

ALLAN CHAPMAN & RODEO KATE. *Under Blue Skies.* Chili Red Records, \$15, allanandkatie@earthlink.net.

Allan Chapman is one of my favorite Western music songwriters. No matter how many times I hear “These Cowboy Boots,” a song on a previous CD, there are lines that make me smile and nod and one

that puts a lump in my throat – every time.

His wife, Rodeo Kate, can wring out feelings you didn’t even know about with her fiddle playing. If you think



OLLIE REED JR.

that’s an exaggeration, listen to Kate’s instrumental “Last Roundup Waltz,” the final cut on this CD, or to “Caldonia Stomp,” an instrumental composed by Kate and Allan, which kicks it off.

Allan wrote most everything else here. I’m partial to “Cinco Peso,” about a Texas Ranger who means business and gets down to it, and

“Western Star,” more poem than song, which is a tribute not only to an old windmill but also to a way of life.

My favorite, however, is “1*9*7*3,” about the year Allan and some other Texas singer-songwriters tried to make it in Nashville.

“We were trying to see the world through Dylan’s eyes, We were going to be Texas stars under those Nashville skies.”

It’s a song for anyone who has ever pursued anything with hope and passion.



JON CHANDLER. *Cowboy Critter Campfire Tales.* Arroyo Records, \$15, JonChandler.com.

With that deep, beautiful voice of his, Jon Chandler could sing a grocery list and get you asking him to do it again.

This CD, a combination of tall tales and campfire songs, is aimed at kids but will please anyone. It’s a revamping of a project first issued in cassette form in the 1990s.

The setup is a campfire around which are gathered cowboys who are also Western animals – a mustang, a pronghorn, coyotes, a badger, a puma.

Chandler tells stories – a mustang’s race with the wind, a fast-draw coyote that couldn’t shoot straight, among others – and accompanies each with a song. It’s a great way to introduce youngsters to the music, mirth, magic and myth of the West. And to Chandler’s fine voice.

E-mail Ollie at oreedjr@gmail.com and send CDs to him at P.O. Box 2381, Corrales, NM 87048.

3 Bad Men. Kino Lorber. Blu-ray, \$29.95, KinoLorber.com.

Chato’s Land. Twilight Time. Blu-ray, \$29.95, TwilightTimeMovies.com.

One of the greatest things about movie treasure-hunting, rummaging our own shelves or picking through the wire racks at Wal-Mart, is finding the classics mixed in with the sublimely ridiculous. How great it is to grab a favorite drive-in mainstay, only to find the next film on the rack is a genuine classic getting a new release for a new generation.



C. COURTNEY JOYNER

I’m happy to say my rummaging found both John Ford and Michael Winner, opposites indeed, getting the full Blu-ray treatment.

Ford’s *3 Bad Men* (1926) had been available on the massive *Ford at Fox* set and on a DVD double feature with *Hangman’s House*, but this is the best the film has ever looked on home media. Sadly, as

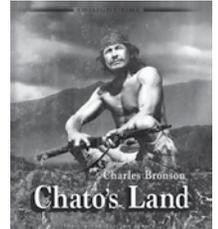
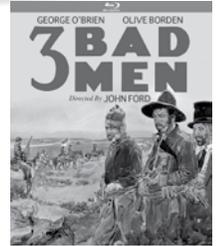
with most silents, there will always be the effects of negative shrinkage. But Kino Lorber’s transfer team has leveled the black and white contrasts, and great care has been taken to steady shots, showing off George Schneiderman’s classic photography.

It’s still a restoration of a film that was pulled from the vaults in rough shape, but it’s a fine one and includes the bonus of Ford expert Joseph McBride’s commentary track. McBride holds that *Bad Men* is Ford’s best silent film. I’m still swept away by the epic nature of *The Iron Horse*, but *Bad Men*’s realism shines through in its depiction of frontier struggle. And George O’Brien’s portrayal of a naïve Irish hero, who transforms himself, is a great performance. To nitpick, the music track is the same as the previous Fox releases. An orchestrated score would have better complemented the excellently reconstructed visuals.

Chato’s Land isn’t a reconstruction, but it allows a reassessment of the 1972 Charles Bronson vehicle, courtesy of Twilight Time’s Blu release. Certainly Michael Winner’s best Western, a corrupt yardstick at best, *Chato’s Land* remains a cinematic exercise in sparse and savage visuals. An almost entirely silent Bronson is the “wronged breed” being pursued to the desert by ruffians Jack Palance, James Whitmore and Richard Basehart. They all have blood in their eyes for the half-Apache, which soon becomes their blood on the ground.

Jerry Fielding’s score reslices every wound captured by cinematographer Robert Paynter, who doesn’t overindulge Winner’s love of zoom shots. The transfer is rich, and the disc includes an interview with screenwriter Gerald Wilson and an excellent essay by historian Julie Kirgo.

C. Courtney Joyner writes in many formats, including screenplays, fiction and nonfiction. E-mail him at olcourt@yahoo.com.



POETRY

JEFFREY ALFIER (photographer) and **LARRY D. THOMAS** (poet). *Bleak Music: Photographs & Poems of the American Southwest*. Blue Horse. Trade paperback, 42 pages, \$15, BlueHorsePress.com.

Anyone who has driven across West Texas to California knows how desolate the scenery can be. Yet photographer Jeffrey Alfier often manages to find beauty – albeit a forlorn beauty – in the landscape. Former Texas poet laureate Larry D. Thomas puts poems to Alfier’s photographs in this absorbing look at creosote bushes, cactus, crumbling ruins and rusting cars. The scenery might be Spartan, but the language and images are undeniably rich.

– Johnny D. Boggs

JUVENILE

MELANIE CHRISMER. *Lone Star Legacy: The Texas Rangers Then and Now*. Pelican. Trade paperback, 144 pages, \$16.95, PelicanPub.com.

