

BOOK REVIEWS

FICTION

JD ARNOLD

Rawhide Jake

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 268 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

Rawhide Jake has only seven chapters, with several of the chapters extra long. Each chapter is like a short story about a particular time in Jonas V. Brighton's life. The book starts with Jonas in a Kansas prison. From there, his life changes as he evolves into a detective and finally into a range detective. Each story is tied to the previous chapter as Jonas learns his new trade. If you don't mind significant page counts in a chapter you will like this book.

— Lowell F. Volk

JENNIFER BOHNHOFF

A Blaze of Poppies

Self-published
Paperback, 280 pages, \$15
JenniferBohnhoff.com

Jennifer Bohnhoff, who lives in the mountains of New Mexico, has composed a story set both there and on French battlegrounds of World War I. Her protagonist, Agnes Day, is born and raised on a ranch and wants to keep possession of it when difficulties arise. She resolves to find the wherewithal of maintaining ownership and works as a nurse tending the wounded in the war. Love finds her, but will he be the one to come home with to make a future on the ranch? Mexican bandits, a meddlesome mother, her boyfriend's insecurities all enter the story and make for an imaginative and satisfying book.

— Lynn Bueling

D. LÁSZLÓ CONHAIM

The Unredeemed: A Novel

Broken Arrow Press
Paperback, 248 pages, \$13.90
DLaszloConhaim.com

D. László Conhaim's novels pursue social and racial concerns woven into the traditional Western. In *The Unredeemed*, Redeemer Scott Renard struggles with whether he should seek to

rescue a little Black girl when the larger society does not care. A kidnapped white child could be held for ransom, but a Black child has little or no value except to his or her family. Conhaim weaves the fictional Ophelia Wheatman (a thinly disguised Olive Oatman) into the story and compares her experiences with those of Black captives. Conhaim presents a more accurate American West in all of its colors and dimensions with the imagined story unfolding within the context of real people, places and events. A novel can connect the past with the present. From its beginning, America has confronted the question, "How much do Black lives matter?" During slavery, Black lives were measured by their economic value, but after slavery Black lives lost much of their monetary and social value. *The Unredeemed* infuses adventure, compassion, good and evil and redemption into its pages. It is a story well told and worth reading.

— Michael N. Searles

JAMES D. CROWNOVER

The Last Comanche Warrior

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 332 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

Since his *Wild Ran the Rivers* won Spur Awards for historical and first novel in 2015, James D. Crownover has continued to turn out solid, realistic novels. Redheaded Adam Bain and his sister are captured by Mescalero Apaches and swept from their Texas home into New Mexico, where Adam – now named Rojo Pelo because of his hair – is adopted by the Apache leader. Eventually, Adam joins the Comanches and their fight to protect their way of life in the final days of Native resistance in Texas. As in much of his fiction, Crownover focuses on the characters, and what it takes to survive on the 19th Century frontier. *The Last Comanche Warrior* might not make you long for the good old days that weren't always good, but it won't make you regret taking a journey into the past.

— Johnny D. Boggs

KERRY DEAN FELDMAN

Alice's Trading Post: A Novel of the West

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 372 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

Here is the fictional memoir of Alice Stump, a mixed-race woman, "Irish-Indian," who was born in Oregon's Willamette Valley in 1863 and lived for 103 years. The author is a professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Alaska Anchorage. His research expertise in applied anthropology enables him to contrive and articulate in dramatic form the unique challenges of a mixed-race woman in the late 19th Century American Northwest. Alice's voice comes through clear and consistently in the narrative device of a collection of her stories "transcribed" by the "Buffalo Gap Historical Society." Her resilience and clear-eyed pragmatism keep the reader engaged. The author synthesizes a career in applied anthropological research with a deep empathy for "the historical and cultural aspects of Alice's story." The result is an intriguing mixture of three-dimensional characters in a harsh, disquieting, but believable world.

— Tom Carpenter

JAMES J. GRIFFIN

The Zombies of Zapata: A Texas Ranger James C. Blawczyk Mystery

Yankee Cowboy Press
Paperback, 223 pages, \$9.99
YankeeCowboyPress.com

Someone or something is killing people in rural areas of north Austin. What would scare a Texas Ranger into a stupor and then suck brains from its victims? State and county parks become prime hunting grounds and Texas Ranger Jim Blawczyk goes a-hunting. Considered a cross-genre contemporary Western, *Zombies of Zapata* contains "zombies" and horses. The pacing is mired with Blawczyk constantly repeating what he has found, what he thinks, etc. The reader only glimpses the zombies, which seem to disappear throughout the middle part of the book. Tension would be heightened with narrow misses and more threats directly to

Blawczyk. The author has an impressive list of published books, but he might take time to massage the plot better. Lovely cover, though.

– Melody Groves

K.S. JONES

Change of Fortune

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 336 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

This engaging historical novel set in the 1849 Gold Rush features a strong heroine, Quinn MacCann, who goes to the gold country by way of San Francisco in order to escape her abusive and controlling father. She ends up in the town of Fortune and pursues her goal to become a successful businesswoman. Along the way, she interacts with a variety of original characters and faces many challenges. The story has a strong element of romance and a tincture of melodrama, but the characters are not all stock characters, and the protagonist is imperfect rather than pristine. Her trajectory, along with the well-detailed milieu of the Gold Rush, holds the reader's interest.

