Tlaxcala, Mexico. But the pursuers must deal with their internal conflicts and prejudice, while the outlaw leader, Jesus Renteria, also called Tlahuelpuchi, has his own internal conflict, which haunts him as he tries to escape those

hunting him. This story that will keep you wondering what will happen next.

– Lowell F. Volk

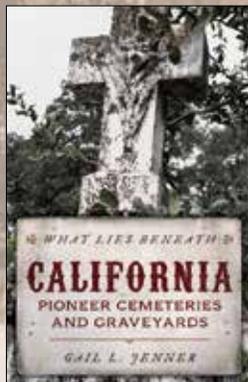
KALEN VAUGHAN JOHNSON

Raid of Souls

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 310 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

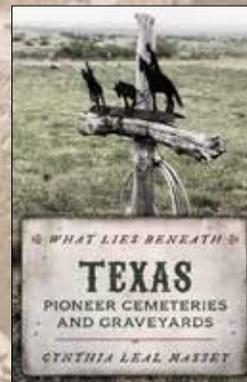
The years in Northern California's Sacramento Valley between the end of the Civil War and completion of the transcontinental railroad were filled with change and growth. Ranches were becoming cattle empires, powerful businessmen were forming companies for pulling gold ore from deep mines, miner unions were being formed, successful farms and small businesses were growing, and politics were being used to manipulate society and business. Kalen Vaughan Johnson weaves a luminous tapestry of these times with colorful, well-researched historical threads as the background to tell an engaging love story between the wealthy, driven son of a rancher and the beautiful, talented

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MAX McCOY

The Ghost Rifle

Pinnacle

Mass-market paperback, 395 pages, \$8.99

KensingtonBooks.com

Jacques Aguirre, an apprentice gunsmith and adventurer of Basque heritage, kills a friend in a duel and, abandoning a son and daughter he doesn't know, flees up the Missouri River in the early 1820s with his "Ghost Rifle." Now using the name Jack Pizarro, he meets friends and enemies, and after his rifle is stolen during an attack by Arikaras, sets off to get his rifle back. Far from a take on the 1950 Western film *Winchester '73*, Max McCoy's story is completely original. The three-time Spur winner delivers a fascinating, richly detailed epic of the mountain-man frontier. *The Ghost Rifle* is a literate, wild ride, bloody yet romantic, unpredictable and impossible to put down. The sequel, *American Odyssey*, is due out in February.

– Johnny D. Boggs

KATHLEEN MORRIS

The Transformation of Chastity James

Five Star Publishing

Hardcover, 289 pages, \$25.95

Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

When the Vassar-educated Miss James arrives in Dodge City in 1878, she is eagerly welcomed by townspeople who see in the refined young woman the ideal person to teach their children. One townsman sees other qualities in Chastity, and she defends herself, proving she is more than a pretty face. Forced to flee, she rescues a wounded man on the trail and nurses him back to health. Beau had been part of a band of desperadoes but fell out with them. They shoot him and leave him for dead. Chas and Beau bond and seek to rescue a young woman who is held for ransom by the desperadoes. Still in flight, the two join a traveling theatrical group, which provides them cover for their rescue mission. The ending is a bit drawn out and anticlimactic but draws loose ends together.

– Milana Marsenich

JOHN G. NEIHARDT

Eagle Voice Remembers: An Authentic Tale of the Old Sioux World

University of Nebraska Press

Paperback, 348 pages, \$29.95

NebraskaPress.unl.edu

After 70-odd years, John G. Neihardt's classic novel *Eagle Voice Remembers* returns in a new edition. Maybe, as stated in the foreword, it can be considered a prequel to Neihardt's better known *Black Elk Speaks*, but it certainly stands alone as a solid work of literature. Neihardt wrote with the knowledge of one who knew the Lakotas well and was accepted by them. Stories of their buffalo-hunting lives and conflicts finds a voice through his composite character. The pages read as an authentic rendering, because, as Neihardt said, "I was truly one of them in heart."