Recounting the 200-year history of the Texas Rangers is a big challenge for any writer, especially when it is intended for middle-grade readers. The shadow of Walter Prescott Webb, Robert M. Utley, Mike Cox and other notable chroniclers of the Texas Ranger organization looms large. Even more challenging is the confinement of pages, allowing for only 120 pages of brief, serviceable text. The book reads more like an encyclopedia, touching on high notes of a certain period or character. Leander McNelly is given a few paragraphs, and the Cortina war is only mentioned once. Not much detail is given on any subject, and while the writing is coherent, I was left to wonder how accessible and interesting each subject would be to the intended reader. The index also lacked the same depth as the text, and is a mere concordance, a list of names, places and events that

offers the reader little help in finding the details of a specific subject. All in all, a mediocre book that adds nothing to the available information about a great organization.

– Larry D. Sweazy

S.J. DAHLSTROM. *The Green Colt*. Paul Dry. Paperback, 164 pages, \$8.95, PaulDryBooks.com.

The Green Colt, fourth in the author’s “The Adventures of Wilder Good” series, is set on 12-year-old Wilder Good’s grandfather’s ranch in West Texas. Amid cottonwood trees, pastures and the love and wisdom of the taciturn old man, Wilder works at gentling his first colt and spends long, hot days with his blue roan and with Tequito, Mexico’s best *vaquero*. When tragedy strikes, Wilder has to learn for himself that life requires one to “keep going.” This is a story of the sacred bond between living things, told beautifully, with grace and quiet power and shows S.J. Dahlstrom to be a big new talent.

– Nancy Plain

JAMES J. GRIFFIN. *A Ranger Redeemed*. Painted Pony. Trade paperback, 128 pages, \$8.99, PaintedPonyBooks.com.

Another well-written young-adult story by Jim Griffin. His understanding of how the Texas Rangers operated in the late 1800s shows his studious immersion into the Ranger culture. He also demonstrates his understanding of teenage boys, no matter what the century. Young Ranger buddies Hoot and Nate, along with much of their Ranger company, come down with influenza and are laid up for several days. The absence of lawmen on the trail of outlaws leaves an opportunity for crime to rise dramatically. When the Rangers get back to work, they find plenty of action ... and tragedy. This an easy, fast-moving read.

– Phil Dunlap

WILLIAM GRILL. *The Wolves of Currumpaw*. Flying Eye. Hardcover, 80 pages, \$24, FlyingEyeBooks.com.

In the late 1800s, a cunning wolf pack tormented ranchers in New Mexico Territory, and the pack’s leader, called Old Lobo and the King, outfoxed even wolf-hunting specialists hired to capture and kill the legendary beast. Writer-artist William Grill retells and reimagines “Lobo: The King of Currumpaw,” the short story in Ernest Thompson Seton’s book *Wild Animals I have Known*. Seton, of course, knew Old Lobo well, and older children will get to know Lobo, too, in this handsome, thought-provoking narrative.

NONFICTION

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON (author) and **DANIEL PATTERSON** (editor). *The Missouri River Journals of John James Audubon*. University of Nebraska Press. Hardcover, 445 pages, \$75, NebraskaPress.unl.edu.

John James Audubon, revolutionary bird artist and founder of modern ornithology, traveled the American frontier to paint all the bird species of North America, and he recorded his adventures in pursuit of this goal in voluminous journals. “No more extensive eyewitness testimony to the youthful United States ... was ever written,” editor Daniel Patterson notes. One of Audubon’s most colorful excursions was his 1843 trip to the Upper Missouri country, in search, not of birds this time, but of western quadrupeds. An indefatigable researcher, Patterson has unearthed portions of the original Missouri River journals thought to have been destroyed by Audubon’s granddaughter after she produced her own, greatly whitewashed edition of his writings. Patterson includes the original journals and the granddaughter’s work. Word-for-word comparison reveals an Audubon far less concerned about conservation

than his granddaughter wished later generations to believe. Replete with Patterson's superb commentary, this is an important, groundbreaking work.

– Nancy Plain

JOHN P. BOWES. *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 328 pages, \$29.95, OUPress.com.

This volume in the "New Directions in Native American Studies Series" provides a much needed narrative about Andrew Jackson's Indian removal policies. Most historians focus on the removal plight of the indigenous people of the southeastern United States. John Bowes, however, provides a new look at the same politics and how they destroyed the culture of and violated every treaty with the various native peoples of the Ohio River. The case studies of the Delaware, Seneca, Cayuga, Odawa, Oneida, Wyandot, Potawatomi and Shawnee tribes provide useful insights into their removal to Kansas and ultimately Indian Territory. An important addition to any historian's library.

– Vernon Schmid

AUSTIN FISHER (editor). *Spaghetti Westerns at the Crossroads: Studies in Relocation, Transition and Appropriation.* Edinburgh University Press. Hardcover, 304 pages, \$110, EdinburghUniversityPress.com.

For years, European Westerns have intrigued not only moviegoers and critics but also scholars. For proof, Google "Sir Christopher Frayling." Frayling, the dean of "spaghetti" academia, is naturally included in this collection of 12 essays that reappraise some standards and illustrate the diverseness of the genre. The writing won't appeal to casual moviegoers, but serious film scholars will glean plenty of material worthy of discourse. And spaghetti fans might find a few obscure titles worth tracking down.

JANET GINGOLD (editor). *The LaVonne Houlton Compendium: Ponies, Poetry and Prose.* AlphaGraphics Commercial Printing Services.

Paperback, 212 pages, \$33, jgingold46@gmail.com.