– John D. Nesbitt

ELMER KELTON

Law of the Land: Stories of the Old West

Forge Books
Hardcover, 306 pages, \$27.99
Tor.com

This compilation of 16 short stories from pulp magazines as early as 1948 and from literary anthologies as recent as 2010 shows why Elmer Kelton stands as one of the greatest Western writers of all time. His take on Western history and humanity as a whole remains timeless. His heroes are strong men with a conscience, and his women are drawn beyond the typical Western stereotypes. Even a chuckwagon cook takes down a bad man without ever firing a shot in “Biscuits for a Bandit,” a previously unpublished short story from the Kelton estate. *Law of the Land* is an entertaining ride with a master of Western storytelling.

– Preston Lewis

JANE KIRKPATRICK

The Healing of Natalie Curtis

Revell
Paperback, 368 pages, \$16.99
BakerPublishingGroup.com

To be submerged in an intriguing novel and to find out much of it is based on a true story is like icing on the cake. Natalie Curtis is a classically trained pianist and singer about to debut with the New York Philharmonic. She has a breakdown and loses her joy of music. Her brother invites her to the West, where her life takes on new purpose. She learns about various Native American tribes and their music, which is outlawed by the U.S. government's Code of Indian Offenses. Natalie is

jolted from her protected upbringing and wants to learn more and help preserve their way of life. Award-winning author Jane Kirkpatrick expertly guides us on a beautiful journey of fact and fiction. It's an important history that is not often told.

– Denise F. McAllister

SUSANNA LANE

Imperfect Promise

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 301 pages, \$25.95
Gale.com/five-star

Cort Enders is married to Sienna Harris, a dying widowed ranch owner old enough to be his mother. To occupy her remaining days, Sienna requests that Cort find a female companion to read to her and do other odd jobs. Enter Lark, a beautiful, scarred young woman. Sparks fly between Cort and Lark, and Sienna requests that the two of them marry and fill the ranch with children. But Cort must overcome his own private demon, and Lark must resolve the issue of Will Cardin, the man who marked her as his own. The locations between places in the story were a bit confusing when trying to picture the travel. The plot line seemed a bit convoluted in places. That said, this is a sweet love story with the added twist that to realize their love, Lark and Cort must wait for Sienna to die.

– Sandy Whiting

Thoughts on my last days as a *Roundup* book reviewer

In my wild carefree days, the thought of growing old never crossed my mind, but what a surprise, I've become an 80-year-old man. When that fact struck me, I informed *Roundup* editor Johnny D. Boggs that I would stop reviewing books in order to concentrate on other projects. As a result, he suggested I write this “Guest Column.”

How did this gig begin? I remember at the time doing some communicating with Rod Miller. If memory serves correctly, I mentioned to him a certain book I had read with some thoughts about it. Rod must have thought *this is a live one* and

contacted Johnny, who, in turn, sent me an e-mail, “Say, would you be interested ...?”

Sure, if I was going to be a WWA member, I wanted to participate. Since then, many books have come across my desk, which I've considered a privilege to review.

Usually they arrived as singles, sometimes doubles, but one year I felt swamped while serving on a committee tasked with selecting the Best Western Traditional Novel. In a short time, nearly 70 of them crossed my desk from authors who wanted consideration. A good one rose to the top, but there were so many good ones that I felt a bit sad when we couldn't pick them, too.

The variety of material I've reviewed has made one thing clear: The WWA membership represents an intellectually

curious group that loves to express findings and feelings in writing. Members write in a wide assortment of genres, including poetry, memoirs, biographies, mysteries, history and more.

So whenever Johnny asked if I would be interested in looking at a book, I always nodded *yes* because they never fail to be interesting and worthwhile.

Our present life in a condominium is great except for the matter of space. Some of these books have earned a spot on my own shelves, but many needed to find a new home. A favorite spot to take them was the North Dakota Veterans Home, but other places willingly took them, too.

I won't disappear from *Roundup* pages as I will continue submitting articles. Johnny has approved two of them for future publication, and I can't wait to get started.



LYNN
BUELING

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 the 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 galore, especially when you can’t tell who might be willing to help you or shoot you down like a dog. A lively, entertaining read.

– Johnny D. Boggs

JOHN MORT

Oklahoma Odyssey

Bison Books

Paperback, 332 Pages, \$24.95

BisonBooks.com

From the Mennonites of Kansas to the Osages of Oklahoma, John Mort delivers a sweeping view of change marking the land forever. The great Oklahoma land rush resulting in much of western Oklahoma’s settlements is embroidered with a Germanic religious commitment to nonviolence. Carefully researched, the novel is an anti-revenge revenge tale grounded soundly in true and historical reality. No flight of author fantasy, you can tell that Mort has tasted the dirt of that region. A stirring episodic adventure worthy of a reader’s time.

– Vernon Schmid

PAMELA NOWAK

Necessary Deceptions: The Women of Wyatt Earp

Five Star Publishing

Hardcover, 459 pages, \$25.95

Gale.com/five-star

This book is definitely a good and entertaining read. The story moves along briskly, without getting bogged down with too much actual history that causes the reader to lose track of the character personalities involved. Putting herself into the minds of people who really existed, Pamela Nowak fleshes out their

personalities in a completely believable and satisfying manner. While nobody can ever claim to know exactly what a historical figure’s thoughts, motivations and private conversations were, this book comes pretty close to achieving that goal. Many of us like to believe that we know Wyatt Earp’s life story and the people involved in it, but how many can claim to know what they thought and felt in any given situation? This book will take you there.

