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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

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THE SOUTHWESTERN JOURNALS OF ADOLPH BANDELIER, 1880-1882. Edited and annotated by Charles H. Lange and Carroll L. Riley. Albuquerque and Santa Fe: The University of New Mexico Press and Museum of New Mexico Press, 1966. Pp. xvi, 462. Photos, maps, drawings, bibliog., index. \$10.00.

THE PUBLICATION of this first volume of Bandelier's day-to-day field notebook is a real boon to all students of our Southwest. Let us hope that neither lack of funds, nor any criticisms, will hold up the publication of succeeding volumes. For there are so many little, but inestimably valuable, bits of information on local history and archaeology which would now be forever lost had not this most observant genius jotted them down in data-packed diaries which, thanks to the editors, are here presented in most readable form, for being expunged of the worthless clutter generally accompanying journals of any sort.

As edited, the work provides rich insights into a land and its varied peoples at a given period, not to mention the personality of the author himself. There is an excellent biography of Bandelier in the introduction, indispensable for a fuller grasp of the text's material. It clearly reviews his entire national and family background, the circumstances which led him into Indian research (and to adopt certain theories that influenced some of his conclusions), the unusual financial embarrassments which affected both his works and his human relations, and some personal quirks which leave an echo in the journals themselves. Such psychic failings, however much a surprise to longtime admirers, should not detract at all from a person we have considered great for so many years. They simply make him more human and understandable.

With little more scientific training than a keen intelligence, deep interest, and an ability to observe with care [and, let us add, the genius to survey and evaluate a site almost at a glance], Bandelier applied himself to anthropology with a passion that lasted throughout his life. Establishing the foundations on which a new science would rise was a task which fell to Bandelier . . . his most important contribution lies in his attempt to combine several disciplines—history, ethnology, archaeology, and the Spanish literature of the Conquest—in studies of America's ancient cultures. His application of sound ethnological practices to the interpretation of archaeological ruins set him sharply apart from the romanticizers of the American Indian.

This editorial comment nicely summarizes his contribution, a gigantic one in spite of mistakes that plague the lone pathfinder, or some erroneous conclusions resulting from vague theories of the times. As with the personal idiosyncracies mentioned before, these failings do not diminish the man as a scientist.

An expert on Indian culture, particularly on Cochiti where Bandelier spent the most time, Dr. Lange in his notes sets us right, when necessary, on Indian customs as well as Bandelier's relations with contemporary researchers. There are also interesting notes on many of the persons mentioned, based on material gathered by that learned and most generous gentleman, Dr. Arturo J. O. Anderson, formerly of the Museum of New Mexico.

Selfishly or not, I regret that the editors did not make profitable use of my *Origins of New Mexico Families* and *Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe* in this regard, but it appears that the manuscript was completed years before these two works came out, and no further editing was done for its regrettably late publication. I also think that an explanatory note on the Montezuma hoax would have been in order, for the benefit of modern readers, since the journal brings it up several times. It was prevalent in Bandelier's time, and he exposed it elsewhere. (See the very first volume, 1926, p. 355, of NMHR) Lastly, I do feel obliged to say that there are several errors in translating words and expressions from New Mexican Spanish; not simply because they appear in this book, but because it is a rather frequent failing in current books and articles, whose authors rely on Velásquez' modern bilingual dictionary instead of consulting older lexicons, or persons who are experts in the old Spanish of Latin America. Even sadder than this, for example, is the attempt to construe the baptismal name of a certain Librado Cabeza de Baca as possibly suggesting that the fellow was a clerk—it reminds me of a recent book on place names which translated the family name Cárdenas as meaning "chains" (*cadena*s). As I have said, this criticism is not intended to disparage the present editors, but to alert all current writers on New Mexicana to such pitfalls. This should not detract, however, from the general excellence of a job well done, and we close with the repeated wish that the future volumes are forthcoming, and soon, both for our benefit and for the greater fame of him whose name was most deservedly given to our loveliest National Monument.

Peña Blanca, N. M.

FRAY ANGELICO CHAVEZ

THE GREAT AMERICAN DESERT. By W. Eugene Hollon. Oxford University Press: New York, 1966. Pp. xii, 284. Illus., maps, bibliog., index. \$6.00.

REMEMBERING a book that had once before been sent to me by the Oxford Press for review, I recalled with pleasure its scholarly elegance and handsome make-up. Naturally I picked up with no little anticipation Professor Hollon's new book.

The Great American Desert has a handsome appearance and a jacket by Ansel Adams, whose nature photography is unexcelled. A glance revealed at once fine typography, color and paper. But there, alas, some of the pleasure cooled.

