

POETRY

BETSY ORIENT BERNFELD

The Cathedral Is Burning

Finishing Line Press
Paperback, 63 pages, \$21.99
FinishingLinePress.com

In *The Cathedral Is Burning*, lawyer-librarian-author Betsy Orient Bernfeld writes about loss, hope, nature, dreams, people and places, from Western deserts to the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris. In “Zero Percent Contained,” about the 2016 Cliff Creek Fire near Bondurant, Arizona, she illustrates the feeling of hopelessness while waiting for the mandatory evacuation order: “What would be the use of saving/my old raggedy clothes from the flames?” Bernfeld also honors real heroes – great-great-great-grandmothers who delivered nine children each (same father; his first wife died, age 38, after giving birth to No. 9). Her style is original and her words well-chosen, whether she’s taking the viewpoint of an undocumented woman walking with her daughter, or an urban wife-mother connecting with a coyote.

– Johnny D. Boggs

ABRAHAM HOFFMAN

Boot Hill Anthology

Los Angeles Corral of Westerners
Paperback, 104 pages, no price listed
LAWesterners.org

Excited to read a book patterned after the iconic *Spoon River Anthology* (Edgar Lee Masters, 1915), Abraham Hoffman’s *Boot Hill Anthology* quickly became one I couldn’t wait to set down. Without the disciplined rhythm of meter, the rhymes are a distraction, the lines lacking crispness from paring down poetry demands. Set in the late 1880s, Hoffman writes gritty and historically accurate descriptions of fictional characters’ life-and-death conflicts journeying to the graveyard but lacks Masters’s craft and intrigue. Introduction: “Many a Western town has a Boot Hill/Where permanent residents lie pretty still.” Looking for a quick visit back in time but not concerned about elements of poetry or length of epitaphs, these narratives may be for you.

– Betty Lynne McCarthy

NONFICTION

KENT BLANSETT, CATHLEEN D. CAHILL and **ANDREW NEEDHAM** (editors)

Indian Cities: Histories of Indigenous Urbanization

University of Oklahoma Press
Paperback, 332 pages, \$32.95
OUPress.com

Contributors to this important anthology upend the stereotype of Indigenous people living on reservations remote from urban centers. The dozen articles demonstrate that Native people established cities prior to European arrival – think Tenochtitlan and the Pueblos – and have lived in settler colonial towns and cities to the present day. Economic and political pressures have compelled Native people to move and reside in Charleston, South Carolina; Minneapolis; Washington, D.C.; Rapid City, South Dakota; Dallas; and other urban places. They have endured racial prejudice, health issues and limited job opportunities, but have managed to resist assimilation and loss of cultural values. Each article offers extensive documentation and includes accounts of Indigenous people’s personal experiences in creating community organizations, dealing with the patronizing policies of Bureau of Indian Affairs personnel and the challenges of poverty and illness. This book presents its topic from a largely Indigenous perspective, informing readers that Native people have their own stories to tell.

– Abraham Hoffman

ROBYN L. COBURN

Dervish Dust: The Life and Words of James Coburn

Potomac Books
Hardcover, 361 pages, \$36.95
NebraskaPress.unl.edu

James Coburn figured out that acting was all about the space that takes place in between lines of dialogue. “I call it telling a truth for a living,” he said. “It’s not lying. You try to tell the truth.” Coburn used those in-between moments to fully flesh out the character of Britt, the knife-throwing member of *The Magnificent Seven*, a role that had less than a dozen lines of dialogue.

The Coburn mystique was born in that film: lanky, laconic, likable. And mysterious. That approach carried him through movies for more than 40 years. Coburn’s daughter-in-law, Robyn L. Coburn, relied heavily on audiotape interviews Coburn gave near the end of his life (2002) to fashion this affectionate, honest portrait of a guy from Laurel, Nebraska, who became a movie star almost by accident. Robyn Coburn candidly criticizes a lot of the misfires Coburn acted in over the years, but at the heart of this memoir is James Coburn’s gradual understanding of what love is, and how important it is to daily living.

– Robert Nott

CHRISTOPHER CONWAY and **ANTOINETTE SOL** (editors)

The Comic Book Western: New Perspectives on a Global Genre

University of Nebraska Press
Paperback, 310 pages, \$30
NebraskaPress.unl.edu

One might expect Western comics to be a uniquely American phenomenon, but this academic tome declares otherwise. Each chapter, written by an expert in the medium from a different country, explores the history and the sociological impact of comics and graphic novels about the American West in that country. The use of various authors necessarily involves changes of tone and approach. The chapter on Mexican comics provides an overview of the industry and a range of titles, for example, but the chapters on France (*Blueberry*) and Japan (*Mayme Angel*) each focus on that single title and what it means to readers there. Stories of how different nations tell stories that resonate to their citizens using the settings and tropes of the America West make for interesting reading.

– Jeffrey J. Mariotte

SHANNON EGAN and **MARTHE TOLNES FJELLESTAD**

Across the West and Toward the North: Norwegian and American Landscape Photography

The University of Utah Press
Hardcover, paperback, 229 pages,
\$69.95, \$34.94
UofUPress.com

Much of the 19th Century was under the spell of German *Naturphilosophie*, the view that there is no separation between the self and the world, humankind and nature. Additionally inspired by Manifest Destiny and Darwinism, landscape photographers such as William Henry Jackson, Timothy O’Sullivan, Frank Jay Haynes and Carleton Watkins rushed to the American West to document Eden. No less talented were their Norwegian colleagues such as Knud Knudsen, Marcus Selmer and Anders Beer Wilse – who is considered Norway’s finest landscape photographer of the early 20th Century. This publication presents excellent essays by a number of acknowledged, international experts accompanied by more than 100 rarely viewed, vintage images of alpine settings in America and Norway. Photography captures life by holding it still, which is so evident in this fine offering.

