

NONFICTION

PAUL BARBA

Country of the Cursed and the Driven: Slavery and the Texas Borderlands

University of Nebraska Press
Hardcover, 474 pages, \$65
NebraskaPress.unl.edu

Drawing on an extensive collection of secondary and anecdotal sources, the author has created a textbook covering the broad spectrum of slavery – Native American, Spanish and Anglo – in Texas from the earliest European contact through abolition in the 1860s and beyond. Cutting past charged vitriol, there are herein deep insights to the effect of slavery on the slaver and enslaved, on trade and on government. Slavery persisted into the 1930s on Comanche reservations and under the guise of leasing state and county prisoners to private persons. In the 19th Century, slavery was driven by dreams of amassing great wealth in the cotton trade in an odd parallel to how corporate empires were built in manufacturing.

– Doug Hocking

DANIEL J. BURGE

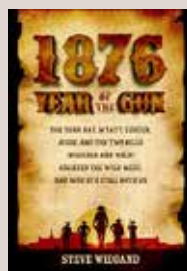
A Failed Vision of Empire: The Collapse of Manifest Destiny, 1845-1872

University of Nebraska Press
Hardcover, 268 pages, \$60
NebraskaPress.unl.edu

Manifest destiny (a common noun, later capitalized by historians) has usually been considered in the context of Western expansion across the North American continent. Daniel J. Burge exposes the term as a myth that clouds its basic intentions in the decades following the U.S.-Mexico War. He produces considerable evidence that the views held by politicians and newspaper editors held a much broader definition of the term. Polk, Pierce, Buchanan and Grant were expansionist presidents who looked to the annexation or purchase of “All Mexico,” plus Central America and South America, and the Caribbean islands of Cuba, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and the Danish West Indies. Opponents to this grand scheme argued forcefully against these proposals, claiming that the United States, a Protestant white nation, would be diluted by including nonwhite, Catholic and non-English-speaking people. Critics used brutally racist rhetoric, describing the inhabitants of these countries as idle, black and savage people. Secretary of State William Seward succeeded (barely) in purchasing Alaska, a worthless place full of polar bears and ice, but failed to get Senate approval for purchasing the Danish West Indies. In the end, embarrassment over the misbegotten Ostend Manifesto, illegal filibustering and vocal opposition resulted in what author Daniel J. Burge calls the “failed vision of Empire.” Readers will find his argument persuasive and an important correction to a traditional view of Manifest Destiny still found in U.S. history textbooks.

– Abraham Hoffman

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



STEVE WIEGAND

1876: Year of the Gun: The Year Bat, Wyatt, Custer, Jesse, And the Two Bills (Buffalo and Wild) Created the Wild West, and Why It's Still With Us

Bancroft Press
Hardcover, 436 pages, \$33
BancroftPress.com

Veteran journalist Steve Wiegand recognizes 1876 as the year when

legends were born that survive to influence today's Western genre. He resurrects the memories of several men and events to support his theme. The familiar names of Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp, Buffalo Bill Cody, George Armstrong Custer and Wild Bill Hickok fill these pages to connect with historical events we associate with them. But to make an interesting book more so, he adds “Part II: The Aftermath.” Masterson becomes a journalist and prizefighting expert, Earp locates to California and delves in various business affairs with questionable success, Custer's reputation ebbs and flows as he lies in his grave, and more. Wiegand's interesting presentation with a before-and-after format makes for great reading. It goes on my shelf.

– Lynn Bueling

Steve Wiegand's *1876: Year of the Gun* races not quite breathlessly through many of the Old West's most famous characters and incidents. Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp, Custer, Hickok, Buffalo Bill, the James-Younger Gang are all here. Even Eli Lilly, Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell get cameos connected with the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. A journalist by trade, Wiegand has authored other books – like this one, directed at generalists. See, for example, his *U.S. History for Dummies*, *Lessons from the Great Depression for Dummies*, *The American Revolution for Dummies*. This book might have been better titled “The Old West for Dummies.” Paul Harvey-like, the author offers “the rest of the story” for those like Wyatt Earp who lived through to retirement and got to see the fight “that didn't last thirty seconds” made into a legend of mythic proportions. Sources are cited loosely, but there is a bibliography. Sidebars on lawmen, theater, faro, bank robbery and other topics round out a good read for the armchair aficionado.

– Charles E. Rankin

CHRISTIAN S. HARRISON*All the Water the Law Allows: Las Vegas and Colorado River Politics*University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 249 pages, \$39.95
OUPress.com

Deeply researched and well argued, this book declares that the Colorado River Compact and the Law of the River, now a century old, cannot meet the needs of Nevada in the current drought. Christian Harrison points out that when the Colorado River was divided up in 1922, Nevada received an allotment of only 300,000 acre-feet a year. The state of Nevada agreed to this amount because of its sparse population and lack of arable land. No one anticipated the incredible growth of Las Vegas after World War II and its increasing need for water. Harrison credits Pat Mulroy, who became the general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority in 1993, with using her negotiating skills to unite local water districts into a regional authority. This authority would challenge what had become an obsolete Law of the River. Harrison deftly follows the twists and turns of district rivalry, litigation and negotiations so that southern Nevada could get additional water sources. However, the prolonged drought rendered problematic the water supplies needed in the future. Incidentally, Harrison clearly demonstrates that the casinos are not the cause of the lowering level of Lake Mead.

– Abraham Hoffman

BEVERLY LIONBERGER HODGINS*Mercy and Madness: Dr. Mary Archard Latham's Tragic Fall from Female Physician to Felon*

TwoDot

Hardcover, 224 pages, \$24.95
TwoDotBooks.com

Dr. Mary Latham, Spokane's first female physician, began her practice in 1888. She worked with poor women, often immigrants, who had nowhere else to go. Sometimes, she performed abortions. She worked tirelessly to help orphans, even offering up her own home as a waystation. Latham also helped found Spokane's Humane Society and its public library, and she loved to sound off not just on the lot of poor women but on business matters and agriculture. However, she had mental health issues, and she had enemies. Guilty or not, in 1905 she was convicted of arson and sentenced to four years of hard labor. Latham's long decline is sad, but on balance she seems to have been an exemplary person and a Washington State heroine.