– Rod Timanus

TOM TATUM

Adobe Daze

Wolfpack

Paperback, 252 pages, \$16.99

WolfpackPublishing.com

Set in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, the third book of Tom Tatum’s “New West Trilogy” moves the Cooper family saga forward from 1989-1990 to 2019. Their son Trey has been entrusted to run the family New Mexico Ranch, Ute Peak. Trey and his girlfriend, known as “M,” find themselves at the epicenter of water, land and drug wars as corrupt lawmen and gunmen causing chaos and

Kim Turner
It's all about a Cowboy & the Woman he Loves...

WYLDER HEARTS
KIM TURNER

CHRISTMAS IN WYLDER COUNTY
NICOLE MCCALLUM & KIM TURNER

DEUCES WYLD
KIM TURNER

HOME IN WYLDER
JANE LEWIS

JANE LEWIS the WYLDER ROSE
KIM TURNER

kimturnerwrites.com

janelewisauthor.com

www.TheWildRosePress.com

LAUREL, TEXAS. CHARITERS AND SELLERS ONLY.
ADVENTURE ON THE WYLDER SIDE.

Available from all on-line booksellers

death surround them. Multiple subplots with twists and turns shape this action-packed narrative that uses Old West warfare with modern weaponry. Trey and M represent the generation that will lead the New West. It's a wild ride for sure.

– Sue Ready

JIM R. WOOLARD

When the Missouri Ran Red

Kensington
Hardcover, 297 pages, \$26
KensingtonBooks.com

Best known for his authentic 18th Century frontier novels (*Cold Moon*, *Blood at Dawn* and the Spur Award-winning *Thunder in the Valley*), Jim R. Woolard turns to the Civil War in *When the Missouri Ran Red*. Woolard's no stranger to that subject, either; his *Raiding with Morgan* was published in 2015. This time, Woolard recreates bloody Missouri in 1864, told through the eyes – 17 years later – of Owen Wainwright. Wainwright, 17 years old when he's shot and left for dead by his half-brother, Lance, finds himself conscripted into the Confederate army and caught up in an unconventional and unholy

war where both Northern and Southern sympathizers often forget humanity. As usual, Woolard shows his instinct for recreating vivid action and digging up authentic period detail.

– Johnny D. Boggs

JUVENILE

TERRY NICHOLS (author) and **ODESSA SAWYER** (illustrator)

The Dreaded Cliff

Kinkajou Press
Paperback, 260 pages, \$12.95
KinkajouPress.com

Flora is a plump little packrat who collects treasures to decorate her nest under the floorboards of a Volkswagen van. When Grandma Mimi tells Flora that the nearby dreaded cliff was their ancestral home until a mysterious killer took it, Flora feels called to reclaim it. Her plans are thwarted when the Volkswagen leaves and she chases after it. During her quest, Flora finds some allies and discovers her own pluck. Each chapter in this book begins with a charming black and white illustration. The back material includes

a short but informative section on the real animals behind the characters in this book. It is a fine and entertaining introduction to the flora and fauna of the American Southwest for young readers.

– Jennifer Bohnhoff

LUANN M. ROD

Maddie McDowell and the Rodeo Robbery

Chicken Scratch Books
Paperback, 270 pages, \$6.55
ChickenScratchBooks.com

After her mother dies, Maddie McDowell is sent to a strict boarding school for young ladies. A lady she is not, and after too many punishments, Maddie runs away. She's mistaken for a missing star rider, which Maddie accepts as a chance to earn her own place in the rodeo before she admits who she is. Soon after, some charity funds go missing, and Maddie must solve the mystery. Set in Montana after World War I, middle-grade readers will cheer for the scrappy main character, boo the villains and want to pet the pugnacious bulldog that always shows up at the right time. Clean and sweet, this book teaches valuable life lessons and is a fun read to boot.

– Jennifer Bohnhoff



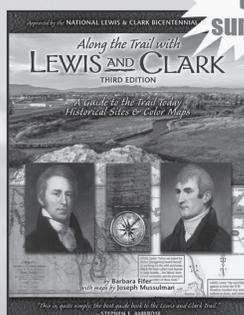
FarCountry Press

Celebrate Montana Books By Local Authors!

Available at your local bookstore, gift shop, or online with FarCountry Press.

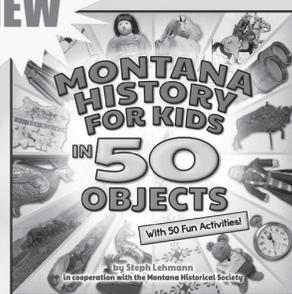
www.FarCountryPress.com
(800) 821- 8374

Coming this summer!