Lovers of Morgan horses and horses in general will find an abundance of material to interest them in this large volume of stories, poems and captioned pictures. Written by LaVonne Houlton and collected by her friend Janet Gingold, it is published in a large 8.5-by-11-inch format and divided into three parts: historic horse articles, poetry and personal prose. Houlton's lifelong love of the Morgan breed radiates brightly throughout the book. Readers will find an extra bonus, a CD containing photos from the National Museum of the Morgan Horse and the LaVonne Houlton collections.

– Lynn Bueling

PAUL L. HEDREN. *Powder River: Disastrous Opening of the Great Sioux War.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 452 pages, \$34.95, OUPress.com.

Proof of Paul Hedren's interest in and knowledge of events and people associated with frontier history can be found while browsing through his large catalog of published books and articles. This latest title concentrates on the beginning of the Great Sioux War of 1876-77. The book's large bibliography attests to the study of primary sources he used to shape the story into a rewarding read. The story begins on March 17, 1876, when six cavalry companies attacked a Cheyenne village, continues for several months and gives witness to hardships, incompetence and loss of life. Hedren's book represents solid history laced with the latest in scholarship.

– Lynn Bueling

CHARLOTTE HINGER. *Nicodemus: Post-reconstruction Politics and Racial Justice in Western Kansas.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 280 pages, \$29.95, oupress.com.

As Reconstruction ended in the post-Civil War South and freed slaves found themselves at loose ends and excluded from opportunity, many were lured westward with promises of land and improved prospects. The village of Nicodemus was established

in northwestern Kansas to welcome freedmen as well as freemen. Hinger's carefully researched book recounts the experience through the stories of three of Nicodemus's most important and influential citizens, tracing developments and disagreements concerning settlement, government and a future course toward finding justice for oppressed African Americans.

– Rod Miller

HENRYK HOFFMANN. *Four Hollywood Legends in World Literature: References to Bogart, Cooper, Gable and Tracy.* BearManor. Hardcover, trade paperback, 944 pages, \$52.95, \$42.95, BearManorMedia.com.

Humphrey Bogart, Gary Cooper, Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy definitely made an impression on the movie-going public, but Henryk Hoffmann, a noted film-reference historian, shows us just how they also impacted popular culture. This massive undertaking reveals how often references to these actors – all of whom starred in Westerns, by the way – have shown up in novels, short stories, plays, poems and nonfiction books over the past 80 years. The writers who have mentioned them range from F. Scott Fitzgerald, James Michener, John Updike and Tim O'Brien to Bill Crider, Loren D. Estleman, Andrew J. Fenady and Bill Pronzini.

CHUCK HORNUNG. *Wyatt Earp's Cow-boy Campaign: The Bloody Restoration of Law and Order Along the Mexican Border, 1882.* McFarland. Paperback, 316 pages, \$39.95, McFarlandBooks.com.

The author examines the post-Tombstone campaign he says is often misnamed "Wyatt Earp's Vendetta Ride." In Parts 1 and 2, Chuck Hornung goes over well-covered ground about the myths and legends surrounding Earp and the Cochise County war with the Cowboys (think Clantons, McLaurys and Gunfight Near the O.K. Corral). In Part 3, though, he analyzes every line of the "Otero Letter," which provides new information about the time Earp's

“vendetta posse” spent in Albuquerque, New Mexico, after leaving Arizona Territory. The authenticity of the letter, supposedly written by New Mexico Territory Governor Miguel Antonio Otero Jr., has been debated, but Hornung says it “has provided the tools to perceive the master design behind Wyatt Earp’s Cowboy Campaign.” Wyatt’s federal strike force apparently enjoyed massive and powerful backing.

– Gregory J. Lalire

MATTHEW N. JOHNSTON.

Narrating the Landscape: Print Culture and American Expansion in the Nineteenth Century. University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 242 pages, \$34.95, OUPress.com.

Matthew Johnston discusses the expansion westward, 1825-1875, as it was depicted by early landscape artists such as Thomas Cole and Asher B. Durand. Their influence was less profound, he argues, than other media such as the boosterish railroad guides, promising a land of bounty and unlimited resources. These had “narrativity” in the sense that, with accompanying words, they told a young nation what it wanted to believe about itself: that the land was pretty, or “picturesque,” and that it could be exploited without being harmed. Rather a delicate treatise. Johnston’s prose can be difficult to penetrate, but the work is painstakingly researched and has wonderful illustrations.

– John Mort

JAMES H. KNIPMEYER. *Cass Hite: The Life of an Old Prospector.* University of Utah Press. Hardcover, 269 pages, \$36.95, UofUPress.com.

In the late 19th Century and into the 20th, Cass Hite wandered throughout the West, eventually confining himself to Navajo country in Glen Canyon, where he died in 1914. Hite chased after the legendary Pish-la-ki Navajo silver mine, but actually found a lost copper mine that turned out to be quite lucrative. He was a critter of his times, a hard drinker who got into many a scrape, but his colorful letters to newspapers, discussing everything from mining to politics,

were probably what ensured his fame. Hite spent his last years near Tickaboo Creek, raising fruit and placer mining. Knipmeyer’s research is meticulous and he has unearthed treasures of his own in period photographs. He also appends Hite’s autobiographical poem, “Trail of Sixty Snows.”

– John Mort

MARTHA KOHL (editor). *Beyond Schoolmarms and Madams: Montana Women’s Stories.* Montana Historical Society Press. Trade paperback, 321 pages, \$19.95, mhs.mt.gov.

This impressive work goes well beyond the limits admitted in its title. The Women’s History Matters project of the Montana Historical Society gathered more than a hundred biographies of women who contributed to the development of Montana from the 19th Century to the present day. Editor Martha Kohl presents the stories of Native, Anglo, Hispanic, Black and Asian women in all walks of life, creating a kaleidoscope of experiences of women who were rodeo stars, suffragettes, forest rangers, union organizers, nurses, doctors, temperance advocates and many, many other occupations and fields of interest. Numerous photographs enhance the book. Best of all, these stories – mainly of ordinary women rather than famous ones or celebrities – are enjoyable reading.