– John Mort

BILL MARKLEY and KELLEN CUTSFORTH*Standoff at High Noon: Another Battle Over the Truth in the Mythic Wild West*

TwoDot

Hardcover, 296 pages, \$24.95
TwoDotBooks.com

History buffs, especially those interested in cussin' and discussin' what really did or didn't happen during some of the most fascinating events in the West a hundred or so years ago will enjoy this book. The authors go into more detail than you typically see in magazines or newspaper articles, and that's what will keep you reading. I always considered myself a student of history, but Bill Markley and Kellen Cutsforth added a lot to my understanding of what might or might not have happened at places

like the Alamo, Donner Pass and the like. Find your favorite easy chair with plenty of light and have your coffee mug at arm's reach. You're going to be reading well into the night.

– E. Joe Brown

TIM McNEESE*Time in the Wilderness: The Formative Years of John "Black Jack" Pershing in the American West*

Potomac Books

Hardcover, 456 pages, \$38.95
NebraskaPress.unl.edu

Mention John J. "Black Jack" Pershing in conversation and one is apt to receive a blank stare or an unsure response. He deserves more, and Tim McNeese presents a lively historical and detailed read of the years that shaped his character, moral fiber and leadership qualities. The author quotes from Pershing's autobiography to vividly describe, document and strengthen his portrayal. He also reports on Pershing's years at West Point, experience as a cavalryman in the Southwest, Montana and Dakotas as the Western frontier closes, service during the Spanish-American War, lengthy assignment in the Philippines, commander of the Punitive Expedition in search of Pancho Villa and selection as American Expeditionary Force commander in World War I. A superb presentation on Pershing's connection with the American West.

– Stan "Tex" Banash

MARK E. MILLER*Big Nose George: His Troublesome Trail*

High Plains Press

Paperback, 160 pages, \$19.95
HighPlainsPress.com

The story of Big Nose George is one of the best-known legends in Wyoming History. In this short and interesting book, Mark E. Miller asserts the value of fact over legend. Miller, who has had a distinguished career as a Wyoming archaeologist and who grew up where Big Nose George met his fate, applies his research skills and logical thinking to a work of historical nonfiction. He tells the story of how Big Nose George and others, after failing to derail and rob a train in 1878, murdered two deputies tracking the gang. Miller then narrates George's arrest, trial and subsequent lynching in 1881, followed by the now-famous anecdotes of how a local doctor had a pair of shoes made out of the

Farewell to Roundup

Editor's Note: Longtime Roundup Magazine book reviewer and contributor Vernon Schmid has decided it's time to put a "-30-" (the old newspaper symbol to indicate the end of an article) to his career. He writes:

The old journalist rode into town on an inverted pyramid, his saddlebags filled with who, what, when, where and how. His journey of six decades of discovery took him to far places, where his work appeared in a hundred magazines, newspapers and periodicals. With a sigh of relief, he dismounted. At 88 years of age and failing health, his dance with words no longer excited him. It was time to hang up his spurs and sit on the porch, watching the flowering of the garden and listening to bird songs. And that's -30-.

– Vernon Schmid

outlaw's skin and how another doctor had the outlaw's skullcap in her office for almost 70 years. Miller lays appropriate blame on the original crime, the lynching and the disrespectful treatment of George's remains. He also represents the outlaw's last name as Parott, as George spelled it, rather than as Parrott, as is presented in many earlier reference works – a small touch in a book that deserves appreciation.

– John D. Nesbitt

MARIANA NUNO RUIZ (author) and **IAN McENROE** (photographer)
Dining with the Dead: A Feast for the Souls on Day of the Dead

Rio Nuevo Publishers
Hardcover, 386 pages, \$35
RioNuevo.com

In this visually stunning Mexican cookbook, which also includes history and enlightenment, one can learn how to make all the traditional foods of the *Día de Muertos* celebration, including tamales, pozoles, moles, salsas, desserts and sweets. Recipe preparations and instructions are extensive; for instance, the Oaxacan Mole Negro, the King of Moles (which I've always wanted to learn) has one page of ingredients and seven more pages of photos and directions. One of my favorite sections is how to create and decorate sugar skulls, including a recipe for royal icing. Since it appears some of the ingredients in this book might be hard to find, the author has thankfully added a list of reliable online companies for sourcing. The author was born and raised in Gua-

dalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, and comes from a long line of strong women and wonderful cooks. When she is not cooking, she is thinking about cooking.

– Rocky Gibbons

MIKE STARK
Chasing the Ghost Bear: On the Trail of America's Lost Super Beast

Bison Books
Paperback, 227 pages, \$24.95
BisonBooks.com

We journalists are an inquisitive lot driven by a deep curiosity. In fact, that is a requirement of good journalism. Mike Stark's pursuit of the evidence of the existence of America's prehistoric bear is illuminating. The evidence exists through the nation from the La Brea (California) Tar Pits to the Florida swamps, Indiana cornfields to the Texas plains. The giant, short-faced bear – standing over 10 feet tall – was a fierce predator who disappeared more than 10,000 years ago. Remains are still being found throughout North America. A meditation on loss, this book is journalism at its best.

– Vernon Schmid

JIM TURNER
Arizona: A History of the Grand Canyon State: Second Edition

Rio Nuevo Publishers
Paperback, 345 pages, \$16.95
RioNuevo.com

This book is an informative chronicle of the entire history of the 48th state from prehistory to modern times. Of necessity, the entries are short, some-

times no more than three or four paragraphs, because there's a lot of history to cover in just one volume. The entire book is liberally decorated with old photos, illustrations and maps that help move the history along at a good pace and provide visual context to the sparse words. This book is an excellent springboard for the reader to further research an entry of interest to gain more insight into the topic.