– Lynn Bueling

ANNA NORTH

Outlawed

Bloomsbury Publishing

Hardcover, 272 pages, \$26

Bloomsbury.com

In her third novel, Anna North – who covers "gender and reproductive justice" for news website Vox – flips the traditional Western like a pancake. When young Ada, a midwife's daughter, marries but produces no children, she is sent to a convent. And because this is a revisionist Western, plausibil-

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Tame the Wild
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Lynn Eldridge
Desire in Deadwood
A Novel

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A Novel

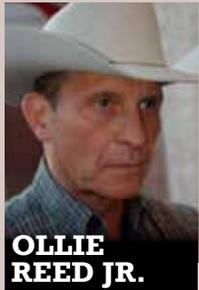
WESTERN MUSIC

DAVE MUNSICK *The Songteller*

Bingo Records \$20
TheSongteller.com

Everything I love about Western music is in the first two songs on this CD.

“Tequila,” about a little Mexican horse named that, is a spirited, joyous number that makes you wish you were pounding leather aboard a pony “gold as the grass in Sonora,” a mount that, although “skinny and rough on the eyes,” is “strong for the spirit” and “smooth for the ride.”



OLLIE REED JR.

“Last Day on the Trail,” boasts a Sons of the Pioneers quality that hits dead on my affection for the rugged beauty of the West and the peace you can find there when you have made a good camp by the water, where there’s “plenty of fish to catch, a bunch of wood to split and the grass was belly deep.”

Dave Munsick, who grew up in New Mexico but now makes Wyoming his home, wrote all 13 songs on this album. Several skew more to country than to Western, but there’s not a dud in the pack. Another favorite is “Vaya Conmigo,” a lighthearted lesson in not mixing strong drink with a language you don’t savvy all that well.



JAMESTOWN REVIVAL *Fireside With Louis L'Amour*

Thirty Tigers
EP available through YouTube Music, Spotify, Apple Music, iTunes Store, Amazon Music, Tidal and Deezer.

JamestownRevival.com

Jamestown Revival is Zach Chance and Jonathan Clay, a couple of Texans who write and perform music that has been described as a blend of country, Americana and Western rock.

They are also fans of Louis L’Amour, the late mega-selling and Spur-winning author of Westerns and other kinds of writing. The six songs on this EP are inspired by L’Amour Western stories. “Bound for El Paso,” for example, comes out of “The Gift of Cochise,” which was the basis for the 1953 movie *Hondo*.

Chance and Clay’s challenge was to capture the plot and feel of a 30-page story in a few minutes of song. I think they do that best with “Prospector’s Blues,” from L’Amour’s “Trap of Gold.”

*I finally had my fill I was on my way
And that mountain started falling as I ran and I prayed
Lord if you let me make it out alive
I’ll never chase another poke for my whole damn life*

E-mail Ollie at olreed.com@gmail.com and send CDs to him at P.O. Box 2381, Corrales, NM 87048.



ity issues are swept aside: Barren women can be hanged for witches in 1890s Dakotas, and Ada’s Mother Superior can sweetly suggest she join the Hole in the Wall gang, whose members are female or nonbinary. The plot has occasional gaps but is pleasingly unpredictable. *Outlawed* may not be every reader’s Western, but it presents an interesting, unconventional approach to historical fiction. The author projects a contemporary writing style and gender policy onto a Western outlaw tale fused with 1600s witch mania.

– Micki Fuhrman

SHELDON RUSSELL *Time and Again*

Milford House Press

Paperback, 193 pages, \$16.95.

SunburyPress.com/collections/milford-house

Besides being a prize-winning author, Sheldon Russell is a weaver. His interwoven story of generational growth in hard times through a century is about as descriptive of a time and place as you can find. His description of the land of western Oklahoma, originally called the Cherokee Outlet, reminds one of the adages for writers, “You have to taste the soil.” He does it with aplomb. The only thing missing is the constant annoyance of sand burrs sticking in your socks. Some characters are a little thin, but it does not take away from the tale.

– Vernon Schmid

TOM RUSSELL *Against the Blood*

Frontera Press

Paperback, 294 pages, \$34.99

FronteraRecords.com

Tom Russell is best known as a singer-songwriter whose songs include the contemporary standards “Navajo Rug,” cowritten with Ian Tyson, and “Tonight We Ride.” He’s also an accomplished painter and essayist and now reveals that he’s also dang good as a novelist. *Against the Blood* follows the misadventures of Rake Larson, a cowboy in LA watching the Hollywood Western drying up in 1953. Larson takes off with a Pima Indian named Billy Yellow Horse, ostensibly to pick up saddles, but the boozing, brawling trip includes many detours. Lyrical but profane, hilarious but touching, *Against the Blood* is an off-the-wall look at a changing West. It’s part Jack Kerouac, part Johnny Cash, a little Max Evans with a touch of John Ford – imaginative and off the wall.

