
Book Reviews

***From Cochise to Geronimo: The Chiricahua Apaches, 1874-1886* by Edwin R. Sweeney. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-8061-4150-3. 706 pages, ill., maps, bibliography, index. \$39.95.**

I am writing this book review, not because Ed Sweeney is one of my best friends, but because he has written, by far, the best overall book on the Apache Wars. I like to tell my friends that I have known Ed since 10 BC (Before Cochise, his first major work) so that would date his scholarly interest in Apache studies at several decades. Ed and I were in our early twenties and now we are both grandfathers. In gathering his information, Ed spent much time at the National Archives in Washington, DC, and almost every depository throughout the United States containing information on the Apaches. He also took many trips into Mexico to take pictures and to gather records that he translated in order to extract the valuable information within.

Admiring his interest in their people, the Apaches at Mescalero embraced Ed's efforts and he now has many friends among them and has been privileged to attend interesting ceremonies that have helped him understand "The People" better. Ed has also walked the ground where many important events took place. Most are not easy to find, but his persistence has paid off and has led to several important discoveries.

From Cochise to Geronimo covers the period after Cochise's death in 1874 to Geronimo's final surrender in 1886 in more detail than any other work to date. Ed has been able to fill in much of the void in all previous treatments on the Apache wars, but this is not to take anything away from the great historian, Dan L. Thrapp, a person deeply admired by Ed. Through his Mexican archives efforts and intense study of the Morris Opler Papers, Ed has been able to fill in details that Dan correctly suspected. Dan was one of Ed's mentors and would have applauded his achievements.

Ed has not only brought out new information on the principals, but also much on many on the periphery, such as Jelikine, Bonito, Chatto and Zele, all of whom were instrumental in adding to this period's tapestry. Even well-versed, or perhaps especially the well-versed in Apache history, will be amazed at his depth of research and findings.

New books on the Apache Wars will continue to be published, but I feel confident that for comprehensiveness none will eclipse *From Cochise to Geronimo*.

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***The Jar of Severed Hands: Spanish Deportation of Apache Prisoners of War, 1770-1810.* By Mark Santiago. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011. 264 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover, ISBN 978-0-8061-4177-0.**

In this book, Mark Santiago gives an illuminating background to the United States' struggles against the Apaches as it expanded into its newly-won Southwest. The Spanish government's wars with the perplexing, agile and diverse foes described by the single name "Apache" had not ended until Mexico gained its independence. Santiago focuses on the last forty years of Spanish rule in the region, with particular attention to how Spanish policies "affected the many groups of Apache prisoners" (page 9).

As violence continued between Spaniards and Apaches, the Spanish government had to adjust its goals "from domination and assimilation into pacification." (page 197) The policy of "velvet glove or mailed fist" that the Spaniards evolved took decades to put into consistent practice due to changes in organization and personality conflicts between the officials in charge of military actions along the border. Spanish authorities relentlessly pursued bands of Apaches into their homelands. At the same time they carried out this constant warfare, they invited Apaches who wished to make peace to settle on land near *presidios* or garrison towns. Those who accepted this offer – the *Apaches de paz* – were expected to help Spanish soldiers in hunting down the bands of Apaches who remained hostile.

Captives from raids on hostile bands were treated as prisoners of war and deported south to Mexico City, from whence many were subsequently sent to Havana to maintain massive Spanish fortifications. Almost none returned. The terror of deportation was calculated to serve as a deterrent to Apache aggression, and in fact,

the policy did reduce violence along the border, although the Apaches' culture and atomistic political structures would not allow a complete solution of the problem during the period of Spanish rule.

Santiago presents statistics showing a total of 2,266 Apache prisoners of war deported, and traces the journey of some individual *colleras* or chain gangs on their way to Mexico City. In doing so, he narrates events with well-chosen details that stay within the realm of fact, while still giving a story character, showing what can be done with a careful treatment of sources. Santiago invites the reader to consider the individual "participants, Apache and Spanish alike . . . flesh and blood human beings" and whenever "official documents offer a few glimpses into their lives" (page 10) he passes that information on to the reader. I found myself able to visualize the events vividly and my imagination was often carried away with the captives, as I pondered their sad fates in morbid fascination and not a small measure of sympathy.

The Jar of Severed Hands is a moving piece of non-fiction, and should also be required reading for any novelist suffering from writer's block.