– Rod Timanus

EILEEN WIRTH
The Women Who Built Omaha: A Bold and Remarkable History

Bison Books
Paperback, 205 pages, \$22.95
BisonBooks.com

Omaha, Nebraska, has often been called "a man's town," but in this delightfully engaging, somewhat risqué and interesting, anecdotal history, author/journalist Eileen Wirth tells many a good short story of the women (and "the women behind the men") who built Omaha and made it the largest city and the largest financial and cultural center of Nebraska. It all started back in 1854, when a group of Iowa society ladies crossed the Missouri River to hold an illegal picnic right there – on Indian land ... and from there the stories continue through "the Gilded Age," "the World War Years" and into today, often featuring names well-known to most Nebraskans and sometimes the world (such as Mutual of Omaha, Henry Doorly, Buffett, Joslyn, Creighton, etc.). Subjects also include a wide

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range of ethnicities, artists, educators, politicians, humanitarians, sports figures, civil rights leaders and so much more. This book is a great read for anyone who has ever spent time in Omaha and/or anyone who wants to know more about Omaha's history – or in this case, her – story.

– Jean A. Lukesh

FICTION

RHETT C. BRUNO and JAIME CASTLE

Cold As Hell: A Black Badge Novel

Blackstone Publishing
Hardcover, 378 pages, \$28.99
BlackstonePublishing.com

Former outlaw James Crowley is dead, but he's dodging Hell by serving the White Throne as a Black Badge – a kind of undead lawman dedicated to protecting the living from the monsters that seemingly hide behind every rock and bush. The publisher calls this the first of a series, though a previous audiobook exclusive introduced Crowley, and events from that tale are mentioned frequently. To me, the best weird Westerns feel authentically Western, and the weirdness is layered in around that setting. In *Cold as Hell*, frequent anachronisms, including references to drunk driving, power trips, God complexes, etc., kept pulling me out of the story. And the place names – Dead Acre, Lonely Hill, Revelation – suggest a West that never was. I wanted to like this book, which offers competent prose often laced with humor, more than I did. Bonus points for including *Dracula* author Bram Stoker as a character, though.

– Jeffrey J. Mariotte

J. HOOLIHAN CLAYTON

With Great Discretion: A Novel of Factual History about Heroism and the Cheyenne People

Dog Soldier Press
Paperback, 336 pages, \$15.95
DogSoldierPress.com

Intrepid investigator C.W. Collins is sent by Interior Secretary Carl Schurz to learn the truth of the Northern Cheyennes' escape from their Oklahoma reservation. Their subsequent journey north involves conflicting reports from many sources. Collins's job: Sort it out. Uncovering the facts about their perilous journey north proves challenging for the Irish immigrant and Union Army veteran. Following the tribe's path, he finds the unsettling truth a stain on the military handling of the event. His report ensures Native American affairs remain under the guidance of the Interior Department and do not become the purview of the U.S. Army. This is a heartbreaking tale based on historical fact and a must read for history buffs.

– Vernon Schmid

BRETT COGBURN

Call Me Lonesome

Pinnacle Books
Mass-market paperback, 473 pages, \$8.99
KensingtonBooks.com



Night Passage

Kino Lorber
Blu-ray, \$24.95
KinoLorber.com

The last decade of James Stewart's career was filled, as it should be, with honors and recognition of a job brilliantly done. His acting contribution to the history of American movies is remarkable, and few performers have as many classic films on their resumé. When Stewart

gave his acceptance speeches to the Academy or the American Film Institute, he acknowledged many of the great directors, particularly Frank Capra and Alfred Hitchcock, whose cameras he stood before.



C. COURTNEY JOYNER

Stewart did not acknowledge Anthony Mann, with whom he made the eight movies that shaped Stewart's post-World War II persona, and the reason is 1957's *Night Passage*.

This formula Universal Western, from a novel by Norman A. Fox, was to be the ninth collaboration between Stewart and Mann, who had recently completed the tremendous *Man from Laramie*. Borden Chase wrote the script, as he had *Winchester '73* and *Bend of the River*, and producer Aaron Rosenberg was on board to see the film through. Who wasn't on board was Mann, who hated the script and demanded rewrites that Stewart resisted, especially the scenes where he played the accordion and sang.

Mann quit, dissolving his professional and personal relationship with Stewart, and was replaced by successful TV director James Neilson.

The final result has been given a beautiful Blu-ray release by Kino Lorber that shows off William Daniels's incredible, wide-screen cinematography along with the movie's faults. Watching railroad trouble-shooter (Stewart) deal with his outlaw brother (Audie Murphy) and double-crossing railroad executive (Hugh Beaumont), old flame (Elaine Stewart), a kid on the run (Brandon DeWilde), baddies (led by Dan Duryea) and folksy, Irish rail workers (Paul Fix and Co.) should be the formula for Technicolor Western fun, but it isn't.

There is no denying *Night Passage's* grandeur and beauty, but it's also lifeless. In the opening, Stewart plays the accordion to a group of angry rail workers who haven't been paid, hoping to calm everyone down. A ridiculous scene John Ford or Raoul Walsh might have pulled off, Neilson lets go on for far too long, setting a pattern for the movie's pace.

Murphy's bad brother would have played better opposite Tom Tyler in 1935, rendering the conflict with Stewart strictly cliché, in a movie that strives for quality that's just out of reach. The ingredients are there, but *Night Passage* lacked the leadership of one of Stewart's greatest collaborators to make sure the film fulfilled its promise.

Through tangled webs of steps and missteps, Sheriff Morgan Clyde manages, somehow, to stay alive and, in the process, take down his adversaries. Bits and pieces and then long swaths of backstory clog Brett Cogburn's usual quick-action stories. While attention to detail, especially about guns, is palpable, *Call Me Lonesome* could use a good haircut. A master at storytelling, Cogburn does a good job interweaving three different plots from various characters into one. In the end, they all make sense. Short chapters are a plus when trying to keep several characters in a reader's mind.