– Larry Len Peterson

CHARLES ELTON

Cimino: The Deer Hunter, Heaven’s Gate, and the Price of a Vision

Abrams Press
Hardcover, 348 pages, \$28
AbramsPress.com

Few Western movies inspired more controversy than *Heaven’s Gate*, Michael Cimino’s 1980 range-war epic. Its \$11.5 million budget swelled to \$40 million. Critics hated its excesses, Roger Ebert calling its three hours and 40 minutes “the most scandalous cinematic waste I have ever seen.” In 1985, Steven Bach’s *Final Cut* described the film’s behind-the-camera drama. Now a fascinating Cimino biography provides new production details, both for *Heaven’s Gate* and the four other films he directed, especially 1978’s *The Deer Hunter*, for which he received an Oscar. Cimino’s life turns out to have been as fictional as anything in his films. He re-invented himself so many times (lying about his age, height, military experience, boyhood upbringing and possibly gender-changing cosmetic surgery) that he told an interviewer, “I Googled myself one time. I don’t know most of the people I’ve been.” A semi-recluse for the last 20 years of his life, he supposedly wrote 50 screenplays (some of them about Native Americans) and left them in a jumble after an earthquake. That sort of chaos is what author Charles Elton

sorts through in a compelling biography that resembles a detective story. Numerous photographs.

– David Morrell

MELODY GROVES

Before Billy the Kid: The Boy Behind the Legendary Outlaw

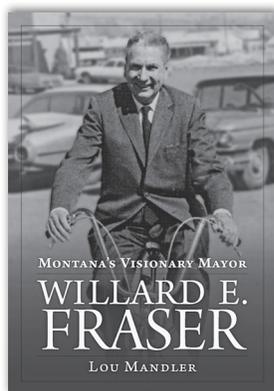
TwoDot
Paperback, 169 pages, \$21.95
TwoDotBooks.com

Famous characters walk fully grown into the history books; but they were almost always someone else before they became famous, or infamous. Situations and circumstances turned them into who they are now remembered as, but usually who they were before their renown is often overlooked. In this nifty little book, Melody Groves gives us a well-researched peek into the early life and times of the historical figure known as Billy the Kid. Young Henry “Kid” Antrim was a product of his times, tough, resourceful and well-liked by many, but not always making the right life choices. I encourage you to pick up this book and discover the early life and later history of Melody’s personal favorite “Outlaw.” You’ll certainly enjoy it.

– Rod Timanus

Montana’s Visionary Mayor

Willard E. Fraser by LOU MANDLER



A political gadfly, a raconteur of the first order, and an indefatigable environmentalist before the term became fashionable, Willard Fraser was the progressive and controversial mayor of Billings during the turbulent 1960s.

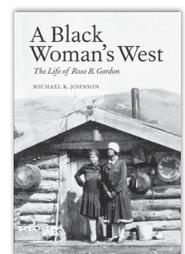
376 pages, 95 black and white photos, ISBN 9781940527918, softcover, \$26.95

A Black Woman’s West

The Life of Rose B. Gordon

by MICHAEL K. JOHNSON

Born in Montana Territory, Rose Beatrice Gordon (1883–1968) was the daughter of an African American couple that migrated west in the early 1880s. The story of her life in Montana offers unique insights into the rural West in the twentieth century.



256 pages, photos, ISBN 9781940527970, softcover, \$24.95



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JILL HUNTING

For Want of Wings: A Bird with Teeth and a Dinosaur in the Family

University of Oklahoma Press
Paperback, 244 pages, \$21.95
OUPress.com

Jill Hunting gives fair warning that the nature of history is chancy, surprising, and full of unlikely intersections. That is an apt description of her account of her great-grandfather Thomas H. Russell's discovery of a rare fossil, *Herperornis regalis*. This book is a fascinating glimpse into the science of paleontology. It combines memoir, autobiography, biography, speculation and poetry into a coherent whole. At its center is the author's search into her brilliant ancestor's journey as a member of the famous 1872 Yale College Scientific Expedition. Hunting's approach of soft-focus realism permits a foray into some of her great-great-grandfather's encounters with abolitionist John Brown, descriptions of 19th Century medical practices, stunning information about Yale University, competition among paleontologists, and contemporary environmental movements. Yet, all these issues and persons manage to relate to the curious little bird-dinosaur at the heart of her book, which was immortalized by PBS as a cartoon character, Jess Herperornis. *For Want of Wings* is complex, with a refreshingly varied path to narrative history.

— Charlotte Hinger

PAUL D. LACK

Searching for the Republic of the Rio Grande: Northern Mexico and Texas, 1838-1840

Texas Tech University Press
Hardcover, 213 pages, \$39.95
TTUPress.org

The stillborn Republic of the Rio Grande occupied center stage along that river during three brief years, but it was part of a larger liberal movement that captivated northern Mexicans from the birth of Federalism in 1824 to the Mexican Revolution of 1911-1920. The book traces the short history of efforts to break away from an increasingly oppressive centralized government immediately following the Texas Revolution. The would-be republic failed largely because its leaders unwittingly triggered a wave of Mexican nationalism by

enlisting aid from ill-disciplined Texan volunteers. Paul D. Lack's narrative follows the movement's leaders through the ebb and flow of their military fortunes, focusing especially on Antonio Canales, who long figured prominently in the confused melting pot along the river. Numerous others, most Mexican, some Texan, share the stage. A "Cast of Characters" section helps the non-expert keep track of those individuals. This is a fine addition to border history.