– Johnny D. Boggs

CHARLIE STEEL *The Soul Gatherers – Thirteen Western Tales*

Condor Publishing

Paperback, 177 pages, \$12.95

CondorPublishingInc.com

Each of these Western tales has one character in common – Old Slew Foot. Or some might call him Lucifer, the Devil or the Enemy. In this anthology, he doesn’t have a pitchfork or horns, but he does emit a sulfurous odor, loves to hate, bristles at the name of God and is hell-bent on making his quota of collecting souls. Things are not exactly according to the gospel (“good news”). Sometimes an angel tells the Devil he has “broken the truce of noninterference.” In one story, Wild Bill Hickock dies and his soul enters a dog. If you’re

AUGUST 2021

looking for a twist on the traditional Western genre, look no further.

—Denise F. McAllister

DEBORAH SWENSON

Till My Last Breath: Book One, Desert Hills Trilogy

BookBaby

Paperback, 338 pages, \$16.99

BookBaby.com

Emily Sweeney, a modern trauma surgeon at a Seattle medical center, unexpectedly finds herself in 1880s Arizona Territory. There she meets Caleb Young, a lawyer who has fled his law practice in Boston in hopes of escaping his past. Predictably, he gets wounded and she saves his life. If plentiful use of participial phrases does not bother you, then you might like this combination of romance, Western and time-travel genres.

SIDNEY THOMPSON

Hell on the Border: The Bass Reeves Trilogy, Book Two

Bison Books

Paperback, 171 pages, \$19.95

BisonBooks.com

The second novel in Sidney Thomp-

son's trilogy jumps forward 20 years to 1884, when Bass Reeves, the Black deputy for Judge Isaac Parker, nears retirement. Bass is relentless and clever, disguising himself as a tramp, sometimes able to disarm criminals without a skirmish. The devout Bass always delivers a sermon, offering bad men redemption even as he escorts them to the gallows. But his pursuit of the outlaw Jim Webb turns violent, and afterwards Bass accidentally, or in pique over a dog's torture, kills his cook. The scrupulously honest Bass confesses and finds himself in Parker's basement jail, accused of murder. Throughout, Thompson fills in Bass's backstory: his encounters with Caesar, a wise Seminole; Belle Starr; and his old master, the cruel George Reeves.

—John Mort

JOHN WEST

Marshallville Revenge

DS Productions

Paperback, 320 pages, \$9.99

DSProductions.com

John West has put together a tale with enough action to satisfy those who prefer their Westerns full of fistfights,

gunfights, stabbings and explosions. Transplanted New York gangster Daniel Kelly's attempt to take over the town of Marshallville ends with his death. His brother Patrick arrives to become Daniel's partner just after Daniel and his henchmen have been killed. Patrick is determined to exact his revenge and make Marshallville his own. To do that, he will have to overcome a band of former lawmen defending the town. While the story has possibilities, the text needs serious editing. Run-on sentences, other grammatical errors and the overuse of faux "Western" dialogue mar the novel. West has the potential to be a good writer of traditional Westerns, but he needs a good copy editor.

NONFICTION

BOB ALEXANDER and RICHARD K. ALFORD

Tall Walls and High Fences: Officers and Offenders, the Texas Prison Story

University of North Texas Press

Hardcover, 562 pages, \$34.95

UNTPress.unt.edu

In Lone Star days, a prison sentence

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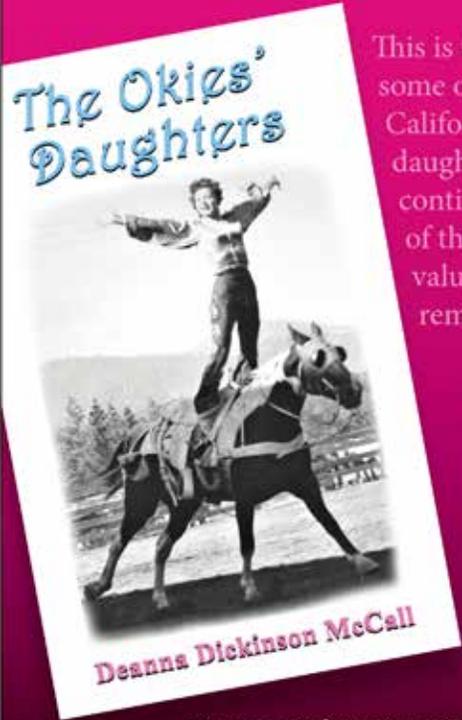
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The Okies' Daughters



This is the story of some of the California Okies' daughters and the continuing legacy of the cultures and values that remain today.