– Melody Groves

SANDRA DALLAS

Little Souls

St. Martin's Press
Hardcover, 304 pages, \$27.99
StMartins.com

“... Denver had been shut down. Schools and churches, pool halls and theaters were closed. Public and private meetings were banned. Streetcars kept their windows open, and passengers were told not to spit on the floor. Neusteter's and other stores asked its customers to wear masks.” Sound familiar? Set in Denver in 1918 – but with a theme certainly relevant today – *Little Souls* focuses on sisters Lucretia, nicknamed Lutie, and Helen, who are caught in the chaos of World War I and the Spanish Influenza. Part love story, part historical novel and even a murder mystery, *Little Souls* is – like any Sandra Dallas novel – exceptionally written, thoughtful, topical and powerful. This four-time Spur Award-winner once again shows why she has been called “a quintessential American voice.”

– Johnny D. Boggs

PATRICK DEAREN

The End of Nowhere

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 224 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

Wracked with guilt over his mother's death and disillusioned with life, Jack Landon leaves his job as a West Texas reporter and drifts to the border during the Mexican Revolution. He sees little meaning in his life or future — until he comes to Esperanza. The villagers are caught between murderous Mexican bandits who demand the people's allegiance and sadistic Texas Rangers, essentially criminals themselves. Landon, however, determines he'll make a difference, especially after meeting pretty Mary Contreras and her teenaged brother. Despite somewhat awkward usage of Spanish words in the narrative and an outlook that occasionally appears more akin to today than 1917, Patrick Dearen weaves a gripping story of love and redemption, against the backdrop of a world in anarchy.

– Loyd Uglow

RAY HERBECK JR.

To the Color: A Novel of the Battalion of St. Patrick: Book 2

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 284 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

To the Color is the sequel to *Changing Flags*. Based on the true story of John Riley, a young Irish immigrant who joins the U.S. Army, then deserts to the Mexican Army to fight against his old comrades in the Mexican War of 1846-48. Several German and Irish soldiers desert with him in his quest for money, land, honor and respect. They soon find themselves under the great Santa Anna himself, leading the advance army toward a showdown with U.S. forces. The *San Patricios* will acquit themselves quite well in battle, before meeting a bloody end. The battle scenes are fast-paced, and you can almost smell the smoke from the cannons. This well-

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BJ MAYO

The Sparrows of Montenegro: A Novel

Skyhorse Publishing
Hardcover, 312 pages, \$26.99
SkyhorsePublishing.com

No doubt about it – this book includes one of the most brutal and sadistic villains I've seen in a long time, the half-Mexican half-Apache bandit Gato Montes. It's a unique story filled with memorable characters, especially the gentle giant Tree Smith, a compassionate man fleeing a tragic past who ends up working on a ranch in South Texas along the Rio Grande, circa 1880. The author, a native Texan, has good command of the Spanish language and of Mexican customs. In the way of criticism, the timeline jumps around a bit (the reader only gets a taste of Tree's life in the cavalry, then the book leaps ahead five years), and the author can be repetitive at times, often unnecessarily recapping a past event, which means the book could have been shorter without impacting the overall narrative. All-in-all, however, it's a thoroughly enjoyable read, with an interwoven love story and a heartwarming ending.

– Rocky Gibbons

Young Tree Smith and Cedar Jones enlist in the 4th Cavalry, contemporaneously with a reign of terror by serial killer Gato Montes along the border. His nasty habits include using metal spikes on his victims, cutting off ears, etc. After leaving the Army, Tree and Cedar transition into the ranching world of southwestern Texas, where Gato Montes ranges. Comanches, Comanches, Apaches, Mexicans and Texans all play roles in the story as the major characters collide. Author BJ Mayo knows how to paint a villain – Gato Montes is about as mean as they come. Several shortcomings, however, mar the novel: Serious inaccuracies about frontier cavalry; artificial-sounding dialog by Mexicans and Indians; and implausible plot segments.

– Loyd Uglow



written book takes you deep into a story not many have read about in the history books.

– Wm. Epps

ANNE HILLERMAN

The Sacred Bridge: A Leaphorn, Chee & Manuelito Novel

Harper Collins
Hardcover, 320 pages, \$26.99
HarperCollins.com

Jim Chee is hiking around Lake Powell when he discovers a body floating in the lake. The dead man is Navajo, the circumstances odd. When questions arise, Chee learns the man has been murdered. Suspects abound and Chee, drafted out of his district to investigate, has a lot of questions. Meanwhile, Bernie Manuelito, after witnessing a hit and run murder, goes undercover to investigate a hemp growing enterprise whose product may contain more of the “good stuff” than is legal. She’s thinking of taking the detective exam and believes this will help make up her mind – as long as she doesn’t become the next victim. Chee and Manuelito are great characters, and this may be my favorite book featuring them. Chee’s villain is a bit too easy to spot, but the history surrounding the area is riveting.

– Carol Crigger

RED JOHNSON

Billy “The Kid”: Peter Pan of the Old West: A Historical Novel

CreateSpace
Paperback, 470 pages, \$16.99
Amazon.com

The longtime California resident who grew up on tales of Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett and Kit Carson and “Legends of the Gold Country,” turns to the legend of Billy the Kid in this historical novel with an interesting premise about the much-written-about Wild West figure. “Billy, The Kid was the Peter Pan of the American ‘old west,’” Johnson writes in the preface. “He just never grew up” Johnson’s pages about his research are interesting, and he does his homework. Far from your typical historical novel – there’s a section where Billy “Speaks for Himself” to “set the record straight” – it’s sure to ruffle historians’ feathers and leave some readers scratching their heads, but it’s anything but ordinary.