— Loyd Uglow

MARK ORWOLL

John Wayne Speaks: The Ultimate John Wayne Quote Book

St. Martin's Griffin
Hardcover, 292 pages, \$17.99
StMartins.com

For John Wayne fans, and maybe some who aren't, this book is an enjoyable read, reference and tribute. Watching nearly all of Wayne's more than 170 films, from bit parts to starring roles, as well as interviews and TV guest appearances, author Mark Orwoll catalogues more than a thousand lines of dialogue, soliloquies and banter from Wayne's Westerns, war movies and all those in between. It began, he says, with his quest to find the film in which Wayne said, "Shoot low. They might be crawlin'." (He was surprised to discover Wayne didn't say it, but that singing cowboy Monte Hale did.) Assigning quotes to categories and subcategories such as "Whippersnappers" and "I've Got a Bad Feeling About This," Orwoll includes famous lines: "By God, she reminds me of me" from *True Grit*, and the not-so-familiar: "Holy mother of the pyramids!" from *Legend of the Lost* (Wayne's character was drunk when he said it). Along with production notes and capsule reviews on every film — from the great to the groaners — *John Wayne Speaks* is a joy for movie lovers.

— Thomas D. Clagett

VALERIE SHERER MATHES

Amelia Stone Quinton and the Women's National Indian Association

University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 291 pages, \$55
OUPress.com

Valerie Sherer Mathes's biography of Amelia Stone Quinton is a scrupulously fair analysis of the exhaustive efforts of a tenacious woman determined to save the American Indians. Quinton was

outraged by the United States' history of moral wrongs against the tribes. A founder of the Women's National Indian Association and a matchless orator and fund-raiser during her long life, Quinton secured financing for irrigation projects, physicians, hospitals, schools, Indian homes and secondary education. During her long life, she also fought boldly with corrupt Indian agents and double-dealing legislators. Her perception of justice was a product of her times. Quinton whole-heartedly embraced assimilation and severalty. She was an ardent supporter of Senator Henry Laurens Dawes's legislation that would break up the reservation system and parcel out the land to individuals. In 1881 she championed the Dawes Act by circulating a petition in every state and territory. It was 400 feet long and signed by 100,000 individuals from nearly 1,000 churches. A prime example of unintended consequences, this legislature resulted in further exploitation of Indians. Mathes's splendid narrative biography will be especially engaging to those interested in women's studies, Indian history, political history or cultural history.

— Charlotte Hinger

SCOTT MCGEE

Danger on the Silver Screen: 50 Films Celebrating Cinema's Greatest Stunts

Running Press/Turner Classic Movies
Hardcover, 288 pages, \$25.99
RunningPress.com

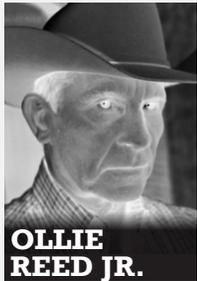
Scott McGee (senior programming director for Turner Classic Movies) profiles 50 stunt-packed films. While most of the selections (*Ben-Hur*, for example) aren't Westerns, four receive extensive analysis (*The Great K&A Train Robbery*, *Stagecoach*, *How the West Was Won* and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*). Numerous other Westerns (*Shane*, *The Wild Bunch*, *Bite the Bullet*, etc.) are mentioned. There are lengthy descriptions of Tom Mix's stunts as well as those by Yakima Canutt (particularly his famous leap onto a team of horses in *Stagecoach* and his use of the controversial Flying W horse-tripping device). Cliff Lyons, Loren James, Joe and Bill Yrigoyen and Richard Farnsworth are some of the other stunt people included here, as well as Polly Burson, the first female stunt coordinator (*Westward the Women*). Bob Morgan's disastrous train accident in *How the West Was Won* emphasizes

WESTERN MUSIC

Lassoing the magic of Gene Autry's Christmas songs

What vocalist singing what song says Christmas to you?

A lot of people would likely give the nod to Bing Crosby crooning "White Christmas." Others may prefer Nat King Cole's version of "The Christmas Song" or Eartha Kitt's saucy "Santa Baby."



OLLIE REED JR.

But back in the 1950s, when I was a cowboy-crazy kid, there was no doubt my choice was Western movie hero Gene Autry singing "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer," or "Frosty the Snowman," or "Here Comes Santa Claus," or ...

Autry recorded lots of Christmas songs. Part of their appeal to me as a pre-teen child were the subjects – Christmas Eve, a snowman that comes to life, a reindeer whose bright nose saves Christmas.

But for a boy whose life revolved around Western radio programs, TV shows and comic books, the fact it was Autry singing them was a big part of it, too. He was one of my idols. I watched his singing-cowboy movies on my Maw Maw Stallone's black-and-white TV.

In the movies, he sang "Back in the Saddle" and "South of the Border," but his biggest seller was "Rudolph ...," which sold 1.79 million records in 1949, the year it was released, and has sold more than 12 million since then.

His first Christmas hit, however, was "Here Comes Santa Claus," which sold 2 million records after its release in December 1947. While most of his holiday hits were written by

others, Autry penned this one himself, inspired by what he observed while riding his horse, Champion, in Hollywood's 1946 Santa Claus Lane Parade.