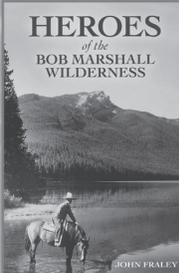
ISBN: 978-1-56037-803-7
\$18.95

NEW



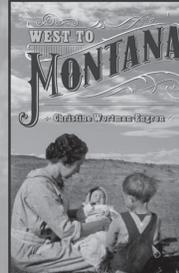
ISBN: 978-1-56037-789-4
\$18.95

HEROES
of the
BOB MARSHALL
WILDERNESS



ISBN: 978-1-56037-774-0
Retail: \$17.95

WEST TO MONTANA



ISBN: 978-1-56037-697-2
Retail: \$19.95

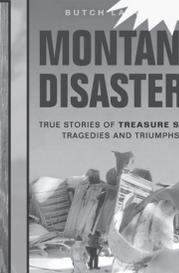
VIGILANTE DAYS & WAYS



ISBN: 978-1-56037-038-3
Retail: \$14.95

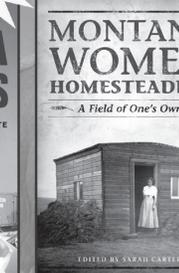
BUTCH

MONTANA DISASTERS



ISBN: 978-1-56037-776-4
Retail: \$18.95

MONTANA WOMEN HOMESTEADERS



ISBN: 978-1-56037-449-7
Retail: \$17.95

Adventures of a Montana Ranch Family 1880-1964

KEMPTON



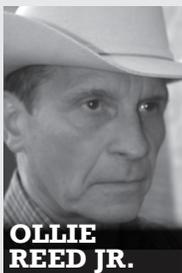
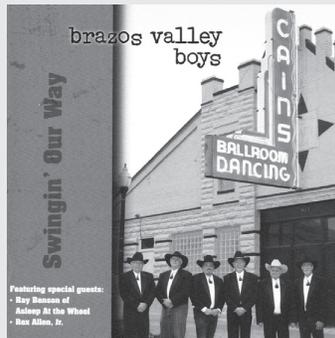
ISBN: 978-1-56037-733-7
Retail: \$17.95

WESTERN MUSIC

BRAZOS VALLEY BOYS *Swingin' Our Way*

Free State Productions, \$20
BrazosValleyBoys.com

Y'all will be reading this in April, but I was writing it just a couple of days before flying south to spend Christmas in my Mississippi hometown. That probably had something to do with me getting hooked by the first cut, "Blues for Dixie."



OLLIE REED JR.

This is no cowboy music CD. The Brazos Valley Boys were the backup band for the late Hank Thompson, known for his honky-tonk Western swing, and the 12 cuts here come from the various musical styles – country, Dixieland, big band, blues, jazz – that stirred together make Western swing cook.

Besides that first cut, my favorites are "That's Life," a duet featuring the BVB band leader Morey Sullivan and guest Ray Benson of Asleep at the Wheel; a "Midnight"/"Brain Cloudy Blues" medley teaming up the voices of Sullivan and guest Rex Allen Jr.; and "You Don't Know Me," written by Cindy Walker and Eddy Arnold.

But it's no lie to say every track is smooth and addictive.

DAN McCORISON *Me and Les*

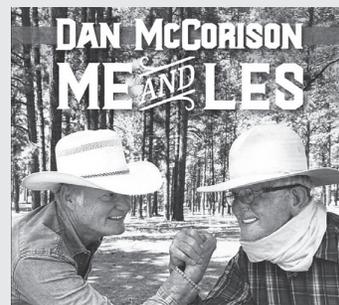
Musikode, \$15
DanMcCorison.com

This CD, on the other hand, is mostly cowboy. It is the International Western Music Association's 2021 Traditional Album of the Year, and McCorison is IWMA's 2021 Songwriter of the Year.

The Les in the title is Western songwriter/poet Les Buffham, who was inducted into IWMA's Hall of Fame in 2021.

Considering that, you got to know all 13 cuts here shine, but the ones I like best are the three co-written by McCorison and Buffham, "Welcome to Wickenburg," a rodeo wreck song; "Wyoming Dreaming" and "Riding Out to Meet the Day."

Also top notch are McCorison's cover of Joyce Woodson's "If I Hadn't Seen the West," and McCorison's own "Dust of Los Angeles," about all those – from *vaqueros* to stunt men – who have made their mark in the City of Angels.



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

NONFICTION

MATTHEW BERNSTEIN

George Hearst: Silver King of the Gilded Age

University of Oklahoma Press
Paperback, 274 pages, \$26.95
OUPress.com

Through his many mining ventures, George Hearst rose from Missouri farm boy to become one of the richest men in 19th Century America, a senator from California and owner of the *San Francisco Examiner*, which, under the guidance of his son William Randolph, would become a newspaper of national significance. Hearst was an unpretentious good old boy but at the same time ruthless when it came to making money. He was against the 13th and 14th amendments emancipating the slaves and granting them citizenship. He was against Chinese immigration and, as a senator voted against women's suffrage and against Washington becoming a state. Matthew Bernstein's book details the life of George Hearst; his philanthropist wife, Phoebe; and the early years of their son William Randolph Hearst.

– Bill Markley

JAMES BAILEY BLACKSHEAR and GLEN SAMPLE ELY

Confederates and Comancheros: Skullduggery and Double-Dealing in the Texas-New Mexico Borderlands

University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 276 pages, \$32.95
OUPress.com

Comancheros, the New Mexico merchants who traded, often illegally, with Comanches and other Southern Plains nations, have been highly fictionalized over the years. But James Bailey Blackshear and Glen Sample Ely, historians known for their works about frontier Texas and New Mexico, correct that oversight and in the process deliver a highly readable and detailed look at the mostly illicit trade. With impeccable scholarship, the authors focus on the Civil War era and provide a lively look at assorted characters, few of them completely reputable, and put the dealings, shootings, legal procedures, raids, spies, killings and cattle drives in perspective. Along the way, Blackshear and Ely also correct some longstanding myths. Fascinating and a whole lot of fun to read.

– Johnny D. Boggs

MIKE COCHRAN

John B. Denton: The Bigger-Than-Life Story of the Fighting Parson and Texas Ranger

University of North Texas Press
Hardcover, 256 pages, \$29.95
UNTPress.unt.edu

It is common to drive through a town and not give a thought to its founding or namesake. If you're driving through Denton, Texas (in Denton County), you might stop and consider the man that the town and the county were named for: John B. Denton. Chronicled in Mike Cochran's well-written biography, Denton's life is much more interesting than the boring city limits sign might imply. He was a Methodist preacher, a missionary, a Texas Ranger, a lawyer and an

APRIL 2022

often-overlooked figure in Texas history. Cochran does much to right that wrong, including a search for the burial spot of Denton's body, which has been lost to the dust of time. Some maps, drawings, and photographs contribute to the quality of this book, as do the bibliography and the index (thorough and well-structured) that will aid researchers and curious readers alike. Texas history enthusiasts would do themselves a favor to put this book on their must-read pile.