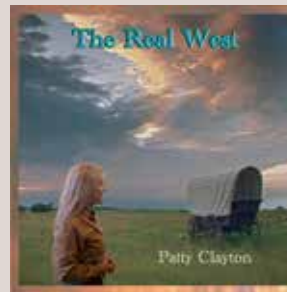
CARLA KELLY

Her Smile

Camel Press
Paperback, 226 pages, \$16.95
CamelPress.com

Fans who know Carla Kelly for her romances will enjoy her foray into the Nez Perce War of 1877. Elizabeth Stewart seems destined for Vassar in the fall of that year when she asks her father for a summer trip to Yellowstone Park. Soon, her parents and brother embark with her to the west. They tour Old Faithful and Lake with a guide and cook, but farther east they encounter the Nez Perce, who take only Elizabeth with them as they flee from the U.S. Army. The Nez Perce appear bedraggled and exhausted from pursuit, but as she journeys with them, she finds both kindness and sophistication in their manner. Though the romance comes late in the book, it is a great read.

– Linda Jacobs



PATTY CLAYTON

The Real West

Cimarron Wind Music, \$15
PattyClayton.com

As I write this in mid-May, wildfires are raging here in New Mexico, a really bad one near the historic Santa Fe Trail town of Las Vegas.

That’s why I found “Red Buffalo,” an older Clayton song revisited on this 11-track CD, especially poignant. According to the liner notes, Plains Indians called prairie fires the red buffalo.

*Stampeding across the prairie
Leaving black dirt behind.*



OLLIE REED JR.

Clayton, however, does not need an unfolding tragedy to make her work effective. She’s a gifted singer-songwriter. The International Western Music Association named her female performer of the year in 2004.

The Real West, her first CD in 10 years, contains six original songs, including “Prairie Passages” “A Call for Brides” and “Buffalo Chips,” all appealing lessons in the history and lore of the American West.

My favorite Clayton composition is the up-tempo, old-timey instrumental “Wagonhound,” featuring Patty on banjo, Ron Jones on fiddle and Ernie Martinez on mandolin. Spur winner Jon Chandler plays blues harmonica on Clayton’s humorous “Prairie Dog Blues.”



TEMPLETON THOMPSON

Get Back Up

Reve Records, \$25
TempletonThompson.com

It’s not difficult to figure that resilience is the theme of this 14-cut CD by Texas native and Nashville songwriter Thompson.

It starts off with “Recover” and there are three songs – “When I Get That Pony Rode,” “In This Rodeo” and the title track – about getting back in the saddle after getting pitched. The best of these, the one that shows Thompson’s pretty voice to best advantage, is “Get Back Up.”

Thompson wrote or co-wrote all the songs. Michael Martin Murphey joins her on “Ride a Wide Circle.” But my favorite is “Dark Horses & Longshots” because it reminds me of Rich Strike, the 80-1 horse that won the Kentucky Derby this year.

*You think these legs ain’t long enough
You think I’m not strong enough to win this race
Well, eat my dust*

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

JEFFREY J. MARIOTTE

O'Meara's Gold

Wolfpack Publishing
Paperback, 261 pages, \$14.99
WolfpackPublishing.com

Jeffery J. Mariotte has launched his "Cody Cavanaugh Western Series" with *O'Meara's Gold*, and the bullets are flying. At the end of the Civil War, Cody is fortunate enough to have survived not only the battles, but also a brutal stay in a Confederate prison where so many other Union soldiers perished. But he still has a mission that will take years to complete and lead him deep into the untamed West. Sean O'Meara, Cody's closest comrade and protector in Tattnell Prison, asks for one final promise as he lies dying. Before being captured, O'Meara seized and hid a healthy amount of Confederate gold, and he hopes that when the war ends, his last and only friend will retrieve the gold and deliver it to O'Meara's fiancé. Cody vows to fulfill his dying friends request, and thus his future and this story unfold.

– Greg Hunt

LEE MARTIN

In Mysterious Ways

Outskirts Press
Paperback, 217 pages, \$19.95

Lee Martin, best-known for her fast-paced traditional Westerns, turns to contemporary California in this thriller. The plot involves a young woman, abandoned at birth, and her young son; an Army veteran-turned-rancher who says the girl is the spitting image of his long-lost love; and a scheming

ne'er-do-well who believes the girl is from a rich family and will stop at nothing to get rich quick. Throw in a kind-hearted deputy, the villain's sister, a local festival at a small lake town and you get an easy-to-read novel that will appeal to fans who like thrillers that are character-driven, without profanity or graphic violence and end with the quintessential happy-ever-after (unless you're rooting for the bad guy).

– Johnny D. Boggs

EDWARD MASSEY

Forever Sheriff

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 330 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

In *Forever Sheriff*, Edward Massey continues his series on the intergenerational Simms lawmen. In 1905, Summit County, Utah, is experiencing continuing strife between cattlemen and sheep ranchers. Mark Simms is sworn in as a deputy by his father, John Simms. The young deputy's first assignment is to investigate the murder of a cowboy gunned down on the McCormick ranch. To complicate the investigation, there is long-standing bad blood between the Simms family and the McCormicks. Massey displays his deep understanding of the land, the environment, and the struggles of the early settlers. *Forever Sheriff* takes you from the saddle to the Model T, and you will find the trip exciting.

– John Neely Davis

JACK MATTHEWS

Death at La Osa: A Pueblo Tribal Police Mystery

Sunstone Press
Paperback, 243 pages, \$22.95
SunstonePress.com

The book contains 19 extra pages of history, anthropology, a reader's guide, literature, additional reading, acknowledgements and an afterward, which leads this reader to wonder why the author didn't write a nonfiction book. Among other things, the information about turquoise is extremely interesting and not only to jewelry aficionados. As to the story, I liked the characters, the basic murder mystery and the setting. There were POV problems and characters who didn't seem relevant to the story. The dialogue is quite stilted and there's not a lot of tension considering it is a mystery. But even with flaws, it is a story worth the read, leading to greater understanding of the various tribal cultures.