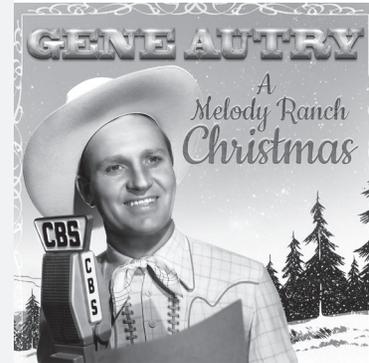
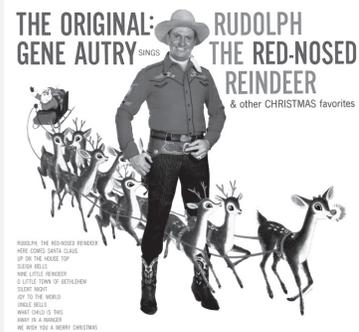
The story goes that Autry and Champion were just ahead of Santa Claus's sleigh, and as he rode along the parade route Gene heard kids yelling "Here comes Santa Claus."

I can't return to those cherished Christmases of more than 60 years ago, but every holiday season Autry's music gets me closer. I have the CD *Gene Autry's Christmas Favorites* (CBS Records, 1989). It's available on eBay.

Other Autry Christmas CDs, all on the Varèse Sarabande label, that can be found on eBay, Amazon or other outlets are *Gene Autry: The Complete Columbia Christmas Recordings* (2004), *The Original: Gene Autry Sings Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer & other Christmas Favorites* (2006) and *Gene Autry, a Melody Ranch Christmas* (2016).

Go find one for your kids, your grandkids or your great grandkids. Or for the kid you wish you were.

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



how dangerous stunts can be. Lavishly illustrated with hundreds of black-and-white and color photographs.

– David Morrell

SABINE N. MEYER

Native Removal Writing: Narratives of Peoplehood, Politics, and Law

University of Oklahoma Press
Paperback, 306 pages, \$29.95
OUPress.com

Surveying removal writings from John Ross to Robert Conley, Meyer tries to define "peoplehood," a slippery concept that eschews one culture's attempts to define another. James Earle Fraser's "End of the Trail" sculpture, meant as a sympathetic reflection of Native American woes, can also be seen as a racist rationalization. Native Americans are *not* finished; the sculpture is offensive. Meyer compellingly traces the Cherokee nation's denial of

tribal membership to freedmen – the descendants of slaves held by the Five Civilized tribes. Basing membership solely on blood, she argues, is a racist formula going back to the infamous Dawes Act. Some readers will find Meyer's arguments persuasive. Her prose is so dense, so mired in contemporary academese, that all will find her difficult to read.

– John Mort

WILLIAM C. PRATT

After Populism: The Agrarian Left on the Northern Plains, 1900-1960

South Dakota Historical Society Press
Hardcover, 338 pages, \$34.95
SDHSPress.com

With four decades of research and endnotes, covering a third of the book's 338 pages, this is a solidly written history on an under-researched topic: the farmer movements in North and South

Dakota, Minnesota and Montana after the Populist Revolt of the 1890s. William C. Pratt spends the first four chapters critiquing the work of historians, surveying the Upper Plains states and the challenges he faced in turning pages of old newspapers published in small towns. Never monolithic, Northern Plains farmers varied in ideology from Socialist to Progressive to Communist. They either supported or opposed Robert La Follette's 1924 presidential bid, endured the Great Depression, supported or opposed Henry Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign and faded away during the Cold War. Pratt succeeds in untangling the numerous acronyms of movement organizations and traces the activities of reformers and radicals who fought on behalf of farmers whose issues have been overlooked by historians more focused on urban radicalism.

– Abraham Hoffman

DON PRESNELL

Wandering The Wild, Wild West: A Critical Analysis of the CBS Television Series

McFarland & Company
Paperback, 215 pages, \$29.95
McFarlandBooks.com

The television series *The Wild Wild West* debuted on CBS on September 17, 1965, and ran for four seasons. Was *WWW* a Western, science fiction or spy story? Was it all of the above? Here is an entertaining examination of this “multi-layered, multi-genre hybrid narrative.” Don Presnell presents a “critical analysis ... [and] an extended treatment of the show’s narrative influences, approaches, and overall aesthetic.” There are synopses and candid analyses of each of the 104 episodes of the series, the two television “reunion” movies and the 1999 feature film. The episode synopses reveal a 1960s casting director’s dream talent pool: Michael Dunn, Ruta Lee, Agnes Morehead and Paul Fix, to name a few. The analyses pull no punches. Numerous graphics and charts illustrate the cross-pollinating influence of *WWW* on other series of the period. There are chapter notes, a wide-ranging bibliography and a serviceable index.

– Tom Carpenter

DEREK SCULTHORPE

Ruth Roman: A Career Portrait

McFarland & Company
Paperback, 214 pages, \$39.95
McFarlandBooks.com

Ruth Roman was one of those “caught in the middle” actresses – not as glamorous as Ava Gardner, not dramatically weighty enough to be a Barbara Stanwyck. She was a star, but one of the lesser lights in the waning days of the glory years of Warner Bros. Derek Sculthorpe makes no effort to over-rate her, calling Roman, quite appropriately, the “nearly girl” – representative of many contract players who maybe should have gotten better breaks and exploded into full-fledge stardom. Roman’s heyday was short – roughly 1950-1956 – and her best performances were in supporting roles in minor classics like *The Window* and *Champion* or starring roles in forgotten pictures like *Joe MacBeth*. Western film fans may be surprised to learn she didn’t like working in the genre, but that did not stop Hollywood from casting her in about a dozen Westerns. Few are good, but Sculthorpe rightly praises her work in 1956’s *Rebel in Town*, in which she plays a woman, grieving after the death of her child, who must find the strength and sensitivity to save her husband and community from a cloud of hate.

