

NONFICTION

BOB ALEXANDER. *Whiskey River Ranger: The Old West Life of Baz Outlaw.* University of North Texas Press. Hardcover, 373 pages, \$34.95, UNTPress.unt.edu.

The lure of the West and maybe other reasons drew Baz Outlaw away from his family's beloved Georgia. With a name like Baz Outlaw, you might not suspect that he became a lawman. Not only was he a lawman, he was also one of the toughest and most effective Texas Rangers of the storied Frontier Battalion. Superiors said that Outlaw knew not fear and was worth two or three ordinary men in a tight spot. He also served as a deputy U.S. marshal. Unfortunately, a nasty alcohol problem made him a nightmare to supervise and work with. It would lead this brave man to his ruin during a meeting with Constable John Selman, the man who killed John Wesley Hardin.

– Monty McCord

MIKE ANDERSON. *Warren Ballpark.* Arcadia. Trade paperback, 127 pages, \$21.99, ArcadiaPublishing.com.

Few baseball parks can match the history of Warren Ballpark, which opened outside of Bisbee, Arizona, in 1909 – making it older than Alabama's Rickwood Field (1910). Several ex-Chicago White Sox players, banned after the 1919 "Black Sox" scandal, played in an "outlaw" league here, and the stadium – still in existence today – saw players and managers like Jim Thorpe, Tris Speaker, Honus Wagner, John McGraw and Billy Martin. The park also served as a holding pen for striking copper miners during the infamous Bisbee Deportation of 1917. Mike Anderson – not to be confused with the Mike Anderson of Phillies, Cardinals and *Bleacher Bums* fame – chronicles the storied ballpark in this well-illustrated (it is an Arcadia book, after all) history.

SHELLEY ARMITAGE. *Walking the Llano: A Texas Memoir of Place.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 216 pages, \$24.95, OUPress.com.

Shelley Armitage sprinkles her memoir with history and facts on living in the Texas Panhandle. During a two-year period she lost both her mother and a brother, and her family farm became a friend, a confidante, a healer. She writes about connecting with the past and a grieving spirit, and connecting with the land as owner and caretaker. Armitage noted at an author talk that writing her memoir became more "about shaping memory." The author accurately captures, with vivid imagery, the haunting beauty of the Texas plains, sprinkled with humorous tales of growing up in this vast place. The Llano Estacado stretches for 37,500 square miles, and is one of the largest tablelands on the continent.

– Natalie Bright

JOHN W. DAVIS. *The Trial of Tom Horn.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 358 pages, \$29.95, OUPress.com.

The murder of a relatively unknown 14-year-old boy might not make major headlines, but in 1901, Willie Nickell's did. He may not have been the intended target for assassination, but the trial of his accused killer, Tom Horn, owned the headlines for two years. A classic battle between large cattle ranchers and homesteaders played out in a Cheyenne courtroom, with Horn's life in the balance. John W. Davis does a masterful job of making the trial of America's most famous stock detective come to life. The meticulously detailed account of the trial is presented in a manner that is difficult to put down. Besides Horn, here portrayed is the aggressive prosecutor Walter Stoll versus a defense team of five accomplished attorneys. Who wins?

– Monty McCord

PATRICK DEAREN. *Bitter Waters: The Struggles of the Pecos River.* Univer-

sity of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 256 pages, \$29.95, OUPress.com.

The Pecos begins in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains near Santa Fe, New Mexico. Its pristine waters don't stay that way long. In 1857, the explorer Edward Beale offered this observation: "A more stupid and uninteresting river cannot be imagined – rapid, muddy, brackish, timberless, and hard to get at." The Pecos, or El Salado, flows across the salty Permian Sea basin of New Mexico, and is often too brackish for fish. Nonetheless, settlers and developers came in droves to build earthen dams to irrigate crops. Sometimes, they succeeded, but irrigation left a salty residue, reducing fertility, while periodic floods washed out the dams. Stewardship has improved somewhat, but the river's a wreck. Patrick Dearen, who won a Spur in 2015 for his novel *The Big Drift*, has given us a scholarly, detailed, sobering history of environmental abuse, complete with maps and captivating photographs.