July 1

For more information visit www.deannadickinsonmccall.com

meant hard labor as both punishment and discipline, reflecting frontier values. The authors represent the Reconstruction era with an account of the racially charged murder of a freedman by an outlaw named Nat Outlaw. They deliver a bullet-by-bullet account of Bonnie and Clyde's engineering of a break from Eastham Prison Farm in 1934. They describe many daring escapes and gun battles, always detailing the make and caliber of the guns. They work in politics, such as a debate over capital punishment, and portray recreational pursuits such as baseball and rodeo. They include a glossary of prison jargon and an account of how COVID-19 has affected prison life. A joyful though discursive account by corrections professionals, and great source material for fiction writers.

— John Mort

ELLEN BAUMLER

The Life of the Afterlife in the Big Sky State: A History of Montana's Cemeteries

Bison Books

Paperback, 208 pages, \$19.95

BisonBooks.com

Ellen Baumler has written two books on haunted Montana places, so it was perhaps inevitable she would turn to the state's cemeteries. Framed chronologically, Baumler's *Afterlife* begins with the first gravesite known to Montana – Anzick, the site of a child burial 11,000 years ago – and ends with the white roadside crosses that mark modern highway fatalities. From the prehistoric, Baumler moves to Indian burials and customs; the cliffs above Billings, unique in burial lore; the boot hills of early gold rush towns; planned cemeteries; ethnic burials; beautification; tombstones; and a host of other topics. Insights are sprinkled throughout: why flowers accompany funerals, that twice as many people are buried in Anaconda as live there, why people cover mirrors, and more. This is a rewarding read.

— Charles E. Rankin

BOB BOZE BELL

The Illustrated Life and Times of Billy the Kid: The Final Word

Two Roads West Publishing

Paperback, 136 pages, \$24.95

Store.TrueWestMagazine.com

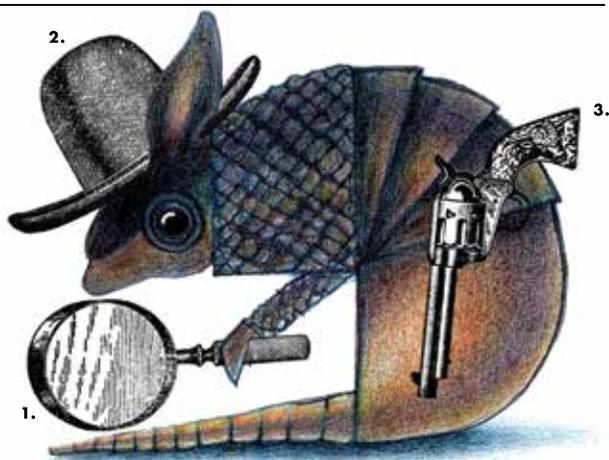
Old West historian and artist Bob Boze Bell, executive editor of *True West* magazine, published *The Illustrated Life and Times of Billy the Kid* in 1992, revised it with a second edition four years later and now brings readers – and art lovers – the final word (yeah, right!) on William Henry McCarty, alias Billy the Kid, the outlaw turned folk hero made famous during New Mexico's Lincoln County War. Bell beautifully and vibrantly illustrates the Kid's life and times with words, color paintings and black-and-white drawings, using a palette that includes historical images, keen insight and Bell's fine wit. The Kid's "legend lives on," Bell writes, "because of two opposing claims: He was an All-American boy and a cold-blooded hero."