– Robert Nott

DAVID H. STRATTON

Tucumcari Tonite! The Story of Railroads, Route 66 & the Waning of a Western Town

University of New Mexico Press
Paperback, 364 pages, \$24.95
UNMPress.com

The town of Tucumcari, located on the eastern plains of New Mexico, was founded in 1902. It prospered as a hub for several railroads and as a tourist stop along Route 66, but Interstate 40, which bypassed the business district in the early 1980s, ended much of the tourist traffic, and trains rarely stop

there today. Tucumcari, though, will not go away. David H. Stratton, born and raised in the Quay County seat of government, has written a book that is much more than a parochial discourse on the fate of a wide place in the road. It is well-researched, comprehensive, detailed, insightful and eminently readable; one might even go so far as to describe it as a page-turner. The title, by the way, is taken from the dozens of billboard advertisements for the town that dotted old Route 66 roadsides from Oklahoma on the east to Arizona on the west. Some remain yet today. If any criticism of this book is to be noted, it would be that the quality of the 32 halftones is not particularly good.

– Don Bullis

DUSTIN TAHMAHKERA

Cinematic Comanches: The Lone Ranger in the Media Borderlands

University of Nebraska Press
Paperback, 263 pages, \$35
NebraskaPress.unl.edu

Yes, most of this book covers the overblown (\$215 million budget) 2013 movie *The Lone Ranger* (starring Johnny Depp as Tonto), which most critics found dreadful. But before you dismiss this on principle, take note that Comanche Dustin Tahmahkera also reshapes the clichéd and inaccurate depiction of the Comanches in film as the often nameless, brutal, merciless “savage.” (Although my Comanche friend and artist Nocona Burgess once told me: “We can be aggressive to a fault.”) Tahmahkera looks at 1956’s *The Searchers*, of course, quoting Comanche educator Augustine McCaffery’s thoughts: “Why can’t those Indians shoot better? ... It confused me, because my uncles and my dad were all good shots.” Tahmahkera also points out two important, if mostly forgotten, silents: 1908’s *The Bank Robbery*, with Comanche leader Quanah Parker in the cast, and the all-Comanche-and-Kiowa cast of *The Daughter of Dawn* (1920), both well-worth seeing. Tahmahkera writes with a great deal of humor and passion. He even might have some of us re-evaluating *The Lone Ranger*.

– Johnny D. Boggs

LOYD UGLOW

A Military History of Texas

University of North Texas Press
Hardcover, 448 pages, \$34.95
UNTPress.unt.edu

Is Texas history military history? Loyd Uglow believes it is, and documents nearly 500 years in his one-volume compendium on the Lone Star State. He makes a strong case for his position while taking the reader through twelve well-defined chapters, beginning with Pre-Columbian clashes of Native American tribes, into and through the colonization period, the Civil War, roles in two World Wars and others, culminating with an examination of its statewide 21st Century military presence. Uglow, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of North Texas, could have written a scholarly tome, but preferred to offer his audience an abbreviated narrative of the state’s military history, leaving them the option of understanding a broader picture or selecting a defined period to examine in further depth. He also avoids taking sides on opposing issues, recognizing the credibility of each view

while preferring the reader choose which might be more reliable. Abundant endnotes, along with primary and secondary sources, support a masterful presentation of which all Texans can be proud.

– Stan “Tex” Banash

HERMAN J. VIOLA

Warrior Spirit: The Story of Native American Patriotism and Heroism

University of Oklahoma Press
Paperback, 154 pages, \$19.95
OUPress.com

This slim book packs a large punch in destroying the outdated stereotype of cowboys and the U.S. Army fighting hostile Indians. In fact, as far back as the American Revolution, George Washington enlisted 2,000 Native Americans to fight the British. They also have served in the Marines, Navy and Air Force. A long history of prejudice, poverty and broken treaties has not prevented Indian men and women from many tribes from serving their country. Navajo Code Talkers earned fame for their service in World War II, but Indian tribes performed similar duties in the First World War. Herman J. Viola and several contributors profile the military careers of numerous men and women, many having earned awards ranging from the Medal of Honor to Silver and Bronze Stars, Purple Hearts and other recognitions of heroism. The National Native American Veterans Memorial was dedicated, appropriately enough, on Veterans Day, November 11, 2020.

– Abraham Hoffman

LINDA WOMMACK

From Sand Creek to Summit Springs: Colorado’s Indian Wars

Caxton Press
Paperback, 542 pages, \$25.95
CaxtonPress.com

Historically, the tragedy at Sand Creek is what customarily defines Colorado as an Indian wars site. However, in this new offering, Linda Wommack points out that the state was also the site of other notable Indian-white clashes: Beecher Island, Milk Creek and the finale at Summit Springs on July 11, 1869. Because of the controversy surrounding it, Sand Creek receives the most attention, however, the other sites are not left wanting. The book is organized chronologically, moving from Sand Creek to raids up and down the South Platte River Valley, to Beecher Island, Summit Springs and the Meeker Massacre. The Battle of Milk Creek completes this narrative. Additionally, the author uses comments from various participants to give the text a personal sense of the event. Throughout, there are appropriate photographs relevant to the events. Caxton Press has done its usual fine job of producing a fine quality book, although this reviewer found the tight print a bit difficult to read.