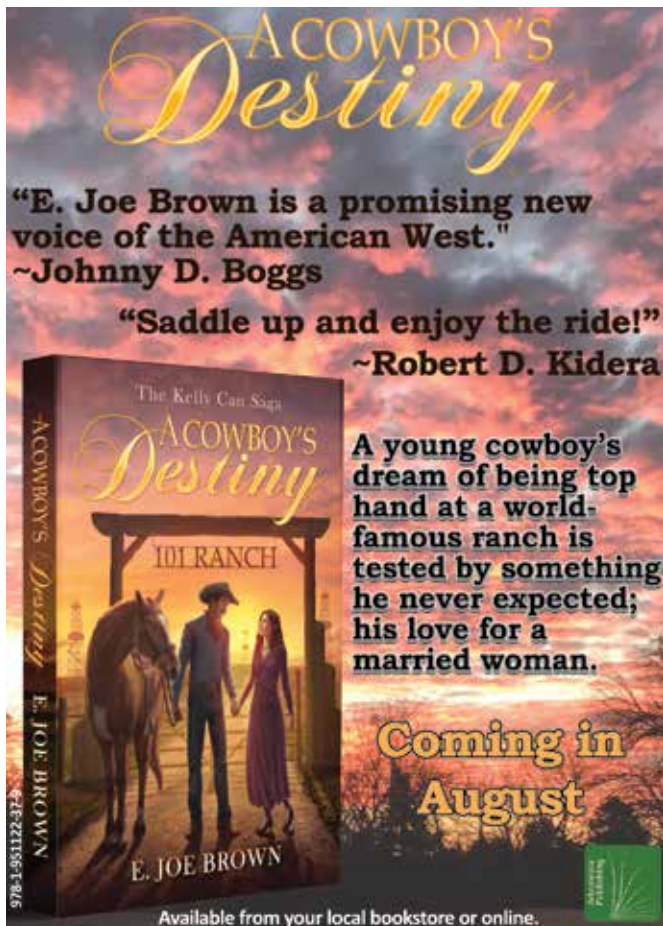
– Carol Crigger

TERRENCE McCAULEY

Blood on the Trail: A Jeremiah Halstead Western: No. 1

Pinnacle
Mass-market paperback, 320 pages, \$8.99
KensingtonBooks.com

Deputy U.S. marshals are generally tough guys in Western fiction, and Jeremiah Halstead – the latest hero from Terrence McCauley – is certainly tough, young, and human enough to know there's no good reason for giving cutthroats much of a chance when they might kill you in cold blood. In this first installment of a new series, McCauley delivers a tense, action-packed Western as the young deputy brings a prisoner to a small Montana town and learns that Silver Cloud offers



no silver lining or respite but trouble, especially when you can't tell who might be willing to help you or shoot you down like a dog. A fun, entertaining read.

MAX McCOY

American Odyssey: A Ghost Rifle Western

Pinnacle Books

Paperback, 334 pages, \$8.99

KensingtonBooks.com

Max McCoy's complex hero, Jack Picaro, continues the search for his lost Ghost Rifle, an unerring weapon that rings distinctively like a bell when fired. In the second book of the series, Picaro settles in relative peace with Sky, daughter of an Arikara war chief, until a monstrous, dying madman bursts through the door. This begins a yearslong trek, chocked with Homeric references and Greek allegory, as Picaro is hired to locate several missing cavalymen and encounters fur trappers, a revenge-seeking Crow woman and dozens of colorful backcountry characters. Meanwhile, young twins April and Augustus try to puzzle together the identity of their father while drifting from one river con game to the next. Readers will be left eager to take up the tale in Book 3.

– Micki Fuhrman

ROBERT LEE MURPHY

Bozeman Paymaster: A Tale of the Fetterman Massacre

Five Star Publishing

Hardcover, 454 pages, \$25.95

Gale.com/five-star

This story of the Fetterman massacre is told from the first-person perspective of Zachary Wakefield, a paymaster's clerk. The author, a former Army paymaster, uses his experience and historical research to provide a fresh perspective of an event that has been the subject of numerous books, fiction and nonfiction. In chronological order, the story proceeds with historical accuracy and plenty of action. The author provides a satisfying solution to the problem posed by his first-person narrator: How will Zachary survive the massacre? With plenty of interesting and esoteric detail of paymaster duties and a token love story, the story marches briskly in short chapters.

– Tom Carpenter

ANN PARKER

The Secret in the Wall: A Silver Rush Mystery

Poisoned Pen Press

Paperback, 384 pages, \$15.99

SourceBooks.com

In this eighth book of the series, Inez Stannert, after leaving the silver boomtown of Leadville behind, is settled in San Francisco with her ward, Antonia Gizzi. Inez has recently begun loaning female entrepreneurs money to start their own businesses. This time she's fronted boarding house owner Moira Krause's expansion. During the grand opening, a skeleton falls out of the wall, followed by a glass eye rolling across the floor and a bag of double eagles from the San Francisco mint. Inez, along with detective Walter de Bruijn, is set to discover who this long-dead person might be, and how he ended up in the walls of the house. The quest is not without danger and will put Inez and Antonia at risk. Strong

writing, vivid descriptions, and intriguing characters paint an accurate picture of life in the late 1800s and is a trademark of Ann Parker's works. Not to be missed.

– Carol Crigger

RICHARD PROSCH (editor)

Six-Gun Justice: Western Stories

Six-Gun Justice Podcast

Paperback, 355 pages, \$12.99

In one story, an outlaw gets played for a fool by a partner who's much more than she seems. In another, an aging shootist must decide whether to turn himself in or go out guns blazing. Each of the 13 stories in the inaugural anthology from the publishing arm of a popular Western podcast crackles with action, adventure and agonizing moral decisions. The collection, edited by *Six-Gun Justice* co-host Richard Prosch and with an introduction by co-host Paul Bishop, bills itself as perhaps "the first ever anthology connected to a podcast," and it doesn't disappoint. These are Western tales written by and for lovers of the genre.