— Johnny D. Boggs

JULIA BRICKLIN

The Notorious Life of Ned Buntline: A Tale of Murder, Betrayal, and the Creation of Buffalo Bill

TwoDot Books



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Hardcover, 212 pages, \$26.95
TwoDotBooks.com

Julia Bricklin, a 2019 Spur Award finalist for her biography *Polly Pry: The Woman Who Wrote the West*, turns her journalistic skills on another author: Edward Zane Carrol Judson, best known as Ned Buntline, his pen name. Judson's life story reads as as exciting and unbelievable as the hundreds (estimates range from 400 to 600) of dime novels he wrote. He was a temperance lecturer who happened to be a raging alcoholic as well as a rapscallion and bigamist. But Judson also brought fame to William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, and his prose, Bricklin writes, "brought the American frontier into focus for the first time for many people with his tales of untamed lands west of the Mississippi and south to the Mexico border." This well-written, well-researched biography earns a rightful place alongside Jay Monaghan's *The Great Rascal: The Life and Adventures of Ned Buntline* (1952), the last major biography of the disreputable hack.

– Johnny D. Boggs

JAMES A. BRUSH (author) and **KAREN RACINE** and **GRAHAM LLOYD** (editors)

The Journal of James A. Brush: The Expedition and Military Operations of General Don Francisco Xavier Mina in Mexico, 1816-1817

University of New Mexico Press
Hardcover, 265 pages, \$85
UNMPress.com

Young General Mina, known as *El Estudiante*, was a minor hero of the Peninsular War between Spain and France and of the Mexican War of Independence. James A. Brush was his commissary officer and therefore privy to Mina's planning. The observant Brush wrote about what Mexico was like in 1816 and 1817. The book is important for the insights it provides into revolution where lack of coordination and foresight led to disaster for Mina, but even more so for the people of the countryside his army passed through. Deceit, double-dealing, lack of unified purpose and coordination and personal political ambition among the general's rivals made for an extended, brutal war.

– Doug Hocking

LYNN BUELING

Faint Echoes: A Collection of Tales, Yarns, and Narratives

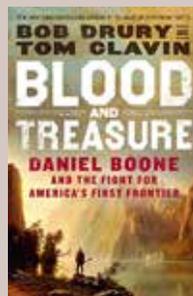
Self-published

Trade paperback, 228 pages, price not listed

Frequent *Roundup Magazine* book reviewer and North Dakota chronicler Lynn Bueling writes about personalities, places, remembrances, history and a whole lot about books in this collection of articles that originally appeared in the *Enderlin Independent* and *Emmons County Record*. Bueling's style is always easy, like he's sitting in a Fort Ransom coffee-shop – is there a coffeeshop in Fort Ransom? – talking to you about hogs ... then moving on to prairie fires ... or making up a story about what a young woman must have thought and seen during the Dakota War of the 1860s ... or even wondering when a certain magazine editor might finally buy him that beverage at a WWA convention that he has been promising for years.

– Johnny D. Boggs

Editor's Note: Running in the August and February issues, Take 2 offers two opinions on one book.



BOB DRURY and **TOM CLAVIN**

Blood and Treasure: Daniel Boone and the Fight for America's First Frontier
St. Martin's Press

Hardcover, 400 pages, \$29.99
StMartins.com

For those of us who have always maintained that this nation's fascination with lands beyond the horizon began not at the banks of the Mississippi River but rather among the peaks and valleys of the Appalachian Mountains, this well-researched book should be a welcome addition to our libraries. *Blood and Treasure* traces the difficult, multidecade and – more often than not – perilous migration that carried hundreds of thousands of farmers, merchants, adventurers, churchmen and their families from secure homes in the East to an unknown future in a relatively unexplored wilderness hundreds of miles distant. Bob Drury and Tom Clavin have done a good job and a great service in presenting the story of our nation's westward expansion during the years before most people had ever dreamed about the Trans-Mississippi West. Complete with four-color endpapers, maps and black-and-white photographs, the book details America's "great leap westward" into the vast territory bounded by the Great Lakes on the north and Tennessee on the south, and from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River.

– James A. Crutchfield

Bob Drury and Tom Clavin make an excellent writing team and have a good formula for success at St. Martin's Press. Nonetheless, readers of *Blood and Treasure: Daniel Boone and the Fight for America's First Frontier* who are not familiar with Boone, or have not read another biography of the frontiersman, will walk away from *Blood and Treasure* with a mixed message: Is it a biography or an amalgamated condemnation of Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis, American-Indian relations in the New World (although the Spanish, French and Portuguese receive little coverage) and Euro-imperial conquest of the New World? I was also particularly offended by their use of the word *infestation* to describe white settlement in North America. I believe the use of *infestation* to describe human beings anywhere at any time in history weakens the narrative of a history book. Choosing a different noun – like the word *invasion* or something similar – that does not carry such a history of prejudice is more appropriate and would not have detracted from Drury and Clavin's outstanding storytelling.