– Larry D. Sweazy

SLOAN DE FOREST

The Essential Directors: The Art and Impact of Cinema's Most Influential Filmmakers

Running Press

Paperback, 325 pages, \$25.99

RunningPress.com

No book about "Cinema's Most Influential Filmmakers" can please everyone. For students of Western films, the exclusion of Sam Peckinpah and William Wellman is regrettable, and Sergio Leone gets only a brief mention. While many of the included directors (John Ford, Howard Hawks, John Huston and George Stevens, to name some) are known for their Westerns, the analysis of those films (necessarily brief) seems intended for readers new to the subject. The descriptions are often simplistic. *The Misfits* is "a cowboy tale," for example, and *Shane* is "a fairly standard Western tale." There are unfortunate errors. Thus, in *The Searchers*, John Wayne's character crosses the continent "to the icy Yukon." *Shane* has the mythic grandeur of widescreen (even though *Shane* was filmed prior to the widescreen era). With numerous photographs, this attractive compendium includes a list of each director's "must-see movies" and an analysis of a key scene from one of those movies.

– David Morrell

SARAH DEUTSCH

Making a Modern U.S. West: The Contested Terrain of a Region and Its Borders, 1898-1940

University of Nebraska Press

Hardcover, 641 pages, \$50

Nebraskapress.unl.edu

Dismissing Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis of the end of the frontier in 1890, Sarah Deutsch instead selects the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 to begin an examination of the West in the 20th Century, clearly demonstrating the continuing evolution of the region until the end of the Great Depression in 1940. However, her book refutes the idea of a triumphalist West. She focuses on a history of the West that has ignored or neglected the West as a locale of racism, economic struggle and political controversy. This is a version of the West with many borders, claims made in the early 20th Century that the West, defined by white political and business leaders, was a "white man's country," a view disputed by Blacks, Native Americans and Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. Other boundaries include corporations against strikers, immigration restrictions aimed at Chinese and Mexicans, business versus labor, and, over it all, the federal government dictating policy against local farmers, ranchers, Indians, women and Mexican Americans who resisted and actively opposed paternalist regulations. Deutsch's narrative covers domestic repressions during World War I,

APRIL 2022



WESTERN CLASSICS II

Kino Lorber

Blu-ray, \$49.95

The Universal-International logo in Technicolor has always been a bit of a spell-caster for me.

During the 1950s, that globe was often in black-and-white, particularly for the science-fiction titles, but color meant either



C. COURTNEY JOYNER

a Douglas Sirk melodrama or a Western. Save for the creative heights reached by Anthony Mann and James Stewart, the Universal Westerns could be a mixed bag, from talk-fests (*Rails into Laramie*) to hidden treasures (*Red Sundown*), but they were never less than watchable because of beautiful photography, great supporting casts and usually a hell of a gunfight.

Kino Lorber's recent collection *Western Classics II* gives us a cross section of some of Universal's lesser-known Western horizons. The best, by far, is director Abner Biberman's *Gun for a Coward* (1957), starring Fred MacMurray, Jeffrey Hunter and Dean Stockwell as brothers with wildly different temperaments. MacMurray is the steady, paternal figure, while Hunter is the passive brother who always backs away from a fight. Of course, Stockwell is the hothead who draws his gun or clenches a fist without thinking, and this leads to trouble for all three.

If MacMurray, before television and Disney, seems a bit old for his role, he's quite strong, as are all the performances, particularly Hunter and young Janice Rule. Universal's veteran cameraman George Robinson (*The Son of Frankenstein*) shoots beautifully in CinemaScope, and the Blu-ray transfer does his work honor. But the hero of *Gun for a Coward* is writer R. Wright Campbell (*Man of a Thousand Faces*), who delivered an unusual and always compelling script. There is so much more to this film than a shoot 'em up.

Originally planned for John Ford and John Wayne, George Marshall's CinemaScope *Pillars of the Sky* (1956) is a deeply felt Western from a Will James novel, with roots in history and the Bible. Jeff Chandler is an experienced cavalry sergeant who goes up against a bull-headed commander who insists on breaking a treaty with tribes along the Snake River. The one who counsels peace is a minister whom the chiefs revere, played by an excellent and subdued Ward Bond.

Pillars of the Sky doesn't always hit its dramatic marks, but the performances are fine, including Dorothy Malone and Lee Marvin, and its Christian message makes it interesting, which can't be said about *Redhead from Wyoming* (1953). Confusing junk starring Maureen O'Hara, it's a studio throw-away. All the films feature commentaries and trailers.

C. Courtney Joyner writes in many formats, including screenplays, fiction and nonfiction. E-mail him at olcourt@yahoo.com.

perpetuation of the yeoman farmer myth, the harsh realities of farming on marginal land, and the unintended consequences of federal policies during the Great Depression. This book offers a major revision of Western history that takes place well into the 20th Century. It should be required reading that will surprise anyone enamored of a mythic West.