– Abraham Hoffman

VICTORIA LAMONT. *Westerns: A Women’s History.* University of Nebraska Press. Hardcover, 194 pages, \$55, NebraskaPress.unl.edu.

Popular fiction of the Western frontier has long been seen as almost exclusively masculine in theme and authorship, a sort of “male-centered frontier club,” Victoria Lamont writes. In this scholarly study, she argues that women writers such as B.M. Bowers, Frances McElrath and others should receive as much attention as the likes of Owen Wister, Zane Grey and Louis L’Amour. Lamont examines novels written by women, roughly from the 1880s to the 1940s, and analyzes how they not only deepen our understanding of women’s lives on

the frontier but offer important insight into 19th Century gender politics and the rise of the feminist movement. Fact: “The earliest-known ‘quality’ cowboy novel,” *The Administratrix*, was written by the suffragist Emma Ghent Curtis 13 years before the publication of Wister’s *The Virginian*.

– Nancy Plain

TAMARA LEVI. *Food Control and Resistance: Rations and Indigenous Peoples in the United States and South Australia.* Texas Tech University Press. Trade paperback, 232 pages, \$39.95, TTUPress.org.

Despite its somewhat stiff academic title, this book addresses how colonialist settler societies dealt with indigenous peoples in attempting to bring “civilization” to them. Specifically, governments sought to control these “natives” by creating a dependency on food allotments. Four case studies show how rations were used to get the “natives” to abandon traditional cultures and methods of gathering food. In the United States, the Pawnee and Osage tribes were coerced into signing one-sided treaties that put them on reservations and at the mercy of often incompetent and/or corrupt systems of ration distribution that left them victims of malnutrition and poverty. Tamara Levi makes a similar case for South Australia’s Aborigine population.

– Abraham Hoffman

IRAKLI MAKHARADZE. *Georgian Trick Riders in American Wild West Shows, 1890s-1920s.* McFarland. Trade paperback, 210 pages, \$29.95, McFarlandPub.com.

After Wounded Knee, when engaging Indians for his Wild West show was jeopardized, Buffalo Bill Cody sought replacement riders to compete with his cowboys in horsemanship. Historically skilled with horses, riders from the country of Georgia made an obvious choice. Joining the show afforded the relatively poor Georgians opportunity for travel and, more importantly, employment as members of Cody’s Congress of Rough Riders of the World. Led by

Luka Chkhartishvili, their appearance and daring performances were praised by enthralled audiences, even though Cody had unwittingly advertised the Georgian trick riders as “Russian Cossacks.” Irakli Makharadze explains the distinction in a readable text with myriad photos. He comprehensively identifies troupe members and describes the dress, weapons and skills of the “centaur-like riders.”

– Sandy Sagala

KARA L. McCORMACK. *Imagining Tombstone: The Town Too Tough to Die.* University Press of Kansas. Hardcover, 206 pages, \$27.95, KansasPress.ku.edu.

Kara McCormack uses Tombstone to delineate the war between the authentic and the inauthentic, history versus the Chamber of Commerce. On its way to becoming yet another ghost town, Tombstone re-invented itself in the 1940s, following the great popularity of John Ford’s *My Darling Clementine*. The town’s boosters prided themselves on their authenticity, but that authenticity was forever mixed up with Hollywood. McCormack’s conceits are feminist and postmodern. Although her argument that the white, macho West of Henry Fonda and Hugh O’Brian was so much hoey is irrefutable, she belabors a point that is hardly new.

– John Mort

E.C. “TED” MEYERS. *Mattie: Wyatt Earp’s Secret Second Wife.* Hancock House. Trade paperback, 286 pages, \$19.95, HancockHouse.com.

Known by her family as Celie, by her husband as Mattie and by police records as Sally and Sarah, Old West buffs learned in 1953 that Celia Ann Blaylock was the second wife of Wyatt Earp from 1871-1882. The author adds immeasurably to this early unveiling of Mattie Earp’s short life by explaining their mysterious years in Peoria, Illinois, and whereabouts in Kansas, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. He explains Mattie’s penchant for frontier town excitement, the “sporting life” and other avenues that ended with degradation, despair and suicide. In this heavily documented book,

Meyers describes an uncertain marital relationship seldom discussed, but also debunks some legends and exposes myths associated with Wyatt that may displease Earp enthusiasts.

– Stan “Tex” Banash

JERRY NICKLE as told to **C.J. DEL BARTO.** *Bringing Sundance Home.* Self-published. Trade paperback, 244 pages, \$16.99, BringingSundanceHome.com.

A great-grandson shines light on the life of his famous relative, the Sundance Kid, to set the record straight on 125 years of what he calls misinformation, exaggerations and inaccuracies. Among other things, he tells us that Sundance and his partner, Butch Cassidy, did not die in Bolivia in 1908 as popular literature has led us to believe. Instead, they came home, settled in the West and died many years later. Jerry Nickle doesn’t try hiding the fact that the Sundance Kid robbed and killed, but on the other hand, he was also a compassionate Robin Hood character. He includes pictures of the period to illustrate the people and the countryside.

– Lynn Bueling

R. ELI PAUL. *Sign Talker: Hugh Lenox Scott Remembers Indian Country.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 260 pages, \$29.95, OUPress.com.

Hugh Lenox Scott certainly remembered his years in Indian Country, but few people today remember Hugh Lenox Scott. That’s a shame, because Scott “had a long, fascinating military career.” Eli Paul has edited and annotated the portion of Scott’s massive and now obscure 1928 memoir *Some Memories of a Soldier*. This story of an officer who learned Indian sign language so well the Comanches called him “Sign Talker” is a valuable source. Perhaps Paul’s book will inspire someone to tackle a long overdue biography of Scott.