Charles Stanford

***Kit Carson: The Life of an American Border Man*, by David Remley. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-8061-4172-5. 289 pages, [16] leaves of plates; ill. ports., bibliography, index. \$24.95, paper.**

Most of Kit Carson's life remains an enigma today in spite of this and several other biographies of the famous scout and Indian expert. He could neither read nor write and the only autobiographical work was one that he dictated to John Mostin, his clerk, who Remley says "stretched the truth here in order to 'improve' the story for prospective book sales." This was written down in 1856, before DeWitt C. Peters's biography appeared in 1858, and about which Carson said that Peters "had laid it on a leetle too thick."

Remley depends on histories of the Scots-Irish immigrants to relate to Carson's childhood and young adulthood. The first chapters of the biography contain

few facts and much supposition, and perhaps his later life, about which more is known, would seem to confirm these suppositions. That Carson had wanderlust, there is no doubt.

Much of what has been written about Carson can be found in the dime novels that appeared as early as 1848. The only factual information in many of these was the name Kit Carson, and the fact that he lived in the west. Carson dictated his memoirs to Mostin in reaction to these novels.

Much of this book is a web of guess work and innuendo, but at least his birthplace and birth year are known, although his childhood remains a mystery. How much education he received, or at least the amount of time he spent in school, is not known. His experiences as a mountain man and scout are better documented, however, not so much by him, as by those he worked for, such as John C. Fremont, whose reports on his many expeditions included descriptions of his scout's activities and were read by Washington bureaucrats and eventually by the public.

That wanderlust led him from Missouri all the way to California in a time when Indian attacks were common, as were other dangers, such as drowning, dying of starvation, or being frozen to death, all of which would leave a body where it might never be found. His life on the borders hardened him, inured him to killing. Remley, in trying to justify the many killings, points out that life on the borders was cheap and the rules well known. Retribution was swift and final and, most of all, expected. In a time when killing Indians was the norm, Carson was as rough and ready as the rest, and a hero to many.

In his attempts to explain the border morality, Remley sometimes appears as an apologist for Carson's and his peers' violent deeds. Although Carson seemed to accept what was considered a necessity, his later actions appear contrary to his early life. In later life, he championed the causes of several tribes, as both an Indian agent and as a member of the military in New Mexico and Colorado.

In his own time, and amongst his own kind, his skill and tenacity in these matters made him admired and perhaps envied. As he grew from boyhood to adulthood, he earned a reputation for honesty and loyalty that made him valuable as a guide and tracker. This reputation spread both east and west. It earned him posts and work, but not much money.

In his personal life, Carson married three times. His first wife was an Arapaho woman who bore him two daughters, one of which, Adaline, survived to adulthood. Because his line of work meant he was gone from any home most of the time, he sent her to live with his sister in Missouri to be educated, after her mother died. His second wife was also Native American, but that marriage did not last long, perhaps because he was gone so often. His third wife, Maria Josefina Jicarilla, came from a prominent family and was several years younger than Kit. They had eight children together, and she died in childbirth not long before he also died.

Long after his death, Carson came to symbolize the program of genocide against Native Americans. He has been viewed by some as no more than a killer. In 1863, he led the force that destroyed the Navajo's food sources and villages, forcing them to surrender. As a result, the Navajo were moved to Fort Sumner, to the east, on what came to be known as the "Long Walk." This action is reminiscent of the campaign waged by General John Sullivan against the Iroquois in New York during the Revolutionary War.

Yet when Carson's life is viewed as a whole, this is a simplistic view of the man and his peers. In his later life, he was often consulted on matters concerning the tribes. Many times he made every effort to improve the lot of the Indian population. He knew the tribes, spoke their languages, had married two native women, and was concerned for their welfare. He favored placing the tribes on reservations for, as he stated, trouble between white people and Indians was most often brought about by the whites.

Christopher "Kit" Carson died on May 23, 1868, from an aneurism. He left behind a legend that is both incomplete and contradictory. Although Remley describes as much as is known of his exploits, he acknowledges that later generations often see only the Indian killer. By emphasizing the more positive aspects of Carson's achievements, the author shows how complex such lives can be. One cannot view actions of another era, based on the judgements of today.

Readers may find the beginning of this book tedious to read as Remley piles supposition upon assumption as to Carson's early life. There is no way to know for there are few facts. In documenting the later years, Remley has accessed as much information as there is regarding his accomplishments and adventures. This

part is as enjoyable as it is informative. The author has included a bibliographic essay that is very helpful to scholars and readers who would like to pursue a study of the time and the man. The book is a quick read that proved to more interesting in the end than it appeared in the beginning.

