

Book Notices

Handbook of the American Frontier: Four Centuries of Indian-White Relationships, volume 3, *The Great Plains*, by J. Norman Heard. Native American Resources Series, No. 1. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1993. x, 265 pp. \$32.50 cloth.

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Scholars always welcome well-designed and comprehensive reference sources, especially those published as multivolume series. Norman Heard, a retired university librarian, conceived the *Handbook of the American Frontier* as a four-volume set of regional books followed by a volume with a detailed index, chronology, and bibliography. Having already released books on the southeast and northeast Woodlands, he now brings the same organizational style to the Great Plains volume. Focusing on Indian-white relationships of the frontier era, he provides articles on Native American leaders, explorers, traders, settlers, soldiers, missionaries, mountain men, captives, battles, forts, and treaties, all of which are arranged in alphabetical order. The longest features run a full page; the shortest comprise five lines.

Although this series has been compared with Dan Thrapp's three-volume *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography* (1988) because they contain some of the same entries, the two supplement rather than compete with each other. Thrapp's work is more comprehensive for the entire span of frontier topics, limited neither by subregion, time period, nor the symbiotic relationship between Indians and whites. Where the two sources overlap, Thrapp's entries generally are sharper and more critical of sources, but researchers can profit from using both references. Certainly the authors have made a valiant effort to separate fact from fiction, but occasional errors do creep into some of the articles. For each entry, Heard and Thrapp wisely include sources for further reading so that researchers can pursue subjects in more detail and can discern the origins of these brief entries.

Critics may chide the *Handbook of the American Frontier* for overlooking certain subjects and overgeneralizing about complicated matters, but as a ready reference, it remains useful.

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