KENT D. RICHARDS. *Isaac I. Stevens: Young Man in a Hurry.* Washington State University Press. Trade paperback, \$29.95, WSUPress.wsu.edu.

This biography of Isaac Ingalls Stevens (1818-1862) is the third (revised) edition of a work first published in 1991. Stevens is likely remembered as the governor of Washington Territory in the 1850s and his involvement in the Indian wars of that time. Kent Richards demonstrates that Stevens’s career was as illustrious as it was controversial. As governor, Stevens encouraged white settlers while making treaties with Indian tribes. In 1857 he was elected territorial delegate to Congress. A Democrat, he remained loyal to the Union, though he had little interest in emancipation, and was killed at the Battle of Chantilly. Richards brings Stevens to life in what has become the standard work on the man and his career.

– Abraham Hoffman

CATHERINE HOLDER SPUDE (editor). *All for the Greed of Gold.* Washington State University Press. Paperback, 272 pages, \$27.95, WSUPress.wsu.edu.

A blending of the diaries and reminiscence of William Jay Woodin and the comments of the editor, this is the best account of the journey to the Klondike in the late 19th Century. Woodin and his father were not typical Klondikers. They went to the Dawson region not to mine for gold, but to mine the miners. They transported merchandise to the goldfields to sell to the miners for 400 to 500 percent of the price they paid in Seattle. Contrary to many accounts of gold rushers, Woodin’s account describes Klondikers as caring and thoughtful, men who displayed the same uplifting qualities on the trail as those at home.

– Harlan Hague

SCOTT THYBONY. *The Disappearances: A Story of Exploration, Murder, and Mystery in the American West.* University of Utah Press. Paperback, 276 pages, \$24.95, UofUPress.com.

Set in 1934 and 1935, this book could just as well have been the basis for three film noir stories. Scott Thybony, a prolific NPR contributor and an archaeologist, stays resolutely committed to his scholarly style in

tracing, not so much telling, three tales of disappearance. It is a book of three good stories.

– Edward Massey

FICTION

PETER BRANDVOLD. *The Curse of Skull Canyon.* Five Star. Hardcover, 282 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

Peter Brandvold's Westerns stampede across the pages in a fury, and *The Curse of Skull Canyon* is no exception. This novel features 14-year-old Lonnie Gentry, who has a penchant for trouble, and his 16-year-old girlfriend, Casey Stoveville, who tries her best to save him from himself. This novel is quite satisfying on several levels. It has no sex, no cursing and lots of tension as Lonnie fights for his continued existence. Good reading for younger and older alike.

– Phil Dunlap

BRANDON BOYCE. *Storm's Thunder.* Pinnacle. Mass-market paperback, 358 pages, \$6.99, KensingtonBooks.com.

Harlan Two-Trees, unable to find peace in either his white or Navajo cultures, finds himself in deep trouble again in a sequel to *Here by the Bloods*, and this is just as furiously paced as the original. Two-Trees plans to take the Santa Fe railroad out of New Mexico and to California, but outlaws and crazy killers spoil his plans. Don't expect much in historical accuracy, but if you want a fun, nontraditional traditional Western romp full of inventive gunfights and plot twists, look no further than Brandon Boyce.

ROBERT BRIAN. *The Last Hooray.* Bridgecreek. Hardcover, 206 pages, \$24, BridgeCreekPubCo.com.

The Last Hooray is a work of fiction that the author has suffused with period photos and newspaper clippings to give an authentic feel. The protagonist of the story lost his large ranch operation when Oklahoma opened its territory to the Land Rush of 1889. Then the idea of a Wild West show featuring

his old ranch hands, his daughters and friendly Ponca Indians developed. Unfortunately, competing shows created serious conflicts that led to gunplay and jailing. Historical characters such as Carrie Nation, Will Rogers and Tom Mix add to the story. The author writes and illustrates the book from his ranch in Oklahoma.

– Lynn Bueling

LINDA BRODAY. *To Love a Texas Ranger.* Sourcebooks Casablanca. Mass-market paperback, 448 pages. \$7.99, SourceBooks.com.

In the spring of 1877, Texas Ranger Sam Legend is hanged by a band of rustlers/outlaws and the game is on. He comes back to consciousness on the ground, alone, with the rope cut. Sam's boss orders him back to the family ranch to recuperate, and he starts for his North Texas home, but instead finds himself locked in a battle to save a woman on the run. Finally, he and Sierra Hunt reach his home, but they aren't safe even there. Told from a largely male point of view, the story is an interesting and complex tale of love, loyalty and family ties – from *New York Times* best-selling author Linda Broday.

– Linda Jacobs

DEREK CATRON. *Trail Angel: A Frontier Epic of Love and Redemption.* Five Star. Hardcover, 358 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

Who can resist a competent, tough, Southern belle from Charleston? Before you get to the description, you know she is beautiful enough to take your breath away and sexy enough to make your heart race. Did I mention competent? Let Annabelle Rutledge be my general manager. Oh, the angel of the title is Josey Angel. You might think because of title and because he is the trail guide that he's the main character. Not when Annabelle is on stage. To some extent that is a thankful balance because Josey carries some pretty heavy baggage from the Civil War. In fairness to Derek Catron, although his Josey Angel reminds me a lot of Josey Wales, he does share the spotlight with Annabelle. I just had to strain to see beyond

the bright sphere that encompasses Annabelle. She is so delightful and spirited, she almost made me forget to tell you it is a good story, too.