– Jerry Keenan

FICTION

JD ARNOLD

Rawhide Jake: Lone Star Fame

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 239 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

The second book in the Rawhide Jake series continues the story about the life of range detective Jonas V. “Rawhide Jake” Brighton. Jake is working undercover as a line rider on the Flying XC Ranch. The book is full of adventures as Jake and partner Wes Wilson recover stolen cattle and arrest or kill rustlers. However, Jake is not satisfied with just doing detective work. He starts a fencing business and sells windmills with Wes. Jake falls in love with Mary Jane after her husband dies, they get married, and Jake thinks of leaving the detective work. If you don’t mind significant page counts in a chapter, you will like this book.

– Lowell F. Volk

JOHNNY D. BOGGS

The Cobbler of Spanish Fort and Other Frontier Stories

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 231 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

This collection of Johnny D. Boggs’s short stories includes award winners, Southern tales from the author’s native South Carolina, his earliest works (written when he was still a newspaperman), some Civil War tales and some cowboy stories. Yes indeed ... something for everyone. In some respects, it was a trip down memory lane, as I had read many of the Spur- and other award-winning tales in prior publications, but there are many new ones here, including the title story. One of my favorites will always be “A Piano at Dead Man’s Crossing,” which earned Boggs his first Spur Award in 2002. I suppose I like it because I’ve always wondered what my great-great-grandmother’s pump organ would have to say if it could talk. And “Massacre at Chest of Drawers Mountain” will first make you laugh, then make you cry. Kudos to Five Star for issuing this comprehensive collection, which confirms the fact that Boggs, the most awarded author in WWA history, is a spectacular storyteller.

– Rocky Gibbons

JAMES J. GRIFFIN

The Shermans: South of the Border

DS Productions
Paperback, 156 pages, \$7.99
DSPublishingNetwork.com

In the sequel to *The Shermans* – yes, another series from James J. Griffin, the Texas Rangers’ best publicity agent – a bad hombre kidnaps Ranger Bruce Sherman’s wife and hauls her south of the border. It’s an obvious attempt to lure Sherman into an ambush in Mexico, where Rangers have no jurisdiction, but Sherman and his Ranger sons, Wyatt and Marshall, have no choice. They cross the Rio Grande on a personal vendetta. Readers not fluent in Spanish might need a Spanish-English dictionary handy, to translate conversa-

tions, but the action is, as in most Griffin novels, fast and furious, and the finale, as in any Griffin novel, satisfying.

– Johnny D. Boggs

JAMES HITT

Storm Riders

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 261 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

The Comanche wife of a white rancher gives birth to Waco Joseph Callahan in West Texas in the early 1880s. Waco, particularly despised by his white half-brother, Flynn, has an extraordinary way with animals, befriending a black stallion and a wolf. The mixed-race child eventually grows into something of a legend. The story takes place during Quanah Parker's Comanche reign and borrows much from the history of Charles Goodnight. The borrowing is done skillfully and well, leading to another finely crafted story by James Hitt.

– R.G. Yoho

MARK C. JACKSON

Blue Rivers of Heaven

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 272 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

From Texas to Louisiana's bone-melting swamps to the backwoods of Missouri, Zebadiah Creed's life is one of violence. We meet him in a New Orleans prison listening to the gallows being built outside his window. A last-minute reprieve is offered, but it comes at a price. Zeb has to kill Sam Houston. Zeb has more at stake than simply saving Houston's life. The woman he loves will be killed if he doesn't carry out the plotter's demands. Bloody, brutal days and nightmare nights bring political plots alive after the fight at the Alamo. Set in vengeful times, the writing is gritty and exciting. The story will keep you turning the pages to see who survives.

– Carol Crigger

CRAIG JOHNSON

Hell and Back

Viking
Hardcover, 352 pages, \$28
PenguinRandomHouse.com

Sheriff Walt Longmire awakens to the sound of bells, frozen to the ground in the middle of a street, with snow falling in his face. In what might be Walt's most puzzling adventure, he doesn't know where he is, barely recognizes any of the people he meets and has no idea why he is where he is. But he stands in front of the Fort Pratt Industrial Indian Boarding School and figures there's something real hinky about it. His job must be to find out what. Then there are the silver dollars that simply appear. And the time of 8:17 that never seems to change. It's hard to review this book and not give spoilers, so I'll just say that readers will become reacquainted – as does Walt – with characters from previous books. There's a mystery to be solved and wrongs to be righted, which Walt does in his unique, inimitable way.

– Carol Crigger



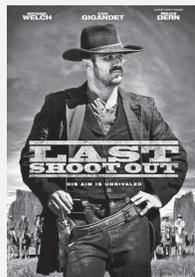
Western films *Last Shootout* (2021) and *Desperate Riders* (2022), both with screenplays by Lee Martin, were made on small budgets, so I really wasn't expecting much from either. I was pleasantly surprised.

Had I known that Lee Martin also wrote the screenplay for the Western Heritage Wrangler Award-winning *Shadow on the Mesa* (2013), I would've been far less skeptical.



Without revealing too much of the plots, both are well done. WWA member Peter Sherayko appears in both films, playing the wise, old codger and trusted sidekick for lead actors Brock Harris, as *Last Shootout's* Billy, and Drew Walters, as *Desperate Riders's* Kansas Red.

The cigar-chomping Sherayko gives excellent performances, somewhat reminding me of Walter Brennan's Stumpy in *Rio Bravo*. Sherayko plays his parts with less humor, but still the same crusty but dangerous second fiddle.