– Stuart Rosebrook





Wings of the Hawk

Kino Lorber
Blu-ray, DVD \$25.95, \$14.95
KinoLorber.com

Few if any Hollywood Western directors had the same appreciation for Mexico as former bullfighter Budd Boetticher. Which makes it all the more surprising that his long career encompassed just a single Mexican-set Western – 1953’s *Wings of the Hawk*, the last of the director’s nine films for Universal, where, over two years of what he regarded as indentured servitude, he “[cranked out] pictures like tortillas.”



KIRK ELLIS

However much Boetticher disparaged his Universal output, a few of those “tortillas” remain pretty satisfying. In the words of historian Jeremy Arnold, whose wall-to-wall commentary track is among the extras on this Kino Lorber release, *Wings of the Hawk* is a “solidly entertaining Western with plenty of action ... and an appealing cast.” Van Heflin stars as American prospector “Irish” Gallagher, whose gold mine makes him a target of both *federales* and *insurrectos* in the early days of the Mexican Revolution.

Heflin’s performance is one of his loosest and most engaging, and he’s perfectly matched by a *charro*-suited Julia Adams as a fiery guerrilla leader. Their repartee, scripted by James Moser from a novel by Gerald Drayson Adams, looks forward to the even wittier scripts penned by Burt Kennedy for the later Randolph Scott Ranown films. George Dolenz, Rodolfo Acosta, Abbe Lane, Antonio Moreno and Pedro Gonzalez Gonzalez (in his film debut) provide colorful support, though Noah Berry Jr.’s cringe-inducing turn as Pascual Orozco is an embarrassing burlesque.

Wings of the Hawk marked Boetticher’s only foray into 3-D, a gimmick the director detested but manipulated with considerable skill. As with his later grasp of CinemaScope, Boetticher found creative uses for the format. The Blu-ray includes both 2-D and 3-D versions of the film, and even in the “flat” version it’s easy to appreciate his use of compositions-in-depth to expand the cinematic possibilities. (The gimmicky shots of machine-gun bullets and exploding debris launched straight at viewers were shot by others.)

Kino Lorber provides a boatload of extras to enhance the enjoyment of this shaggy but immensely enjoyable picture: not only Arnold’s informative (if a bit relentless) analysis, but also the three-channel stereo-magnetic soundtrack and a separate commentary from 3-D expert Mike Ballew that includes a detailed and often hilarious production history chronicling the various stunt mishaps. There’s even the original 3-D Woody Woodpecker cartoon, *Hypnotic Hick*, that accompanied the original release.

Roundup video reviewer C. Courtney Joyner is taking time off. Kirk Ellis is an Emmy- and Spur-winning writer/producer and a former president of WWA.

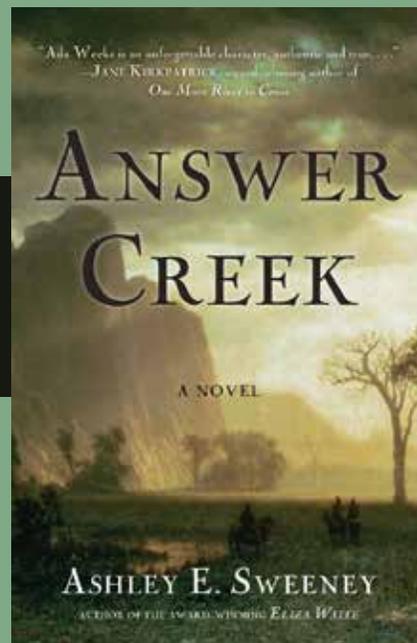
BRIAN A. CERVANTEZ
Amon Carter: A Lone Star Life
University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 264 pages, \$29.95
OUPress.com

Amon Carter was much more than a collector of Western art (the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas) and a newspaper mogul (founder and publisher of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*). Brian A. Cervantez, a history professor at Tarrant County College, Northwest Campus, in Fort Worth, traces Carter’s rise from growing up in a one-room log cabin to making a fortune in the oil business. Not only was Carter a newspaperman, he also was a philanthropist, a strong supporter of education, a major force in the establishment of Texas’s Big Bend National Park and a man who called Will Rogers, Franklin D. Roosevelt and even scathing newspaper reporter H.L. Mencken friends.