– Edward Massey

ELIZABETH J. CHURCH. *The Atomic Weight of Love.* Algonquin. Hardcover, 335 pages, \$25.95, Algonquin.com.

Elizabeth Church lives and writes in Los Alamos, New Mexico, a fact that certainly influenced her writing of this book. Los Alamos, being an important site for developing the atom bomb in the Manhattan Project, provides employment for the protagonist's husband. The wife, Meridian Whetstone, halfheartedly submits to his wishes that she set aside her dreams of graduate school and ornithology to be a housewife. He controls most facets of their marriage, which inevitably leads to Meridian's unhappiness and despair. An encounter with a young man in the woods, where she pursues her hobby of studying birds, leads the story in a new direction and an absorbing conclusion.

– Lynn Bueling

JAMES CLAY. *Hard Stone.* Black Horse. Hardcover, 158 pages, £14.50, HaleBooks.com.

A dying outlaw's statement sends detective Rance Dehner to the mining town of Hard Stone, Colorado, to save the life of a man accused of bank robbery. The outlaw Dehner killed said he had been hired to fake that robbery, but a witness says otherwise, and soon Dehner isn't just trying to save the accused's life – but his own. Prolific James Clay turns out an easy-to-read story that blends elements of traditional Westerns with a touch of *Perry Mason*.

ROD COLLINS. *Bitter's Run.* Bright Works. Trade paperback, 413 pages, \$13.42, Amazon.com.

The heroine, Morgan, on the hunt for a husband, has John Bitter as her target. He, on the other hand, has no interest in marriage, kids or anything domestic. Circumstances, along with a wily judge, weave a quick web of entanglement until the only viable option for Morgan and

John is to become Mr. and Mrs. John Bitter. There are some technical issues that hold this novel back. (Heifers do not produce milk. Marshal Law is a comic book. Martial Law, is, well, not.) Lots of head jumping from character to character sometimes in the middle of paragraphs. An additional drawback is that between the 1850s through the early 1970s, Morgan was traditionally a male name. It took a bit to realize that this novel's Morgan was actually a miss and not a mister. A traditional female name would have sounded like this 'miss' belonged in this time frame. All that said, the plot worked from beginning to end.

– Sandy Whiting

JAMES D. CROWNOVER. *Pick-etwire Vaquero: Five Trails West, Book 3.* Five Star. Hardcover, 324 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

Prospective readers of this novel would do well to read the first books in the series. Otherwise, aspects of the format may be confusing. In this volume, the Meeker family heads west on the Cherokee Trail. The story follows young Zenas as he sets out on his own and becomes a cowboy and trader.

B.J. DANIELS. *Honor Bound.* Harlequin. Mass-market paperback, 384 pages, \$7.99, HQBooks.com.

Author B.J. Daniels's 80th published book is about a spirited, commercial location scout who is being followed by a mysterious person who wants to see her dead and the stalwart cowboy working undercover to protect her. Sawyer Nash's job is to keep Ainsley Hamilton safe and find out who is trying to kill her, but along the way he falls in love with her. As the mystery unfolds and tensions mount, Ainsley finds she's in danger of losing more than her life.

ROBERT DEAN. *The Red Seven.* Weird West Books/Necro Publications. Trade paperback, 209 pages, \$11.95, NecroPublications.com.

When outlaws calling themselves the Red Seven murder Daniel Masterson and his family, his bounty hunter

brother vows revenge. Known only as The Ghost, the hunter prefers to take his fugitives dead rather than alive; he lost his sense of humanity in the Civil War. The Ghost picks off the Red Seven one by one in a series of bloody confrontations. Robert Dean punches up the dialogue with f, m-f, c-s, s and n words; this book should be kept away from children. Fans of Western novels who don't care much for scenes of women and young girls raped and killed, innocent children butchered and gratuitous violence may find this book unacceptable.

– Abraham Hoffman

LANE EVERETT. *A Northern Gentleman.* Senior Prospect Publishing Company. Trade paperback, 298 pages, \$11.99.

This historical fiction centers on the fictional character of Drucker May, a banker's son who flees the security of his circumstances in Atlanta to travel to Boston. Taking the wrong train, he then engages in a variety of adventures in Arkansas, Texas and Arizona. The plausibility of most of the adventures is questionable in the historical context of their settings. The author's compassion and insight, however, helps the story along so that the reader roots for Drucker even though he seems at times to be a little dimwitted.

– Vernon Schmid

DELORES FOSSEN. *Those Texas Nights.* Harlequin. Mass-market paperback, 320 pages, \$7.99, HQBooks.com.

Prolific author Delores Fossen's latest book is a screwball comedy set in the West. As is customary, there's a generous helping of chemistry between the main characters that readers hope will blossom into love. Unable to withstand the humiliation of being left at the altar and seeing her business fail, Sophia Granger enlists the help of a swarthy police chief to pretend to be her lover and the catalyst for all her troubles. Chief Clay McKinnon is reluctant at first, but agrees when convinced the deception would reveal the true motivation behind the elopement of his sister to a man the McKinnon family doesn't care for.

As the charade progresses, it becomes harder for Sophia and Clay to determine if they're just pretending to care for one another or if their feelings are genuine.

FRED GROVE. *War Journey.* Center Point. Hardcover, 327 pages, \$34.95, CenterPointLargePrint.com.

Winner of five Spur Awards, the late Fred Grove was among the best and most versatile of WWA members who felt at home writing traditional, historical and contemporary Westerns. *War Journey*, first published in 1971, is a moving story about a Baltimore artist who is captured and enslaved by Kiowa Indians. It also illustrates many of Grove's strengths: keen attention to detail, plotting, dialogue, and character development but, above all, an understanding and respect for Indian cultures – no surprise since Grove was of Osage and Lakota descent. Long out of print, this excellent novel is now available in large print.