– Abraham Hoffman

DENNIS DRABELLE

The Power of Scenery: Frederick Law Olmsted and the Origin of National Parks

Bison Books

Hardcover, 280 pages, \$29.95

BisonBooks.com

A journey into our national park system’s first beginnings can be found in the book *The Power of Scenery*. Dennis Drabelle sweeps through the historical documents and weighs them to present his historical account. He writes that the idea for national parks originated when Frederick Law Olmsted used his landscape architect’s eye to think of ways to manage the wilderness area of Yosemite Valley. He did not envision it in a carnival-like atmosphere such

as Niagara Falls had become, instead feeling that that was an example of what should not happen. His vision and efforts created a blueprint for national parks to come. While others began having thoughts along lines of establishing parks, Olmsted stood out from the others as a leader.

– Lynn Bueling

GARY B. FOGEL

Sky Rider: Park Van Tassel and the Rise of Ballooning in the West

University of New Mexico Press

Paperback, 250 pages, \$25

UNMPress.com

Finally, a long overdue biography of the man who put ballooning on the American and worldwide map: Park Van Tassel. Author Gary Fogel chronicles Van Tassel’s journey, starting with Albuquerque, New Mexico’s first glimpse of a gas balloon during the 1882 Fourth of July celebration, to his final flight in California in 1930. Today’s gas balloons are filled with helium or hydrogen, but Van Tassel’s balloons were filled with coal gas. Fact was, he had to wait for Albuquerque’s gas lines to be installed before he “filled up” and took flight.

Throughout his lifetime, Van Tassel witnessed an inspiring evolution of flight. Not only did he design balloons and fly, he also co-invented a parachute used to make the first parachute jump in the West. One of the few aerial exhibitionists to perform in the late 19th Century, he brought ballooning to the world. *Sky Rider* has a place on the shelves of balloon enthusiasts, historians and readers interested in a man who never gave up.

– Melody Groves

ANDREA LANI

Uphill Both Ways: Hiking Toward Happiness on the Colorado Trail

Bison Books

Paperback, 268 pages, \$21.95

BisonBooks.com

Andrea Lani walks the 489-mile Colorado Trail, Denver to Durango, with her family. She has just quit an enervating job in Maine. Some 20 years before, she walked the trail with her new husband, Curry, and some readers will feel Curry and the kids are humoring her depression and nostalgia for her Colorado childhood. Amusingly, Lani afflicts her family with cold oatmeal and eschews all fires. Her musings on climate

FROM WESTERN AUTHOR **JEFFREY PAOLANO**

EXPIATION
JEFFREY PAOLANO

APERTURE
JEFFREY PAOLANO

OBSTINATE LEGERITY
JEFFREY PAOLANO

TWO GUN PUBLISHING

JEFFREY PAOLANO WESTERNS ARE AVAILABLE AT [AMAZON.COM](https://www.amazon.com)
VISIT [WWW.TWOGUNPUBLISHING.COM](https://www.twogunpublishing.com) FOR MORE INFORMATION

change and malicious Trump policies are elegant and sad, whether she's commenting on bristlecone pines or dams; meanwhile, the endless procession of hikers and mountain bikers undermines any notion of pristine wilderness. Lani's spiritual goals, to live in the moment and join with the rhythms of nature, are hopefully expressed though not altogether convincing.

– John Mort

ARMAND S. LA POTIN

Hugh Lenox Scott, 1853-1934: Reluctant Warrior

University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 290 pages, \$36.95
OUPress.com

During his remarkable life, Hugh Lenox Scott crossed paths with many luminaries of the American West including Chief Joseph, Nelson Miles and Pancho Villa. In this illuminating biography, Armand S. La Potin paints a picture of a complicated man. Scott was a soldier and a humanitarian. He fought Native peoples in the American West and the Philippines but was committed to diplomacy. While dedicated to the principles of fair play and honesty, Scott never doubted the righteousness of the Anglo-American "civilizing" mission, and his views of Native peoples were tinged with paternalism and ethnocentrism. Soldier, ethnologist, bureaucrat, and diplomat, Scott was a man of many talents. This is a well-researched and fluently written book that should appeal to anyone interested in the Old Army on the frontier.

– David C. Beyreis

JAIME LOWE

Breathing Fire: Female Inmate Firefighters on the Front Lines of California's Wildfires

Farrar, Straus and Giroux
Hardcover, 302 pages, \$27
US.macmillan.com

Inmate crews comprise an estimated 50-80 percent of California's total firefighting personnel. Like their male counterparts, incarcerated women in the familiar orange jackets must be ready to hike, cut line and work through hot, choked air – all for measly prison wages of \$2.65 a day and \$1 an hour while on the line. Author Jaime Lowe draws on five years of reporting and interviews to limn illuminating portraits of a representative cross-section

of these remarkable women, many of whom find redemption in their time in the blazing forests, only to see their opportunities as convicted felons circumscribed upon their release. The book comes alive when it focuses on the women's personal stories and their often harrowing exploits, but it could have benefitted from better organization and tighter editing; long digressions into the history of California's catastrophically dysfunctional penal system, while relevant, weaken the overall impact.

– Kirk Ellis

RICHARD B. McCASLIN

Texas Ranger Captain William L. Wright

University of North Texas Press
Hardcover, 416 pages, \$34.95
UNTPress.unt.edu

While this book is rightly focused on Captain William L. Wright, one of the "Big-Four" captains of the Ranger force, another interesting facet of the story is the transition from the Frontier Battalion. Long affected by politics of the day, the internal workings of the growing Texas Ranger organization at the turn of the 20th Century are on full display in the depth and breadth of Wright's long career as a Ranger. Any student of the Texas Rangers will find this biography a worthy addition to their reading list. Well-written and thoroughly researched, Wright's life and personality come to life with anecdotes and stories that read like the best Western literature. The only complaint is the lack of a thoughtful and usable index. It would be helpful to readers and researchers alike for authors and publishers to tackle the creation of an index with a true understanding of the document's purpose instead of providing a list of single topics with 30-page numbers attached afterward. Otherwise, this book would be highly recommended.