MICHAEL L. COLLINS (editor)
A Texan’s Story: The Autobiography of Walter Prescott Webb
University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 226 pages, \$29.95
OUPress.com

Famed historian Walter Prescott Webb, perhaps best known for *The Great Plains*, was also pivotal in the founding of *The Handbook of Texas*. Collins unearthed Webb’s autobiography, written when he was a guest scholar in wartime England, among his papers in Austin. Framed by Collins’s fine introduction and epilogue, *A Texan’s Story* is a lively account of

Winner 2020 Arizona Authors Association Literary Award



“A must-read for fans of historical fiction.”
—Seattle Book Review



www.ashleysweeneyauthor.com

growing up on a homestead in West Texas, with responsibility for running the farm – and a lot of rabbit-hunting – at age 12. Books were hard to find, schooling sporadic, but the boy knew he wanted to become a writer, and even with his uneven education made his way from teaching in country schools to the university – and at last to worldwide acclaim. Western Writers Hall of Fame novelist Elmer Kelton will come to mind.

– John Mort

JANE CULP (author) and **SUSAN HALLSTEN McGARRY** (editor)
Jane Culp: Echoes of the San Andreas: Paintings and Drawings

Fresco Books
 Hardcover, 144 pages, \$45
 FrescoBooks.com

For those who enjoyed *New Beginnings: An American Story of Romantics and Modernists in the West* (2018), this publication will be of interest. The cover image brings to mind the works of the great Taos Modernist Victor Higgins (1884-1949). In Jane Culp’s case, her range is the spine of the Sierra Nevada from her home north of the

Anza-Borrego Desert through Joshua Tree, Death Valley, Tioga Pass and finally, Yosemite Valley. This handsome book is adorned with 120 vibrant, color illustrations, convincing viewers that to fall in love with the mountains all you have to do is open your eyes. But to fall in love with the desert, you have to open your soul.

– Larry Len Peterson

DENISE LOW and **RAMON POWERS**
Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art by Fort Robinson Breakout Survivors

University of Nebraska Press
 Hardcover, 264 pages, \$65
 NebraskaPress.unl.edu

Here are ledger-art, or notebook, drawings by Northern Cheyennes Wild Hog, Porcupine and Strong Left Hand. They belonged to a group of 350 who escaped their Oklahoma reservation in 1877 and journeyed home to Nebraska. After many costly battles most were imprisoned at Fort Robinson, where they were starved and pressured to return to Oklahoma, resulting in another bloody breakout. The art came about in the Dodge City jail, where Sheriff

Bat Masterson provided the Cheyennes proper food and medical care, contact with journalists and drawing materials. The Cheyennes bartered their stories and art to improve their standing, ending the long string of indignities with a qualified success. The drawings themselves – scenes of Cheyenne life and of battle – are beautifully reproduced and haunting.

– John Mort

WILLIAM C. MEADOWS
The First Code Talkers: Native American Communicators in World War I

University of Oklahoma Press
 Hardcover, 378 pages, \$36.95
 OUPress.com

Navajo code talkers have achieved widespread recognition for their role in helping the United States win World War II. Far less famous are the men documented by William C. Meadows in this impressive work. The author shows that the use of Native languages for military intelligence emerged from the American Expeditionary Force’s time in the trenches of France during World War I. Source material on these men is remarkably sparse, which makes the

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author's exhaustive detective work all the more impressive. Meadows identifies the irony that Native soldiers used their traditional knowledge to benefit the United States Army at a time when the government was either ignoring their people or attempting to eradicate their lifeways through assimilationist policies. Readers interested in military history and Native American studies – particularly Choctaw studies – will find this book rewarding.

– David C. Beyreis

MICHAEL M. MILLER

XIT: A Story of Land, Cattle, and Capital in Texas and Montana

University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 280 pages, \$29.95
OUPress.com

The establishment of the XIT Ranch and the construction of the Texas state capitol in Austin go hand in hand. In 1879, Texas legislators set aside a 3 million-acre Capitol Reservation as a funding source for a new capitol building. Out-of-state investors eyed those acres and entered the scene, including a syndicate that developed the XIT Ranch. Running large numbers of cattle and expanding northward to Montana, they made a lasting impact on the region, although relatively short-lived, from 1885-1912. Their business practices coupled with politics found success, but also conflicts and troubles, such as those associated with barbed wire, blizzards, rustling and more. Lovers of the history of the early cattle industry will like this one.