– Austin Wright

JEFF R. SPALSBURY

The Fire Huntress

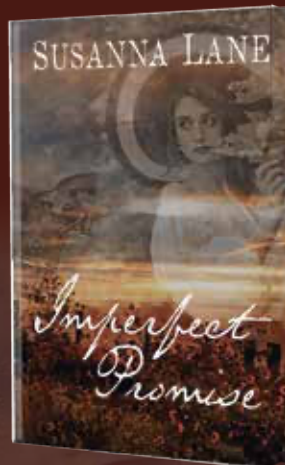
Self-Published

Paperback, 281 Pages, \$24.99

In the fifth of six titles in the author's "The Hunt Series," a small band of Indians, along with the citizens of Chester-ville, Wyoming, are worried about an encroaching prairie

"Imperfect Promise" is ...

A unique tale of heartbreak and hardship on the Great Plains where ranch empires were built against a harsh landscape. Those with the will to overcome odds had the best chance of enduring changing times. Cortland Enders has one chance to escape prison; accept a distasteful business arrangement disguised as a marriage with the ranch widow, Sienna Harris. She is determined to see her late husband's dream survive. Lark Garrin is running from danger when she accepts the offer as Sienna's companion. When violence threatens their lives and legacy, Cortland resurrects his skill with the gun to protect both the woman he loves and the legacy that hangs in the balance.



The 2022 Western Writers of America Winner of the Spur Award for Historical Romance

Visit susannalane.com for more information.

Available from : Amazon | Five Star Publishing | And other book stores

fire, the *Fire Huntress* of the title. Everyone, that is, except Asher Grubel, who plans to take advantage of the fire by robbing the train, stagecoach and several businesses in town at the same time. Segments about the Indian tribe, the fire-fight and Grubel's attempt to rob the town are well written and entertaining. But the interaction and dialogue among Chesterfield's residents make Pollyanna look like Debbie Downer. Sadly, the sappy dialogue, which takes away any suspense as to how the story will conclude, makes *The Fire Huntress* crash and burn.

— James J. Griffin

JULIA SULLIVAN

Bone Necklace

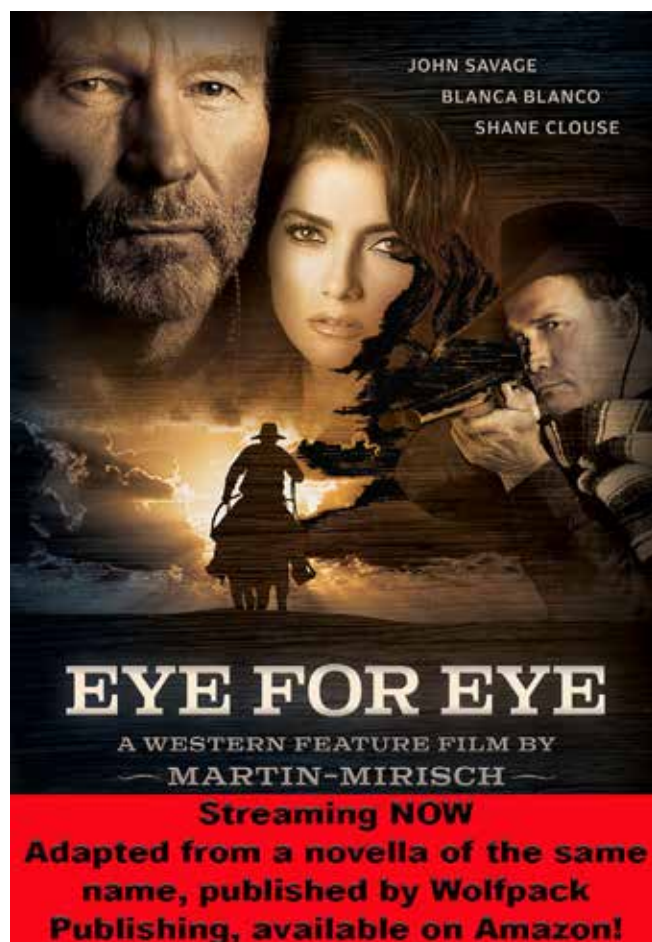
BrandyLane Publishers

Paperback, 302 pages, hardcover, paperback, \$28.95, \$16.95

BrandyLanePublishers.com

This is one of the best researched novels I have encountered, because I too, investigated the Nez Perce war for several of my published novels. Julia Sullivan tells the story from the points of view of both Nez Perce characters and a soldier who rode with General Oliver Otis Howard. The author includes correspondence between Howard and General Sherman, who commanded the west, and makes the reader feel the tragedy from the points of both the Nez Perce and the soldiers who pursued them. This book brought me to tears many times with its exquisite vocabulary, raw emotion and a sense of helplessness that maintains hope.

— Linda Jacobs



CYNTHIA SWANSON (editor)

Denver Noir

Akashic Books

Paperback, 264 pages, \$16.95

AkashicBooks.com

Noir isn't everyone's cup of bitter tea. People in *noir* fiction don't experience good endings; at best they find *bad* good endings, and you'll find all sorts in these pages. So, if upbeat, hopeful finishes are your thing, pass this one by. But if you enjoy compelling, well-crafted chronicles of people living on the edge of desperation, fighting dark impulses and, more often than not, losing the battle, you'll find plenty to like in this grim collection. It kicks off with multi-Spur winner David Heska Wambli Weiden's excellent story of a small-time lawyer finding the warrior spirit of Geronimo within himself. The one traditionally Western tale, by editor Swanson, follows a gravedigger faced with an unpleasant task. This collection is an eclectic mix, but one that's certain to appeal to anyone not afraid of a midnight stroll through the dark and seamy side of life.

— J.R. Sanders

MARK WARREN

The Westering Trail Travesties: Five Little-Known Tales of the Old West That Probably Ought to A' Stayed That Way

Five Star Publishing

Hardcover, 407 pages, \$25.95

Gale.com/five-star

Head west. But first grab a copy of Mark Warren's newest book *The Westering Trail Travesties* for the ride. These five little-known tales of the Old West are also perfect entertainment for your evenings by the campfire. The first three tales plunge the reader into a world of parody that will have you laughing out loud. Warren's imaginative writing is embellished with poetic devices and some elements of futurism, but remains faithful to the time period. Fans of the Old West and aficionados won't be disappointed as some of their favorite Western historical figures and outlaw gangs play supporting roles. The last two stories of the book are vignettes that explore the fates of its protagonists. With a few plot twists, each story packs a surprise ending for the reader.

