

### Book Reviews

covers the period from 1630 to 1880, shows with dramatic clarity how smallpox, measles, cholera, and other European diseases swept through the Great Lakes region. This map shows that smallpox followed the Mesquakies west, striking them at Lake Winnebago in 1717, then on the headwaters of the Wisconsin River, and finally in their villages in eastern Iowa in 1762 and 1835. The text accompanying this map describes each epidemic, and supplies, when known, estimates of mortality.

The *Atlas* is such a spectacular piece of work that no short review can do it justice. I can only suggest that anyone interested in native American history, even if their primary focus lies outside the Great Lakes region, should look at it. Those whose field of study lies within the region must own a copy. The maps, the text, and the excellent bibliography make it indispensable. Fortunately, the University of Oklahoma Press, which outdid itself in the production of this splendid volume, has recently issued it in an affordable paperback edition.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

MICHAEL D. GREEN

*Soldiers West: Biographies from the Military Frontier*, edited by Paul A. Hutton. Introduction by Robert M. Utley. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987. xiii, 276 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$19.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper.

*I Married a Soldier*, by Lydia S. Lane. Introduction by Darlis A. Miller. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987. 193 pp. \$9.95 paper.

The United States Army and its role in the Indian wars have fascinated people for years. Many of the images, such as cavalry charges with blue-clad riders attacking Indians, have been perpetuated in print and in the visual arts. More recently some have replaced these stereotypes with others of a cruel army destroying the native Americans' way of life. Historical reality has often received little attention. These two books, in their own ways, suggest that the army was a society of men and women with their own frustrations, politics, triumphs, and tragedies.

The more substantive of the two works is Paul Hutton's collection of fourteen biographical essays written by leading scholars and a thought-provoking introductory essay by Robert Utley. In the introduction, Hutton presents a rationale for the work when he suggests that the officers are representative of the different types that served on the plains, especially in the post-Civil War era. Robert Utley's intro-

duction, a presentation he gave at the Air Force Academy, presents his ideas on the ways the army was shaped by the frontier experience. The fourteen biographical sketches that follow, each twelve to fifteen pages in length, concentrate on the period that the officer spent on the plains. There are accounts of William Clark, Stephen Long, William Harney, and James Carlton, whose exploits describe the pre-Civil War army in its roles as explorer, planner, and developer. The remaining sketches, the majority of the book, portray the postwar army. Among those officers included are the major Indian campaigners: Custer, Crook, Mackenzie, and Miles. Other officers included in the book had careers that were somewhat different. These include Bourke, who became an ethnologist; Hazen, who later served as an Indian agent; and King, whose writings fostered the popular view of the Indian wars. Some of the essays conclude with a brief analysis, while others include a discussion of the significance of the officer's career. The biographies are based on a combination of primary and secondary materials.

A collection of this nature can be viewed from different perspectives. Taken individually, the value of the sketches varies. All are competent, but some stand out for the quality of the narrative and the depth of the analysis. Brian Dippie's account of the life of George A. Custer is fascinating. His attempt to explain the fame of this failed Indian fighter is intriguing. One gains insight into this boy general who rapidly rose to high rank yet felt somewhat insecure when not the center of attention. Joseph Porter's essay on John Bourke reveals an army officer who is known for his writing and research more than for his contributions on the field of battle. Yet regardless of the competence or interest of the individual biographies, the overall effect is numbing. Many of the sketches recount the same episode but from the perspective of each individual officer. To look at the 1876 expedition against the Sioux from the view of Crook, Custer, Bourke, and others does not really add much to our knowledge of either the officers or the Sioux War. More significantly, since the editor made no real attempt to link the essays together, it is up to the individual reader to make some sense out of this collective biography. On the other hand, if this collection is meant as a reference work, then the scope is much too narrow and the biographical sketches too long. It is hard to judge this work, since its purpose is not clear. However it seems inadequate viewed from almost any perspective.

Another view of the frontier army is provided by Lydia S. Lane's account of her years with her officer husband. He served during the 1850s and 1860s in Texas, New Mexico, and the plains. Particularly fascinating is her account of the onset of the Civil War and the divisions within the officer corps as some headed to join the Confederate

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army and others remained loyal to the Union. For Lydia Lane, army life apparently was a succession of moves from one isolated post to another. She described in much detail the variety of problems she had in trying to be a homemaker. Written to inform her children of what life was like, the author seems to have felt that the officers of the 1890s and their wives had it easy; the "good old days" were much tougher.

The reader must wonder, however, why this book was reprinted. It consists mainly of accounts of travels across the plains, and tells us almost nothing about life at an army post, or even what it was like to raise a family in the frontier army. There is only casual mention of the author's children and little about her husband. Based on this memoir, the reader would come to the conclusion that much of Lane's life was a succession of trips back and forth across the plains in bumpy wagons. The introduction by Darlis Miller summarizes much of the book and provides some background information, but really does not add much to the paucity of information provided in the autobiography. Since there are better and more inclusive memoirs of officers' wives from this time period, it is questionable whether this particular work deserved republication.

Taken together these two books provide some insight into the life and times of the frontier army. Lane's autobiography is so narrow in scope, however, as to be almost useless. Hutton's biographical sketches are interesting but lose much of their value because of the lack of any overall analysis or focus. The reader interested in learning more about life in the frontier army should turn elsewhere, especially to Edward Coffman's *The Old Army*, rather than to these two volumes.

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*Prairie Women: Images in American and Canadian Fiction*, by Carol Fairbanks. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986. xi, 300 pp. Notes, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$22.00 cloth.

Carol Fairbanks's book, *Prairie Women: Images in American and Canadian Fiction*, is an overview of the novels of women writers of the prairie regions with particular attention to landscape and to the experiences of opening new lands. It is an angle of vision that has become increasingly important to both feminist and regional historians. The canon of books in this area has grown rather quickly: Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land* and *The Land before Her*, Glenda Riley's *Frontierswomen*, Julie Jeffrey's *Frontier Women*, Sandra Myres's *Westering Women*. The books are somewhat different, but beneath them lies a debate that is growing more heated. Western women's his-

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