– Larry D. Sweazy

ROSANNE S. McHENRY

Trip Tales: From Family Camping to Life as a Ranger

Huntley Avenue Press
Paperback, 300 pages, \$17.95
TripTalesBook.com

Split into two parts, this amusing book contains anecdotes of childhood family camping trips and stories of the author's experiences as a park ranger, mostly on the West Coast. I'm sure anyone who grew up in the 1960s can relate to the family camping

misadventures. The author found her calling in those childhood outings, learning helpful lessons which she put to use as a compassionate and understanding national and state park ranger. Her career included stints at Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Mount Rainier and Death Valley national parks, with plenty of exciting escapades at each location.

– Rocky Gibbons

JOHN H. MONNETT

The Battle of Beecher Island and the Indian War of 1867-1869, Second Edition

University Press of Colorado
Paperback, 278 pages, \$28.95
UPColorado.com

In September 1868, a company of frontiersmen under the command of Major Alexander "Sandy" Forsyth followed a trail of mainly Southern Cheyenne raiders into the Republican River Valley of extreme northeastern Colorado. Composed primarily of Cheyenne Dog Soldiers – more properly known as Dog Men, as the author explains – and augmented by some Lakotas and Arapahos, they had been raiding throughout the Saline and Solomon river valleys, burning, murdering and generally instilling a reign of terror among settlers in the region. Near the town of Wray, Colorado, Forsyth's company of frontiersmen engaged these "hostiles" for nine consecutive days before a relief force arrived. The story of this fight, one of the most famous in the annals of the Plains Indian Wars, is aptly told by Professor John H. Monnett. *The Battle of Beecher Island and the Indian War of 1867-1869*, a Spur Award finalist first published in 1992, is now brought forth in an updated second edition.

– Jerry Keenan

SHERRY ROBINSON

James Silas Calhoun: First Governor of New Mexico Territory and First Indian Agent

University of New Mexico Press
Hardcover, 408 pages, \$34.95
UNMPress.com

Early New Mexico territorial governors often get little attention from historians, but author Sherry Robinson has changed that with her detailed and comprehensive biography of the first of them, James Silas Calhoun. A

Georgian, first appointed Indian agent, Calhoun arrived in New Mexico in 1849. After the Compromise of 1850 created the territory, he was appointed governor in 1851. His earlier experiences as businessman, judge, legislator and military officer did little to prepare him for the challenges he faced in New Mexico: Military commanders openly defied him, political foes opposed and sabotaged him, and the national government provided him with no funds with which to operate a government. Notably, he was one of the few territorial governors able to speak Spanish, and it served him well. He left behind, only 18 months later, the early steps in the long trek from territory to statehood. Robinson does a great job of leading readers through the ins and outs of his career in public life. He died in 1852, along the trail back to Georgia.

– Don Bullis

PAUL SCHULLERY

The Bear Doesn't Know: Life and Wonder in Bear Country

Bison Books

Paperback, 248 pages, \$21.95

BisonBooks.com

It's difficult to know whether Paul Schullery is better identified with Yellowstone National Park or with bears. These two topics are so identified with each other – and with Schullery – that perhaps it doesn't matter. With his latest book, *The Bear Doesn't Know: Life and Wonder in Bear Country*, Schullery, the former Yellowstone ranger naturalist and author of more than 40 books, gives us a selection of stories – some about bears, others about himself and bears – that, taken together, constitute as much a memoir as a story collection. Readable, enlightening and genuinely entertaining, Schullery navigates easily between being conversational and deeply knowledgeable because of his background, experience and research. Rooted in the scientific and historical, the book is humbly philosophical with an imminently humane point of view. In fact, the viewpoint is often that of the bear. And thank goodness it is. Schullery shows quite clearly how danger and fascination go hand-in-hand.

– Charles E. Rankin

BRIAN G. SHELLUM

Buffalo Soldiers in Alaska: Company L, Twenty-Fourth Infantry

Bison Books

Paperback, 386 pages, \$29.95

BisonBooks.com

In 1899, just as the Klondike gold rush declined, the U.S. Army stationed a company of Black soldiers in southeastern Alaska at Fort Wrangel, Dyea and Skagway. The recruits and officers, numbering approximately 100, spent the next three years interacting with indigenous people and settlers. Their mission: guarding the flag in a strategic and resource-rich corner of Alaska, keeping the peace and watching for Canadian intrusion. Brian G. Shellum, who has already built a reputation in Black military studies, details the day-to-day activities, mundane and extraordinary, of the soldiers. The author covers barracks life, bawdy houses, disciplinary actions, community celebrations, and service in disaster. Race relations between soldiers and the predominantly white population are also explored. Illustrations, maps, and informative appendices supplement the work.

– Robert Clark

Broken Earth "Virgil Alexander's Broken Earth is intelligent, action packed and engaging. I was eager to see how the story would end, but reluctant for the book to finish. Broken Earth is a page turner – solid entertainment that draws readers into the story while revealing rare glimpses of Apache culture. Alexander ties surprisingly diverse storylines together until both justice and the reader are well served. When it did end, I went out to get additional books in the series to keep reading."

– Dr. Thea Wilshire, Director, San Carlos Apache Wellness Center (Ret.)