– Lynn Bueling

JAMES E. MUELLER

Ambitious Honor: George Armstrong Custer's Life of Service and Lust for Fame

University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 392 pages, \$32.95
OUPress.com

Love him or hate him, George Armstrong Custer looms large across the landscape of American history. Although countless books have been written about the man, James A. Mueller's book is different. It concentrates on Custer's theatric view of life – whatever he did, he did to draw attention to himself, whether it was the actions he took, the clothes he wore, or the subjects he wrote about. He knew what to write to create a good story; and he cultivated the press to report favorably on him. He

knew what stories reporters wanted and he gave those stories to them. The public couldn't get enough of Custer. There were more photographs taken of Custer than of President Abraham Lincoln. *Ambitious Honor* is well-researched and well-written.

– Bill Markley

BARNEY NELSON

Making Circles: The Memoir of a Cowboy Journalist

University of Oklahoma Press
Paperback, 296 pages, \$26.95
OUPress.com

More than a treatise on cowboys or journalism, Barney Nelson's *Making Circles* serves up a lifetime perspective into all that the ranching West represents, past and present. Nelson is at her best on the topics of nature; horsemanship; bovine behavior; irrigation; Charlie Russell; Allan Savory; Ray Hunt; the 06 Ranch; grub-lining; Zen as it relates to cowboyism; environmentalism; Thoreau; wildness and domesticity; and two cowboy legends in particular: Tom Blasingame and Nicasio Ramirez. No one else gives a better assessment of misunderstood author Edward Abbey. A combination of hands-on outdoorswoman and credentialed academic, Nelson slices through the suppositions that academe applies to the West. "I recognized ... the patronizing way the East and West Coasts imagined 'flyover country' ... 'They' imagined 'us' as their colonized producers; our land contained their resources and provided their playgrounds. We were backward, irrational, violent, inferior and childlike – definitely in need of wise management by our colonizers." This book champions the cowboy ethic against the 2020s forces that would erode those values. But get it for the colorful and evocative prose.

– Jesse Mullins

LAUREN REDNISS (author and illustrator)

Oak Flat: A Fight for Sacred Land in the American West

Random House
Hardcover, 281 pages, \$30
RandomHouseBooks.com

Is the "manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent" still in play today in Arizona? A fortune in copper ore lies buried under federal land 15 miles from the

San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation at Oak Flat. A multinational mining corporation wants the projected billions of dollars in profit that will come from extracting the ore, promising a boon in local economic benefits – jobs and tax revenues for the next four decades. But the Resolution Copper mining company plans to dig shafts more than a mile deep. The extraction of ore will cause an earthen collapse, creating a moonlike crater two miles wide and a thousand feet deep. Lauren Redniss, a National Book Award finalist, tells us about the future impact on the Apache people and their sacred land. For generations, Oak Flat has been a place for traditional ceremony. With colorful images drawn on location and heartfelt personal interviews, Redniss asks the question, "to dig or not to dig?" Prominent environment organizations have sided with the Apache people who oppose the dig. The hard question remains – "to dig or not to dig?"

– SD Nelson

GERALD F. REID

Chief Thunderwater: An Unexpected Indian in Unexpected Places

University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 188 pages, \$34.95
OUPress.com

Oghema Niagara, better known as Chief Thunderwater (1865-1950), was an early advocate for indigenous rights, mainly for the Six Nations tribes living in eastern Canada in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He created the Council of the Tribes that anticipated later Indian rights organizations. Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent general of Indian affairs, saw him as a threat to Canada's assimilationist policy and with some success thwarted Thunderwater's plans. In the 1920s, Thunderwater filed a libel suit against two Louisville newspapers whose articles were based on Scott's campaign of disinformation. The libel trial ended inconclusively. Gerald Reid provides an important corrective to the influential article by Susan Postal, published in 1965, that used falsified information claiming Thunderwater was not an Indian but a "negro" and a con man. Meticulously researched, Gerald F. Reid's book rescues Thunderwater from the lies and distortions that marred his career.

– Abraham Hoffman