– John Mort

GLEN SAMPLE ELY. *The Texas Frontier and the Butterfield Overland Mail 1858-1861.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 354 pages, \$34.95, OUPress.com.

A must-have for anyone interested in Texas or transportation history, this is the story of the antebellum Texas frontier, from the Red River to El Paso. It's also a tale of people who lived along that frontier and the communities in which they worked. From 1858-1861, Butterfield Overland Mail passed through northern Texas on its way from St. Louis to San Francisco. The Texas frontier was an area where different populations connected, often clashing. This book and photos tell of forgotten hardships and dreams. Well-documented, fascinating stories of pioneers – the people brave enough to venture to Texas – make this book relatable to today's lives.

– Melody Groves

NATHAN A. JENNINGS. *Riding for the Lone Star: Frontier Cavalry and Texas Way of War, 1822-1865.* University of North Texas Press. Hardcover, 402 pages, \$32.95, UNTPress.unt.edu.

Nathan Jennings, an Army officer, traces the unique military history of Texas from Mexican colonial days through the Civil War, giving the legendary Rangers a scholarly, sometimes rather dry examination. Skirmishes with the Tonkawas taught Stephen Austin's settlers the art of warfare on horseback. Thus began the Rangers, irregular cavalry with much the same brutality and endurance as the formidable Comanches. To defend the South, Texas mustered more cavalry than any other state – though, as a point of pride, almost no infantry. Texans were known for their “shock” charge, and when they closed with revolvers and Bowie knives they could devastate an infantry unit. But as the war continued, Union cavalry, infantry and munitions improved, and wild charges were cut down. Meanwhile, Texas was devastated economically, lost at least a quarter of its manpower, and had to endure Reconstruction. The Rangers were never the same.

– John Mort

JENNIFER J. LAWRENCE. *Soap Suds Row: The Bold Lives of Army Laundresses, 1802-1876.* High Plains. Trade paperback, 157 pages, \$18.95, HighPlainsPress.com.

A fact-filled primer on laundresses, those valiant women – and even some transgenders – who, from 1802 until 1876, were the only women “paid and recognized” by the U.S. government. Jennifer J. Lawrence provides details of the duties and glimpses into the lives of an overlooked part of the frontier Army.

JOYCE B. LOHSE. *Spencer Penrose: Builder & Benefactor.* Filter. Trade paperback, 110 pages, \$12.95, FilterPressBooks.com.

This brief biography successfully recounts events in the life of Spencer Penrose, who made his mark in mining, agriculture, tourism and other

areas. Colorado Springs and its visitors still profit from many of his ventures, but his influence spread across Colorado and into the larger West. While the reader comes away from this slim volume with a good understanding of Penrose's many accomplishments, one does not gain much insight into the man himself.

– Rod Miller

RICHARD LOWITT. *Twentieth-Century Oklahoma: Reflections on the Forty-Sixth State.* University of Oklahoma Press. Paperback, 424 pages, \$24.95, OUPress.com.

Oklahoma politics and historical development are reflected in this collection of essays by Richard Lowitt. Environmental issues, agricultural adventures, civil rights and the struggle of the Indian peoples who were dumped into the region by federal edict paint a less than positive picture of the territory cum state. This collection is a valuable repository of significant historical events that continue to shape the direction the state is taking in the 21st Century. If you want to understand Oklahoma there can be no better beginning than reading these essays.

– Vernon Schmid

MARK WILLIAM LUSK and NICOLE LeFAVOUR. *Sawtooth-White Cloud.* Caxton. Hardcover, 128 pages, \$26, CaxtonPress.com.

It's a safe bet that this book is as close as most people will ever come to the remote Sawtooth and White Clouds Wilderness Areas in central Idaho. Fortunately, it's as good a substitute as a book could possibly be. Photographer Mark William Lusk's rich photographs capture the stark beauty of the high, wild mountains. Sky, stone, and water dominate in a region where even trees and plants seem like visitors. Nicole LeFavour's contributions are labeled “essays,” but seem too brief for the label. Rather, they, like photographs, offer vivid images of high country hiking, riding, camping and inspiration.