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***Nothing Daunted: The Unexpected Education of Two Society Girls in the West.* By Dorothy Wickenden. New York: Scribner, 2011. 286 pp. Bibliography, index. \$26.00 hardcover. ISBN 1439176582.**

The two society girls mentioned in the title of this gracefully-written book are Rosamond (Ros) Underwood and Dorothy Woodruff, the grandmother of the author, *New Yorker* executive editor Dorothy Wickenden. Friends since kindergarten, Underwood and Woodruff grew up in Auburn, New York, where their parents enjoyed the lifestyle of the wealthy. In 1906, they sent their daughters to Smith College, one of the first women's colleges in the nation. One of the school's missions, the college president proclaimed in the late nineteenth century, was to teach its students to become "refined, intelligent gentlewomen." The two friends entered wholeheartedly into Smith's social activities: they played tennis, went on picnics, and joined sororities and other college clubs. Neither had career ambitions, the author states, nor "were they intent on finding husbands."

During summers at home and following graduation, Dorothy and Ros did what other young women of their social class did: they went to luncheons, afternoon teas, dances, and charity balls. In 1910 their parents financed their year-long stay in Europe, much of it spent in Paris, where they studied French. The details of their overseas adventure are based on the forty letters Dorothy Woodruff wrote home from Europe.

What follows makes up the heart of the book—also the most entertaining and enlightening part. It tells how these well-educated young society women had a transforming experience after they applied for and received teaching positions in an isolated rural school in the Elkhead mountain range in northwestern Colorado.

The fact that they accepted a paid job startled their parents and shocked many Auburn residents. “No young lady in our town,” Dorothy later recalled, “had ever been hired by anybody.”

And so these two adventurous twenty-nine-year-old socialites set out during the summer of 1916 to spend a year teaching the children of struggling homesteaders. Nothing had prepared them for the rigors of living in the Rockies. “Their sense of the westward expansion,” Wickenden writes, “came largely from Elinore Pruitt Stewart’s *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*.” Excited by the prospect of living in the West and envisioning themselves in situations much like Stewart experienced, they “were nothing daunted” by what might await them, Ros later recollected.

Their employer, Farrington Carpenter (who figures prominently in this narrative), arranged for the teachers to live with the Harrisons, a homesteading family of five who resided two miles from the schoolhouse. Living in an unfinished house in close proximity to total strangers might have proved awkward for the Auburn society women, but they were good sports right from the start. They enjoyed the banter that took place around the family dinner table and appreciated Mrs. Harrison’s keen sense of humor. And much to their surprise, they found the Harrisons “sophisticated and well educated.”

Wickenden is at her best describing the daily activities of the teachers and of the local homesteaders. She had good sources, including fifty long letters that Dorothy and Ros sent to their families from Elkhead. The teachers rode horses to the schoolhouse on weekdays in all kinds of weather. The region was covered in snow six months of the year, temperatures sometimes dropped to forty degrees below zero, and blizzards made traveling hazardous. Astride a large white horse, fourteen-year-old Lewis Harrison broke a trail to the schoolhouse each morning after a new snowfall.

Ros taught the older students—six girls and two boys (the more sedate class), and Dorothy taught the

younger children—ten boys (who were prone to fight) and two girls. They described in their letters the poverty of some of the parents—“hardworking, self-respecting people.” Friends of Dorothy and Ros responded to their pleas for help in providing clothes for the children—boxes and barrels filled with coats, sweaters, and other wearing apparel soon arrived. Wickenden gives a wonderful description of the school Christmas party, the room decorated with a tree, ornaments, colored paper streamers, and red balls. In the midst of a late afternoon blizzard, families began to arrive. The younger children shrieked as Christmas stockings filled with goodies sent from Auburn were distributed.

Ros and Dorothy were forever changed by their year in Elkhead. By the time the school term ended, Ros later said, she had lost her heart to the West, and she told her grandchildren that the year in Elkhead “was the best in her life.” (Ros spent the rest of her days in Colorado, having met and married the son of a wealthy coal mine owner.) Dorothy felt much the same way, exclaiming in later years, “I fell in love with that beautiful country.” Their former pupils remembered Ros and Dorothy with affection. A sixty-four-year-old businessman recalled his school days: “I’ll never forget the first morning when Lewis Harrison and the two new teachers rode up to school . . . I don’t believe there ever was a community that was affected more by two people than we were by those two girls.”

Dorothy Wickenden is a good storyteller. In *Nothing Daunted*, she describes with clarity and verve the adventures of two intrepid women; but she also tells much about western settlement and development at the turn of the twentieth century. For readers looking for a slice of western American history, one larded with human interest stories, this is the book for them.

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