— Sue Ready

TIM WASHBURN

Stampede

Pinnacle

Mass-market paperback, 458 Pages, \$8.99

KensingtonBooks.com

Most readers of Westerns are aware of the land rush of 1889 when more than 50,000 would-be settlers charged into a 2-million-acre area of western Oklahoma known as Unassigned Lands. With *Stampede*, the third novel in the Rocking R Ranch Western series, Tim Washburn puts a face on some of these people. The Ridgeway family claimed thousands of acres of land and, through their tenacity, had overcome droughts, rustlers, and illegal herders. But now they are facing something new, an onslaught of land-hungry settlers who are determined to stake claims of their own and who have little regard for property rights or the lives of others. Washburn writes in other genres, but his skills in bringing the Old West alive are undoubtedly formidable.

— John Neely Davis

POETRY

SUSAN CUMMINS MILLER

Making Silent Stones Sing: Poems

Finishing Line Press

Paperback, 25 pages, \$14.99

FinishingLinePress.com

The relatively small size of this poetry chapbook of 18 poems belies its sweeping scope of geologic time, geographic space and intimate exploration of the twisting, steep trails of the human heart. These poems are not only paeans to the bleak beauty and mysteries of Western landscapes but also to the magical possibilities of language employed as only a skilled poet may employ it. From the first poem to the last, the reader encounters the objective prowess of a scientist (the poet is a field geologist) mingled seamlessly with the lyrical sensibilities of an accomplished wordsmith (the poet is also an award-winning, widely published “woman of letters”).

– Larry D. Thomas

JOHN D. NESBITT

Trails and Crossings

RR Productions

CD, 21 tracks, \$13

JohnDNesbitt.com

Fans of John D. Nesbitt know that characters in his novels might sing a song or recite a poem. Nesbitt has won Spurs for fiction and poetry, and this audio CD includes 21 poems, all written and recited by Nesbitt. In 2018, singer-songwriter W.C. Jameson recorded *In a Large and Lonesome Land*, a CD of Nesbitt’s songs, a handful of which Nesbitt recites here. It’s easy to picture a cowboy singing some of these verses while night-herding, but “Ella Watson” reveals that Nesbitt can write in free verse, too. Nesbitt has an ear for 19th Century language, and, had Nesbitt been born in the 1800s, Jack Thorp probably would have collected many of these songs/poems in *Songs of the Cowboys* (1908).

– Johnny D. Boggs

JUVENILE

KELLY HALPIN (illustrator)

Local Baby: Wyoming

Arcadia Children’s Books

Board book, 15 pages, \$13

ArcadiaPublishing.com

This new series of regional books for children up to 3 years old kicks off with a radiantly illustrated look at Wyoming. From Yellowstone to Cheyenne, and Devils Tower to the Snake River, Wyoming artist Kelly Halpin captures the state’s wonders that should dazzle crawlers and toddlers. Food and wildlife, and Western history (Buffalo Bill Cody and Fort Laramie) are not overlooked. “Babies start pointing at people, places and objects they recognize when they’re about 9 or 10 months old,” says Nancy Ellwood, Arcadia Children’s Books’ publishing director. “So how great is it that a little one who

points at a local landmark outside then encounters that landmark in a book at home.”

JIM JONES (author) and **KAMEE YOUNG** (illustrator)

Bolo the Brave: True Friend (Book II)

Self-published

Paperback, 45 pages, \$13.95

JimJonesWestern.com

Illustrated with line drawings, this sweet story feels like a throwback to simpler days. Ten-year-old Charlie lives with his Grandpa, a chuckwagon cook. Bolo, a dog with a crooked nose, is Charlie’s only friend. When Charlie intervenes between a bully named Jed and a disabled boy named Chance, Chance resents Charlie’s unasked-for help. Jed becomes injured and trapped on a slope above a rattlesnake nest and needs help from the boys he has teased. Chance, Bolo and Charlie set aside their differences and come to his rescue, showing that people with disabilities are not helpless and deserve to be treated with respect, and that good people are willing to do the right thing, even to those who’ve wronged them.

– Jennifer Bohnhoff

MARIANA LLANOS (author) and

MARIANA RUIZ JOHNSON (illustrator)

Run, Little Chaski! An Inka Trail Adventure

Barefoot Books

Hardcover, paperback, 32 pages, \$16.99, \$9.99

BarefootBooks.com

The author is Peruvian-bred and proud of her country’s rich and colorful Inka history, which comes through loud and clear in this beautifully illustrated children’s book. A chaski was a fleet-footed royal messenger during Inka times, one entrusted to deliver important messages and packages via a relay system throughout the vast territory. Many of the words in the text are Quechua, and I found myself often looking back and forth between the story and the glossary in the back to be able to understand what was being related. But that’s the purpose of this book – to teach young readers about this ancient civilization of the Americas. The message is also to never give up and always be strong, swift, sharp and ... kind.

– Rocky Gibbons

S.D. NELSON

Crazy Horse and Custer: Born Enemies

Abrams Books for Young Readers

Hardcover, 144 pages, \$19.99

AbramsBooks.com

In this dual biography of Lakota leader Crazy Horse and 7th Cavalry Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, Spur-winning author-artist S.D. Nelson follows the lives of two warriors in the turbulent times that led to the 1876 battle at the Little Big Horn. Nelson, a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, again shows why he is considered one of the best writers-illustrators for young readers. He paints a balanced portrait of the two men, showing the similarities and differences between the Lakota and the white soldier. This book, aimed at readers from grades five through nine, is written and beautifully illustrated with a focus on history and humanity.

– Johnny D. Boggs