– Rod Miller

RON McFARLAND. *Edward J. Steptoe and the Indian Wars: Life on the Frontier, 1815-1865.* McFarland. Trade paperback, 260 pages, \$39.95, McFarlandPub.com.

Ron McFarland grew up in Florida where he developed a boyhood interest in the man who became the focus of this book, Edward J. Steptoe. Steptoe studied at West Point, served on the frontier in the Seminole War, the Mexican War, Utah Territory and Washington Territory. In one engagement he led his men on a narrow escape after Indians surrounded them in the state of Washington. Considerable research went into McFarland's book and readers looking for facts of this historical character and the sphere of his activity can find them in this volume.

– Lynn Bueling

MARIANNE MONSON. *Frontier Grit: The Unlikely True Stories of Daring Pioneer Women.* Shadow Mountain. Hardcover, 208 pages, \$19.99, ShadowMountain.com.

“Thousands of women – black, white, Native American, Mexican, Chinese, Polynesian, and other racial variations – experienced the frontier.” Marianne Monson offers glimpses into the lives and frontier experiences of 12 women, from Gold Rush “boomer” Nellie Cashman to María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, the first Mexican-American novelist, to stagecoach driver Charley Parkhurst and even Makaopio-pio, “The Spirit of Aloha.”

MICHAEL P. O'CONNOR. *The Wild West meets the Big Apple.* Pelican. Hardcover, 204 pages, \$25.95, PelicanPub.com.

First-time author Michael O'Connor brings us a sampling of prominent Western figures who had visited, lived for a time, or had adventures on the sidewalks of New York. His eclectic list includes: lawmen, Bat Masterson and Pat Garrett; frontiersmen, Buffalo Bill Cody and Wild Bill Hickok; Lakota leader Sitting Bull; soldiers, William T. Sherman and George A. Custer; women, Libby Custer and Josephine Marcus; writer Mark Twain; Alamo

heroes Jim Bowie and Davy Crockett; and outlaws, Billy the Kid and the Sundance Kid; among others. Biographies of the individuals, descriptions of their experiences in New York City, contemporary images of related buildings and places as well as modern day color photos of these sites are included. I highly recommend this for readers who enjoy a glimpse of their Western heroes outside their natural environment.

– William Groneman III

BILL O'NEAL. *Sam Houston: A Study in Leadership.* Eakin. Trade paperback, 257 pages, \$19.95, EakinPress.com.

The state historian of Texas takes a different approach in this biography of Sam Houston. Bill O'Neal hones in on the leadership qualities of an "assertive, independent, ambitious Type A personality." Although focusing on Houston's leadership traits and how those traits were forged, this first-rate read still provides a fine overview of Houston's life and times.

THOMAS A. PERMAR. *Navigating the American West: A History.* Western Sea Press. Trade paperback, 286 pages, no price listed.

Thomas A. Permar's book is truly an enthralling and educational read. Permar's historical account begins in the mid-16th Century and follows western human migration into the mid-19th Century. The book illustrates how several people from a host of differing cultures dealt with traversing the land that became known as the American West. With exquisite descriptions of the landscape itself, Permar expertly incorporates the human element into this descriptive narrative. The stories provided in this volume not only exhibit the ability of humans to overcome overwhelming obstacles facing them in the forms of mountains, vast deserts and abominable weather, but they also add to the greater history and understanding of the settling of the American West.

– Kellen Cutsforth

JERRY D. SPANGLER and DONNA KEMP SPANGLER. *Last Chance Byway: The History of Nine Mile Canyon.* University of Utah Press. Paperback, 372 pages, \$34.95, UofUPress.com.

This is a coffee-table book for historians, lovers of the West and people who like out of the way forgotten places. Lots of fun and old and beautiful photos adorn the 272 pages of text, before you get to the 51 pages of Biographical Register backed up by 47 pages of Notes. Every taste in nonfiction is well served. Partially underwritten by the Bill Barrett Corp., a North American oil and natural gas corporation, the Spangler scholars have created nine big chapters that trace the history of Utah's Nine Mile Canyon from some non-specific date before 1800 to about 1936. That history is one of events, people, geography, natural resources and commercial adventures.