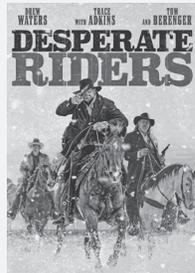


Last Shootout

Lionsgate
Blu-ray (\$21.99), DVD (\$19.98)

In little more than a cameo appearance in *Desperate Riders*, Tom Berenger's brief moments on screen lift the film to a much higher level. Berenger's humor and screen command almost steal the film from its primary actors.

Last Shootout features Bruce Dern in his most villainous Western performance since he took down John Wayne in *The Cowboys* (1972), a role that nearly traumatized me as a kid and left me despising Dern for many years thereafter.



Desperate Riders

Lionsgate
Blu-ray (\$12.99), DVD (\$19.98)

If you have watched any recent Western films, most of which go directly to video, you have no doubt seen country-music performer Trace Adkins. He is everywhere on film these days, embarking on a secondary career, often playing the heavy, something

Adkins does again in *Desperate Riders*.

Before I wrap it up on the characters, I thought Jay Pickett's performance in *Last Shootout* was superb. He might have been the standout performer in the entire cast.

As a lover of Western films, I highly recommend *Last Shootout* and *Desperate Riders*. They are a couple of smaller films that would have stood tall with big studio budgets.

I will be eagerly looking for anything else written by Lee Martin. A combination of the genre's expected archetypes and some unexpected twists make Martin's work outstanding.

If you love Westerns, check out these two films.

Regular *Roundup* film reviewer C. Courtney Joyner has this month off. R.G. Yoho, a novelist and 2022 Spur Award finalist for Best Western Short Nonfiction, lives in Ohio.

AL LAMANDA writing as **ETHAN J. WOLFE**
When the Devil Comes A-Calling

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 275 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

Brothers Jack and Emmet Youngblood, working for Judge Isaac Parker, are two of the best U.S. marshals in the West. When two other marshals are murdered and their prison wagon stolen, Parker sends the brothers to find out what happened. This puts them on the trail of escaped killer Joe Foster. There's a good story in this novel. However, it takes a long time to find it. The author is clearly talented, but the action is perfunctory, at best. Fistfights are one-sided. Ditto for gun battles. Men get shot and fall down. Period. Even when Jack gets gut-shot, he just shrugs it off. Character background is also sparse. If the author can "punch up" the action, add more details to the fight scenes, and more fully develop his characters, he'll come up with some truly great Westerns.

– James J. Griffin

ROD MILLER

And the River Ran Red: A Novel of the Massacre at Bear River

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 212 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

You have to stand in awe of a book that makes the blood race and has as foreword written by singer-songwriter Brendan Hill, whose song/poem provides the last page. You don't have to enjoy novel. Written in third person with a heavy dose of narration, dialogue perilously close to an organized information dump, the book chills, if not gags, the reader with the story of the needless, senseless and wanton murder of 300 Shoshoni, plus or minus 50, in the Bear River Massacre of 1863. Taking a look back with the perspective of 159 years, it is not only impossible to justify, but also to understand the actions of Colonel O'Connor (Rod Miller respects the O' the colonel dropped to hide his Irish origins in English-settled Utah), Major McGarry (who gets an epilogue devoted to his suicide in 1867, presumably because of his abhorrent role) or the men they commanded. Many books detail the egregious behavior of the California volunteers. Miller read them and used them all. It must have been torture. This is a good book, but it is not fun.

– Edward Massey

KATHLEEN MORRIS

Fallen Child

Dunraven Press
Paperback, 278 pages, \$12.99
KathleenMorrisAuthor.com

In late 1800s Arizona Territory, Josie Fallon leaves Angel's Refuge orphanage on the false pretense of moving on to a good, independent, adult life. Josie knows better. She has just been sold into the sex trade. Collin, also from Angel's Refuge, finds her and helps her escape. Billy joins them as Josie evades the law and seeks retribution. High-spirited and half-wild, Josie is determined to shut down the orphanage, and others like them. She vows to bring the owners to justice, her kind of justice. Kathleen Morris has created a true Western

heroine, who is full of surprises. *Fallen Child* is a fast-moving, engaging, story where Josie Fallon outwits the villains and brings them to their knees.

– Milana Marsenich

LeROY A. PETERS

In the Heart of The West: A Mountain Man Adventure: Saga of the Armstrong Brothers, Book 1

DS Productions
Paperback, 167 pages, \$6.99
DSPublishingNetwork.com

In the Heart of the West takes place in the 1820s and is about three Armstrong brothers who, after losing their parents, decide to go west. While in St. Louis, they see William H. Ashley's ad for enterprising young men to travel up the Missouri River to trade with the Indians and trap. The story has a lot of information about the life of fur trappers who lived among the Indians and how this life affected the three brothers. I found the story entertaining and an enjoyable read. If you are interested in the life of a fur trapper, you will enjoy this book and look forward to the publishing of Peters's next book in the series.

– Lowell F. Volk

WAYNE PURCELL

Justice for All: The Search for Big Poker Tom

Wayne Purcell
Hardcover, paperback, 254 pages, \$22.95, \$17.99
Amazon.com

Big Poker Tom, a compulsive gambler and drinker, disappears mysteriously from his home on a Nevada reservation. His Paiute family and friends know he is prone to disappearing for weeks on occasion, but fear that this absence may be different. They set off on a search for him, a journey that takes them south as far as Bridgeport, California, near Mono Lake. They find remains that they hope are not his, but they fear the worst. The family and sheriff find a convenient suspect, a Chinese restauranter and gambler. Conflict arises between the judgment of the Paiute Indian Court and the white man's justice system. The narrative moves at a measured pace as suspense builds to an inevitable, but still surprising, conclusion. Based on a true story.