The writer stated his qualifications. Over an area of incredible vastness on *The Great American Desert* there was, he says, only one tract (the Great Basin) which he did not know well when he began his study. Then on another page he mentioned that he had made also "two extensive trips into and around the Great American Desert." But he did not sharply delineate his area, state his agreed-upon names, or clearly list his landmarks. It looked a bit like scientific writing whose bounds might occasionally depend on sentimental adjectives instead of hard and fast pin points.

Yet a more basic question than all is this: will readers consent to agree that high, snowy ridges and mountain passes, northern rivers, boreal forests, grassy plains, crop lands, wind-driven sands, and, finally, areas that produce water, uranium, oil, copper, potash, etc., etc.—will they believe that all this is Desert?

The author seems to challenge all comers, and he must, therefore, expect ignorant errors not to pass unreported. Thus on page 185 the reader finds a statement that Albuquerque is a Republican stronghold. That fact, if it be a fact—which it is not—will be learned by many, many thousands of Democrats over New Mexico as a great, great surprise. The Oxford Press is invited to check—though, of course, no one desires to appear unfriendly.

Later, in studying Ansel Adams' fine photo of a scene in the Organ Pipe Cactus Monument, I was compelled to observe that the sahuaro is confused with the massive organ pipe cactus. The two species do not look alike and could not be mistaken for one another by an observer who had any acquaintance with desert botany. Furthermore for a scholar who has made "two extensive research trips into and around the Great American Desert," it is hard to see why he has not learned about the conspicuous and common sahuaro. On page 18 he states that the sahuaro "grows throughout the southern portion of the Great American Desert." For the sake of the record it is stated here that from east to west clear across the

big state of New Mexico the sahuaro does *not* grow "throughout the southern portion"—that it does not grow in New Mexico at all. Period.

However, in this book there is much good reading. Especially in the later part this is true, as in "Challenge of the Future" which deals with the water supply. "Around the Rim," and "Desert Cities on the March" (which will impress many readers in Denver, Salt Lake City, and Albuquerque as being unfairly named). Others, like "The Cattlemen's Invasion" are good reading because of the handling of homely sayings and tall tales. Arizona is singled out as a "magnificent country." This reviewer concurs, adding that there the highly colored wastes at dawn and sunset must surely rank among the loveliest lands of earth.

The long bibliography is important—but where, where was Emory with his unequalled knowledge of the arid Southwest? All scholars in the field of Southwestern history know of Lieutenant W. H. Emory who in 1846 crossed the Southwest from Santa Fe to the Pacific, and need no introduction to his *Military Reconnoissance*. It has been a gold mine of accurate information to historians for more than a century now. In addition to his youthful military service, Emory was commissioned by our government after the Mexican War to draw the international boundary between the two nations. So he is not exactly an unknown. His duties can be indicated here only in the sketchiest way. Assigned to General Kearny's command, he was to fulfill the duties of a surveyor and astronomer; to estimate water resources along their route and the length of daily marches; to make contact with Indian tribes along the way; to collect plant and animal specimens; to jot down other matters military, commercial, miscellaneous; and report thereupon to Washington with accuracy and promptness. With the nation already at war, troop movements were of the most vital importance. So Washington wanted no second or third class man's eyes and ears at work in the critical desert area. They chose Emory. And the explorations of New Mexico, Arizona, and California in the *Military Reconnoissance* proved the War Department's wisdom.

After the Mexican War there was no longer a real excuse for listing together river, mountain, snow, farm land and forest and drifting sand to designate the romantic but unrelated hodgepodge "Desert." Nor is there now a Great American Desert, and the very name has fallen into disuse.

Then why did the writer deliberately—as it would appear—decline to mention Emory? The simplest answer perhaps would be that Mr. Hollon feared to compete with the sober, scientific Emory.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

ROSS CALVIN

PHOTOGRAPHER ON AN ARMY MULE. By Maurice Frink, with Casey Barthelmess. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965. Pp. xxiv, 151. Illus., bibliog., index. \$6.95

Books about the military and Indian affairs of the American West frequently reflect a scarcity of information on their subjects. This is especially true of biographies of frontier soldiers. Too often, available biographical material cannot match an author's determination to produce a full-length study. So, he dares not discard a note (relevant or not), for the way is long and the documents lean. The result is not good biography, because the subject has become little more than a vehicle for a reiteration of the familiar story of how the troopers tamed the frontier. Such a book is *Photographer on an Army Mule* by Maurice Frink, with Casey Barthelmess.