Broken Earth
by
Virgil Alexander

Book 5

The Wham Curse
by
Virgil Alexander

Murder in Copper
by
Virgil Alexander

Saints & Sinners
by
Virgil Alexander

The Baleful Owl
by
Virgil Alexander

Available at Barnes & Noble.com and Other Booksellers.

A loner condemned to die finds a reason to live. And friends worth fighting for.

DAVID NIX

CONDEMNED TO DIE. HE'S ABOUT TO FIND A REASON TO LIVE.

DEAD MAN'S HAND

Modern Western
Classic Hero

Buy at
Walmart,
Amazon,
B&N

GREGORY E. SMOAK (editor)
Western Lands, Western Voices: Essays on Public History in the American West

The University of Utah Press
Hardcover, 240 pages, \$35
UofUPress.com

The editor of this volume has gathered 13 essays by as many writers who speak to the significance of public history. Compiled in remembrance of the 50th anniversary of the University of Utah's American West Center, the essays collectively define public history as the use of historical skills and methods outside of the traditional academic realm of history. The book will prompt the novice historian to look beyond the classroom and recognize useful applications of history in everyday life. The book succeeds in alerting readers to available options.

– Lynn Bueling

HENRIETTA and RAYMOND TONGKEAMHA (authors) and **BENJAMIN R. KRACHT** with **LISA LaBRADA** (editors)

Stories from Saddle Mountain: Autobiographies of a Kiowa Family

University of Nebraska Press
Hardcover, 222 pages, \$40
NebraskaPress.unl.edu

In southwestern Oklahoma live the Kiowas, who once roamed the open plains as allies of the Comanches. From horseback, they were masters of the plains before being relegated to reservations. Reservation life failed to moderate their fierce independence, and that independence is graphically revealed in this personal account of Kiowa life shared by editor Benjamin Kracht's careful research of the Tongkeamhas' lives on the arid plains. This community-based oral history is a unique primary source useful for scholars of the Native American experience.

– Vernon Schmid

"SWEDE" TROEDSSON
Smoke-Jumper & Other Stories

Sweetgrass Books
Paperback, 101 pages, \$16.95
FarcountryPress.com

Formerly published on a weekly basis in the *Dillonite Daily* in Montana, these true stories experienced by the author have been collected in a nice little tome. "Swede" Troedsson's career exploits include smokejumper (even

after breaking his leg on his second training jump!), timber forester with the Northern Pacific Railway and U.S. Forest Service, volunteer assistant to Montana game wardens and volunteer member of National Ski Patrol and Search and Rescue. I was most impressed to learn Troedsson was part of the team that rescued Hank Williams Jr. after a devastating fall above Ajax Lake in 1975. Stories are relayed with candor and no frills, and sometimes with humor, in the author's own words and views. Thank you for your service as a U.S. Marine, "Swede," and for sharing your adventures.

– Rocky Gibbons

BILL VAUGHN
The Last Heir: The Triumphs and Tragedies of Two Montana Families

Bison Books
Paperback, 258 pages, \$19.95
BisonBooks.com

Tracing the history of two Montana families through four generations and showing how they came together in the third generation through marriage, Missoula author Bill Vaughn provides a story as much about Montana, its dreams, myths, and deceptions, as he has about the Herrin and Burke (pronounced "Bur-kee") family histories. Well-written and remarkably footnoted, Vaughn shows how the pastoral/agricultural Herrins, Republican stalwarts, united with the Burkees, city-folk Democrats who followed politics and government office for livelihoods. They were alike only in their common Irish heritage. One blurbist calls it "a dishy, encyclopedic romp through twentieth-century Montana history." He didn't read the ending. This is the story of declension – from assumed idyllic Montana pastoralism and warm, small-town community life to divorce and tragic death. Twelve-year-old Keebo Herrin was to inherit it all – a secure, landed, well-established family with strong traditions – and instead died of cancer, heir to family disintegration.

– Charles E. Rankin

LAURA INGALLS WILDER (author) and **NANCY TYSTAD KROUPAL** (editor)

Pioneer Girl: The Revised Texts

South Dakota Historical Society (Little House Heritage Trust)

Hardcover, 484 pages, \$49.95
SDHSPress.com

Pioneer Girl: The Revised Texts is the third book in the Little House Heritage Trust's *Pioneer Girl Project* that takes author Laura Ingalls Wilder's original autobiography (which was written for adults) and shows how it was changed and grew into the popular "Little House on the Prairie" series of children's books, with the help and publishing expertise of daughter Rose Wilder Lane. This tome includes further annotated revisions, historical information and documentation, and professionally edited stories and articles, all pertaining to Wilder's life, her books and her time in history. Adult readers who loved her "Little House" stories as younger readers might find this extensive book enjoyable, informative and memorable. Though it is hard to curl up with a book this size, there is something comforting about many of the memories it evokes.

– Jean A. Lukesh

BOOK NOTES

MARK WARREN
Last of the Pistoleers

Speaking Volumes
Paperback, 529 pages, \$19.95
SpeakingVolumes.us

A high school history teacher in the mountains of north Georgia pins on a badge when his best friend, the county sheriff, is killed in a firefight with local drug dealers. Because of his fascination with the Old West and his innate skill with 19th Century firearms, Harte Canaday proves to be an old-school lawman as he goes up against locals he has known all his life. Mark Warren is the author of the award-winning trilogy "Wyatt Earp, An American Odyssey."

Due to the possibility of cancellations, postponements, closures and delays caused by the coronavirus pandemic, *Roundup Magazine* is temporarily suspending "In the Chute," which lists upcoming Western books; and "Calendar," which lists upcoming book events. The magazine staff hopes to relaunch these two free listings later this year.