– Harlan Hague

V.J. ROSE

Hell West of the Pecos

Wolfpack Publishing
Paperback, 348 pages, \$11.98
WolfpackPublishing.com

V.J. Rose hits the ground running – along with 1,000 head of Texas longhorn cattle – in this exciting and action-packed trail-drive story. Faced with hostile Comanches and Apaches, along with equally hostile Mexican and white bandits, drovers Dudford Washburn and his Uncle Ponder are tried to their limits. They're tested by torrential rain, lightning storms and blistering heat, but they, along with a ragtag crew of cowboys, will do whatever it takes to deliver the herd and make their fortunes. A wonderful cast of characters people a story set in a carefully researched locale. Smart, snappy dialogue clues you to character – and they are a bunch of characters!

Here you'll find realism so gritty it might break you out in a sweat as you read.

— Carol Crigger

PAT STOLTEY

In Defense of Delia: A Sangamon Novel

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 269 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

We met most of these characters several years ago in *Wishing Caswell Dead*. This novel picks up where that one left off, except 13 years have passed for the characters. Delia Pritchard, only 16 years old when she fled Sangamon, Illinois, returns with a bullet in her shoulder and a Black child she has rescued. Neither she nor the child is welcomed, and when a bad gang of brothers shows up to finish the job of killing her, the whole town is put in jeopardy. It seemed to me the author dwelled overly long on Delia's wound. With the exception of a few, the characters, while well-drawn, are not particularly sympathetic, and the bad men are without a single redeeming feature. That said, there's a lot to root for when the women of the town get together to save Sangamon.

— Carol Crigger

ASHLEY E. SWEENEY

Hardland

She Writes Press
Paperback, 368 pages, \$17.95
SheWritesPress.com

Yes, *Hardland* is gripping. Much of the book is hard to put down, yet hard to read. This is not a "feel-good" type of story. It's one of grit, determination and life's unfairness. Ruby Fortune's vivid and unforgettable character certainly will remain with readers. Ruby is born into a circus family and has a father she adores. Life topples when he dies and she naively heads into a marriage with a bully, abuser and yet, oh-so-charming man. Her circus family dissolves and four children later, she realizes there's no hope in her future. Set mostly in Arizona around the early 1900s, Ruby finds love with the wrong people at the wrong time. *Hardland* is a tale of survival, stark realism and resolve.

— Melody Groves

KIMBERLEY WOODHOUSE

A Gem of Truth: Secrets of the Canyon: Book Two

Bethany House Publishers
Paperback, 320 pages, \$16.99
BakerPublishingGroup.com

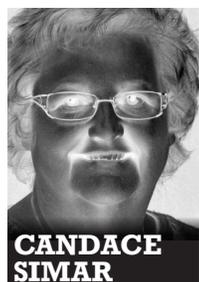
Julia is a Harvey Girl at the El Tovar hotel atop the Grand Canyon in 1907. Hoping to leave behind her orphaned past which led to a dangerous habit of embellishing stories for attention, she vows to stick to the truth. A legend of treasure entices her to dream of wealth in hopes of wiping her slate clean and bringing with it respect and admiration. She meets master jeweler Christopher, who holds honesty above all else. Supervisor Ruth wants to introduce Julia to a relationship with her Heavenly Father, but Julia isn't ready to believe in that "story." Add to this mix two criminals searching for the same treasure, mountain-lion attacks, gossip about Julia's lying past, and sweet romance and redemption. Kimberley Woodhouse gracefully paints this inspirational fiction with her flowing prose, intricately woven mystery path and authentic nature descriptions.

— Denise F. McAllister



Polish your manuscript until it shines

Recently I discovered a typo in a publication from a major publisher. It was comforting to know I'm not the only one with typos in published work. This issue explores self-editing techniques



CANDACE SIMAR

recommended by WWA members to root out those pesky mistakes. Harlan Hague recommends reading the manuscript aloud. "Ask yourself: Does this sound like me? Does the dialogue sound like a believable character? Does the story flow seamlessly from one paragraph to the next? Write a narrative that features believable characters caught up in believable situations. A Western may include violence and death, but don't make this the central theme. This may be

a personal bias, but I want to care about my principal characters. I want them to be good people. If I include a bad actor in my story, I'm either going to reform him before the end or get rid of him."

Gary Pullman uses technology to edit his work. "My wife and I are both writers. Although we proofread both our own and each other's manuscripts at least twice, we found that a few errors escaped our notice. (Big-name authors and editors at top publishing houses also miss errors. I counted at least five in a recent novel by a well-known writer.) Microsoft Word has a built-in 'Read Aloud' feature which operates in tandem with the 'Editor' function.

"Making corrections are quick and easy when you follow along on your computer while listening to the reader. Simply save the document after making a correction and let the program return

to the work in progress so additional changes can be made. It's possible to choose male or female voices to 'read' the manuscript aloud. We've found that listening twice, once with a male voice and again with a female voice, is best. The differences in tone and pitch allow us to catch errors we might have missed. Our use of such readers has made our manuscripts error free!"

Thank you, Harlan and Gary, for your excellent advice.

How about you? Don't be shy. Send your best writing tip to simar@tds.net with "Best Writing Tip" in the subject line. Watch for it to appear in *Roundup Magazine*. Future topics include: writing the traditional Western, historical novels, historical romances and short stories. Anything concerning writing is welcome. Let's help each other improve our craft.