DOUG HOCKING. *Devil on the Loose.* Buckland Abbey. Trade paperback, 225 pages, \$14.95, DougHocking.com.

Turn the devil loose and see what happens. People die in shootouts. In Santa Fe. Changing one's name, accent and location are about the only things that keep the devil alive. After killing a man, Owen St. Gnomebray (man without a name), gallops out of Santa Fe, rides through Mesilla and tries to hide in southern Arizona. Alas, his Cornish accent gives him away and he finds himself in gunplay again with the Santa Fe ruffians. Throw into the mix Bray's desire for a young girl — his *piskie*. She (and her father) accept Bray's advances, then reject him as a brute. She turns to an already-married thug who plans sending her to a Mexican brothel. Bray can't convince her the thug is malicious. Devils, gunfights and women. A true Western.

– Melody Groves

LINELL JEPSEN. *Far West: The Diary of Eleanor Higgins.* Wolfpack. Trade paperback, 227 pages, \$13, WolfpackPublishing.com.

Eleanor Higgins overcomes a horrifying childhood to marry at 16 to a photographer. They take a river steamer west to Bismarck during the spring and summer of 1876. The story culminates when her husband is sent to photograph General Custer battling the Indians, which turns out to be Custer's Last Stand. Lots of action and romance in this fast-paced first person narrative.

JON LAND. *Strong Cold Dead.* Tor/Forge. Hardcover, eBook, 352 pages, \$26.99, \$12.99, Tor.com

Texas Ranger Caitlin Strong is back in action, and this time she's up against home-grown terrorists, as well as ISIS. Dylan Masters has abandoned his classes at the university and it appears he may be in trouble. There's a stand-off outside the Comanche reservation gates and a man is murdered. Somebody is trying to blame the macabre death on Dylan. If you know Caitlin you know this isn't going to fly, especially when homeland security, Captain Tepper and the regular cast take a hand. The connection between the present and Caitlin's grandfather's time shows there's nothing new under the sun as a deadly toxin shows up on Comanche land. Unfortunately, ISIS intends to put it to use in this tense thriller.

– Carol Crigger

GINA L. MULLIGAN. *Remember the Ladies.* Five Star. Hardcover, 321 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

Orphaned at age 4, Amelia must learn to survive in a world that is terrifying and intriguing. Years pass, and survive, Amelia does. Chance encounters allow the now young woman to excel in a man's world post-Civil War. From such dire beginnings in life, can she make a difference in the world? Will anything she accomplishes make an impact? One single person? Influence a single vote? This novel was inspired by an actual letter sent from a mother to son, which stated "Remember the Ladies." From that single missive, Gina Mulligan developed a compelling novel that is interesting and thought-provoking.

– Sandy Whiting

MARY DORIA RUSSELL. *Epitaph: A Novel of the O.K. Corral.* Ecco. Trade paperback, 592 pages, \$16.99, HarperCollins.com.

So much has been written about the OK Corral I almost passed this book up. Now I consider *Epitaph* one of the best historical novels on the American West I've ever read. Historical fiction often suffers when authors dwell too much on historical fact at the expense of a good story, or, as in the case of most accounts of the O.K. Corral, allow the fiction to run away from the facts. Mary Doria Russel achieves a perfect balance. Learn and be entertained at the same time. It's "edutainment" at its best.

– David Jessup

BUD SHAPARD. *Medicine Woman's Revenge: The Life and Times of an Apache Woman.* Sunstone. Trade paperback, 254 pages, \$22.95, SunstonePress.com.

Medicine Woman's Revenge follows the story of Jada Morgan, who, as a 5-year-old Apache, sees her family massacred in a cowardly attack by a group of Mexican soldiers. Eventually, the survivors are returned to a reservation in the United States, where the young woman is adopted by the post surgeon, who is returning to private practice, and his wife. The family returns to Philadelphia, where Jada grows into a beautiful, intelligent young woman who graduates from the Pennsylvania Medical School for Women. She decides to return to the Southwest and start a clinic for the Apaches. It's not long before she is again facing the same man who led the troops which killed her extended family. This is an extremely well-researched book, one nearly impossible to put down. There are places in the story not for the squeamish, but the realistic descriptions are not often found in Western fiction. *Medicine Woman's Revenge* is a novel worthy of Spur consideration.

– James J. Griffin

HARRY SIMPSON. *Westward: The Journey of Adolf Nagel.* Andrews. Trade paperback, 256 pages, \$9.99, AndrewsUK.com.

Adolf Nagel interrupts the rape of

his 16-year-old fiancée by killing the son of the most influential man in Hocking County, Ohio. Escaping certain death, Adolf and Oskar McGill, his childhood friend, flee westward. Only 17, they embark on a perilous journey – including not only nature, but scalp-minded Indians and blood-thirsty desperados. They are drawn to the Rocky Mountains and the wild herds of mustangs in the Wyoming Territory. Joined by a giant of a man from Minnesota and a scrap of a horse wrangler from Texas, they create a horse ranch in this untamed land. As pioneers settling this new frontier, they would lead generations of the Nagel family to achieve their dreams.

DEAN HALLIDAY SMITH. *The Wastage.* Rowe. Hardcover, 582 pages, \$20, RowePub.com.

Dean Halliday Smith's novel, an inside look at the machinations of the Civil War, is an in-depth struggle to make sense of a deeply divisive war. While this is not a Western in the true sense of the word, for Civil War buffs as well as any writer looking for a "behind the scenes" picture of leadership – or the lack thereof – this is the book for you. Although a novel, Smith's research and facts are right on. He brings the war front and center. At times, it's hard to tell fact from fiction.

