

The Standing Bear Controversy: Prelude to Indian Reform, by Valerie Sherer Mathes and Richard Lowitt. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003. x, 211 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer John P. Bowes is a lecturer in history at the University of California-Los Angeles. His recently completed dissertation is "Opportunity and Adversity: Indians and American Expansion in the 19th-Century Trans-Mississippi West."

When the Ponca leader Standing Bear left Indian Territory in 1879 to bury his son on former Ponca lands in Nebraska, he set off a series of events that changed the nature of federal Indian policy. Valerie Sherer Mathes and Richard Lowitt use this conclusion to frame the two primary objectives of their book. First, they seek to present a more in-depth account of the removal of the Ponca Indians, the *Standing Bear v. Crook* court case, and the lecture tour Standing Bear made after those events. Second, they intend to prove that the controversy over Ponca removal served as a catalyst for a western-born reform movement that grew to maturity in the East and culminated in the Dawes Act of 1887.

Two distinct introductions bear out the authors' goals and set apart the first five chapters from the latter four. Mathes and Lowitt first rely on newspaper reports and the testimony of Ponca Indians and government officials before a Senate committee to explain the causes and effects of *Standing Bear v. Crook*. Omaha journalist Thomas Henry Tibbles took up the Ponca cause and organized a successful lecture tour of eastern cities for Standing Bear after the court ruled in his favor. The second half of the book relates the larger impact of Standing Bear's lectures and the controversy they provoked. Publicity from the tour planned by Tibbles carried this movement for Indian reform to Washington, D.C., where Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz squared off against Senator Henry Dawes, the congressional flag bearer for the Poncas. Although these political deliberations resulted in minimal benefits for Standing Bear's people, they nonetheless provoked important discussions regarding legal protection, Indian citizenship, and allotment.

The first section of the book successfully argues for the need to discuss the wider repercussions of Standing Bear's actions. Tibbles, Dawes, and reformers such as Helen Hunt Jackson were undeniably inspired by the Poncas' plight. However, the second half of the book focuses on the power struggle between Schurz and Dawes to the detriment of other analytical threads. Although the authors trace links between debates over Indian citizenship and the status of freedpeople after Reconstruction, their surface treatment of these connections raises more questions than it answers. Nor do they convincingly prove that the Ponca controversy served as the primary impulse for allotment. The 1887 legislation may carry Dawes's name, but prior applications

of individual land ownership in the Southeast in the 1830s and Kansas in the 1860s remain important precedents. Yet these critiques should not lessen the importance of the authors' initial assertion regarding the Poncas' actions. Although this book more effectively traces the impact on individuals than on federal policy, Standing Bear's return to Nebraska clearly affected Indian affairs nationwide.

Buffalo Bill and Sitting Bull: Inventing the Wild West, by Bobby Bridger. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002. xx, 480 pp. Notes, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Michael L. Tate is professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. His latest book is *The Frontier Army in the Settlement of the West* (1999).

In the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, the name Buffalo Bill evoked a heroic image recognized worldwide. Dime novels and cinematic portrayals placed William F. Cody on a pedestal that honored him as the archetypal frontiersman—rugged, courageous, honest, self-reliant, and chivalrous. In 1968 playwright Arthur Kopit challenged the Cody mystique by writing *Indians*, which director Robert Altman subsequently adapted into a film titled *Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson*. Both portrayed Cody as a charlatan whose fame rested on his destruction of the bison and his self-serving manipulation of Indian people. In the 1980s, a five-part television series, "Images of Indians," demonized Cody and made him into a symbol of all that was wrong in American expansionism.

As one might guess, Buffalo Bill was neither the nature's nobleman featured in Ned Buntline's dime novels nor the evil incarnate that some revisionists have portrayed in more recent times. To set the record straight, Bobby Bridger has attempted a detailed synthesis of the published literature, and has tried to organize his work along a dual biography approach that compares and contrasts the lives of Cody and the Hunkpapa holy man Sitting Bull. This innovative technique, reminiscent of Stephen Ambrose's parallel biography of George A. Custer and Crazy Horse and Peter Aleshire's comparison of George Crook and Geronimo, offers rich possibilities for the broad reading audience to whom the book is directed.

Central to Bridger's argument are his assertions that Buffalo Bill had frequent contact with Indian people throughout his life, he learned to fully respect their cultures, he was a true friend to the Indians who joined his Wild West Show, and he frequently defended Indian rights and land claims when so many other whites favored their termination. Because relatively little is known about some phases of the subject's

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