It is an attractive and well-made volume built around 116 excellent photographs taken by Christian Barthelmess, an Austrian-born musician who served in the United States Army from 1876 until his death in 1906. His skill with the lens has earned Barthelmess an honored place among those who recorded the Old West. It is therefore regrettable that "Shadowcatcher" (as the Indians called him) remains little more than a shadow himself throughout most of a book that purports to tell his story. Barthelmess gradually sinks from view after the first few chapters, thereafter surfacing occasionally, only to submerge again in a morass of minutiae.

His biographers faced a difficult problem: How to utilize the excellent photography of Barthelmess, pay him the homage they feel he deserves, while having barely enough biographical data to write a lengthy article? Their solution is a familiar one. Write a whole book. Construct a "setting" or "background" for the hero by repeating the well-worn story of military campaigns and garrison life on the frontier. Heap page on page of tangential facts and anecdotes in the hope that they will compensate for a paucity of relevant biographical material. For instance, in *Photographer on an Army Mule*, one finds a list of Indian scouts who served at Fort Keogh in 1890-91, as well as the complement of that post from June 1, 1880 to June 30, 1881. The reader also will discover both the authorized and actual strengths of the Sixth Cavalry in November 1876, not to mention a breakdown by rank, job specifications, and their various pay rates. As a bonus, one learns that William T. Sherman earned \$13,500 yearly while General of the Army. But, the pinnacle of pedantry is attained when the reader encounters not merely the total weight of thirty-two head of cattle purchased by the Second Cavalry in 1879, but their average weight as well.

Many of the obscure facts may prove rewarding to frontier military buffs. Some will be delighted to learn the percentage of applicants rejected as unfit for enlistment in 1891. Others will be gratified to discover that "Rule Nineteen" of the *Soldier's Handbook* instructs troops to "fire low" and gives the benefits thereof. Then follows the history and development of army bands. While one chapter is given over to Indian scouts, another is devoted to a biography of Fort Keogh and the familiar campaigns associated with it.

For the most part, *Photographer on an Army Mule* is written in readable, restrained prose—save for an occasional outburst of hyperbole, as when the authors refer to "angry red sons of the wild wind." While documentation is uneven in quality, the index and bibliography are adequate, although the latter is not annotated. The greatest value of the book lies in the fine photography of Christian Barthelmeß. Some readers will find the photographs alone worth the cost of the book.

Sacramento, California

LESSING NOHL

EXPERIENCES OF A SPECIAL INDIAN AGENT. By E. E. White. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965. Pp. xl, 340. Illus., app. \$2.00.

HISTORIANS of the American West who have come to expect quality in the Western Frontier Library will not be disappointed by this recent addition to the series. First published in a limited edition in 1893, under the title *Serving on the Indian Reservations*, this colorful account chronicles the personal experiences of Special Agent White in the years 1885-1889.

Though he was a political appointee and only thirty-two years old when selected as a roving "trouble-shooter" for the Indian Department, White's general ability, his legal training and experience as a newspaper editor made him mature for his years; and his subsequent performance is testimony to the fact that field men for the Department were not always opportunistic incompetents principally interested in federal largess.

Considering his limited period of service, White's official itinerary is impressive. He began his work among the Eastern Cherokees in what is now Oklahoma; from there he went to Kansas to investigate the fraudulent Black Bob Shawnee land sales, after which he was sent to Fort Reno, where his campaign to eject the ever-present "Boomers" from tribal terrain was largely abortive. Perhaps his most important (and certainly most difficult) assignment was to the remote and isolated Ute reservations in the Uintah Basin.

Here the three principal bands—the Uncompahgres, the Uintahs, and the White Rivers—were then among the least assimilated Indians in the country, and, in face of the usual pressure exerted by local land jobbers, Agent White encountered his most difficult test. His courage, his timely use of a colossal bluff and some oratory befitting a stump politician proved most effective. As a consequence, a bloody incident on the pattern of the Meeker Massacre probably was averted.

Prior to his appointment as Indian Inspector in 1889 (the year he ends his story), Special Agent White was involved with much less exciting but no less important assignments in Indian Territory, Kansas, and Nebraska. Some of his descriptions of reservation life are concise and critical, while others are probably exaggerated; in any case, they are always well written and in the aggregate represent a social record for which historians should be grateful. Edward E. Dales's informative introduction is a distinct asset to this edition, particularly as it fills in the general details of White's early and later life.

The reprinting of an alleged classic requires a candid answer to the question, "Of what significance is it to an understanding of the American West?" If, on the one hand, one observes the many explorers, trappers, scientists, soldiers, and cattlemen whose journals and/or reminiscences presently crowd the shelves of one's study, and on the other, the paucity of interesting accounts such as White's, it would appear that the answer to this question is obvious.

Wichita State University

WILLIAM E. UNRAU