– Melody Groves

CURT VON FANGE. *A Civil Issue.* Five Star. Hardcover, 392 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

Categorized by the publisher as Genre: Historical Thriller. What we have is Scope – Andersonville mud to mining town mud in Colorado. Gold – Civil war shipments to ore shipments. Technology – new and unstable TNT to evolving smelting techniques. Characters real and fictional – from heroic Henri to storied President Grant. All of this in a big story and a big book (about 120,000 words), full of big paragraphs, big personalities and big doings. Come prepared to concentrate. Lots to learn in this densely packed historical thriller. Curt von Fange makes his readers work hard. He rewards them with action, intrigue and riches in the future State of Colorado.

STONE WALLACE. *Witness Seeker.* Five Star. Hardcover, 266 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

Chance Gambel makes his living escorting key witnesses to trials in the old Southwest. When a Mexican named Francisco enlists Gambel's aid in a mission of vengeance against notorious killer Silvano Ramos, the two set off across the region in an exciting pursuit. The story builds to a less satisfying climax, marred by two fairly implausible plot elements. A penchant for explaining motives, trains of thought and possibilities in too much detail weakens the narrative, and historical errors about the Mexican Revolution and Comanche Indians damage credibility. Characterization of Gambel and Francisco, on the other hand, is one of the book's strong points, and, on balance, it is an enjoyable novel.

— Loyd Uglow

KEVIN WOLF. *The Homeplace.* Minotaur. Hardcover, eBook, 272 pages, \$24.95, \$11.99, MinotaurBooks.com.

This Southwestern mystery won the 2015 Hillerman Prize from St. Martin's Press, and rightfully so. The writing is smooth, the characters flawed, though always engaging and interesting. The setting involves the reader with the people and the place until you feel you belong there as part of the community. The plot draws you in and keeps you reading without let up. In short, Chase Ford, who made the big time playing basketball for the Lakers, returns to his hometown. Friends from his past await him there, but so too does danger, murder and regret for what might have been. Wolf's debut novel is right up there as one of my favorites this year.

— Carol Crigger

JAMES C. WORK. *The Contractor.* Five Star. Hardcover, 192 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

In this novel of murder and legal retribution, James C. Work traces the sure-handed efforts of Detective N.K. Boswell to apprehend the killer and deliver him for trial in the face of everything the guilty man's brothers can do to prevent it. Although the plot is standard, Work gives it fresh life with

New mailing address for short story judge

Thomas Cobb, a judge in the 2017 Spur Award competition in the Short Fiction category, has moved. Cobb's new address:

Thomas Cobb
1700 E. Seneca St.
Tucson, AZ 85719

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an engaging narrator, Phillip Pierce, a young newspaperman reminiscent of Dr. Watson in Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. The dialogue and exposition ring true to the 1860s, keeping reader interest despite an admittedly low level of suspense. There is violence but a refreshingly low body count. *The Contractor* is no nail-biter but simply an engrossing story that draws the reader in without a heavy emotional toll.

— Loyd Uglow

R.G. YOHO. *Return to Matewan.* White Feather. Trade paperback, 195 pages, \$15.95, WhiteFeatherPress.com.

R.G. Yoho moves away from the traditional Western – and into his stamping grounds – in this engaging historical novel set in West Virginia in the 1920s. “Cowboy” Morgan Cobb, a trouble-shooter for the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, returns from Ludlow, Colorado, to the coal-mining town of Matewan, where he's hired to bring in young Billy Hatfield, who is making life difficult for the militant mining companies and Baldwin-Felts by avenging the murder of his father, a county sheriff. Hatfield just happens to be Cobb's cousin. Yoho puts his heart into this novel, and it shows. *Return to Matewan* chronicles a bloody, often overlooked time in U.S. history when mine owners hired detectives to retaliate against striking miners. It also illustrates how Western things could get in West Virginia.

BOOK NOTES

JOHNNY D. BOGGS. *Top Soldier.* Center Point. Hardcover, 285 pages, \$33.95, CenterpointLargePrint.com.

A young Texas boy struggles while waiting for his father's return from the Civil War and in the years immediately afterward, trying to discern if his dad was a hero or was, and remains, a coward.

WILLIAM W. JOHNSTONE with **J.A. JOHNSTONE.** *Colter's Journey.* Kensington. Hardcover, 295 pages, \$27.95, KensingtonBooks.com.

An Oregon-bound greenhorn teenager from Pennsylvania teams up with a one-eyed mountain man in 1845 to stop a gang of cutthroats from starting an Indian war that could turn Wyoming into a bloody battleground.

THOMAS J. JOEL (author) and **NICHOLAS J. WHARTON** (maps). *Denver Landmarks and Historic Districts, Second Edition.* University Press of Colorado. Paperback, 216 pages, \$26.95, UPColorado.com.

This well-illustrated guide highlights Denver's 51 historic districts and more than 330 landmarked properties, including banks, churches, clubs, hotels, libraries, schools, restaurants, mansions and show homes.

ROBERT MATZEN. *Mission: Jimmy Stewart and the Fight for Europe.* GoodKnight. Hardcover, 416 pages, \$28.95, GoodKnightBooks.com.

Ever wonder how James Stewart went from playing the gentle soul in lighthearted movies like *Destry Rides Again* and *The Philadelphia Story* to emotionally scarred, volatile heroes in *Winchester '73* and *The Naked Spur*? Robert Matzen delivers an argument for the transformation in this gripping narrative of Stewart's war years, during which he flew 20 bombing missions over Germany and France. Nonfiction purists will rightfully frown over Matzen's “getting inside his subject's head,” as Leonard Maltin calls it in the foreword. Stewart rarely spoke of his war experiences. Yet this harrowing look at combat and the stress of command is hard to put down. After reading this, you'll never watch *Twelve O'Clock High* without imagining Stewart in the Gregory Peck role, but you'll understand how Stewart could be so convincing as a good man with a dark side.