– Edward Massey

LARRY WOOD. *Bushwhacker Belles: The Sisters, Wives, and Girlfriends of the Missouri Guerrillas.* Pelican. Trade paperback, 295 pages, \$24.95, PelicanPub.com.

Ozarks historian Larry Wood chronicles another side, and sex, of the Civil War on the Western frontier. He tells the stories of the women who supported Missouri's Confederate irregulars during the bloody fighting in Kansas and Missouri. Many of these mothers, sisters and daughters were banished from the state by Union officials, others received prison terms and even one was sentenced to death (the execution wasn't carried out). A good source for novelists and scholars interested in this savage time.

CHARLES E. WRIGHT. *Law at Little Big Horn: Due Process Denied.* Texas Tech University Press. Hardcover, 315 pages, \$45, TTUPress.org.

George Custer scholars and buffs alike will have to take notice of Charles Wright's powerful indictment of President Ulysses S. Grant, generals William T. Sherman and Philip Sheridan, and Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer as violating the due process clause of

the Constitution, General Order 100 (issued in 1863) and the Lieber Code on military conduct. The charges apply to the so-called "Indian Wars" of the 1870s. A lawyer by profession, Wright produces convincing evidence that Congress never voted for war against American Indian tribes, that military forces indiscriminately attacked and killed noncombatant women and children, and that the U.S. Army invaded unceded Indian territory in violation of the Treaty of 1868. A reminder: Treaties carry authority as supreme law of the land. Wright also retraces Custer's actions at the Little Big Horn, highlighting Custer's incompetence and arrogance that led to his death and those of 210 men of the 7th Cavalry. This book is certain to ignite spirited discussion and render obsolete an earlier generation of writings on Custer's Last Stand.

– Abraham Hoffman

PAUL R. WYLIE. *Blood on the Marias: The Baker Massacre.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 336 pages, \$29.95, OUPress.com.

The author starts his account of the 1870 massacre of Piegan Indians on the Marias River in Montana Territory with the tribe's first contact with whites in a deadly encounter with Meriwether Lewis in 1806. The book ends with the 1884 death of Major Eugene Baker, who led the fight on the Marias while, it seems, in a drunken stupor. Paul Wylie's research is extensive, uncovering numerous sources. But he also reveals how cover-ups by the military, political intrigue and bureaucratic infighting all served to obscure events, probably beyond recovery. While the book makes a valuable contribution to history, the prose is somewhat plodding and readers would benefit from a more engaging presentation.

– Rod Miller

FICTION

RUDOLFO ANAYA. *The Sorrows of Young Alfonso.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 232 pages, \$24.95, OUPress.com.

In this autobiographical novel the author recounts the life of a young boy, Alfonso, on the banks of the Pecos River and plains of eastern New Mexico, his coming-of-age experiences in Albuquerque and as an adult. The story is told in a long series of letters to an unnamed “K” by an anonymous narrator we are led to believe is a colleague of Adolfo’s. Late in the book, the writer’s true identity is revealed. A beautifully written novel, Rudolfo Anaya dances throughout with sorrow, pain, poverty, philosophy, religion, love, culture, discrimination, activism, literature, writing and other thoughtful and thought-provoking topics.

– Rod Miller

JAMES CLAY. *The Robin Hood of the Range.* Black Horse. Hardcover, £14.50, HaleBooks.com.

I have read several of the author’s works, and he writes solid traditional Westerns. In this story, Rance Dehner is a detective on the trail of Ricky Cates, a vicious killer who will gun down even his own partners without compunction but has convinced some people that he is a Western Robin Hood, stealing from the rich to give to the poor. While the story moves along quickly, I didn’t find it up to the standards this author usually sets. Character development is minimal, and I found myself not really caring about any of them, good guys or bad.

– James J. Griffin

BRETT COGBURN. *Widowmaker Jones.* Pinnacle. Mass-market paperback, 378 pages, \$7.50, KensingtonBooks.com.

Robbed and shot, Widowmaker Jones sets off in pursuit of his assailant, a Mexican bandit feared on both sides of the border. Jones is joined in his quest by a fat and sassy Judge Roy Bean – whose “court” first tries him for murder – and a fetching gypsy circus girl. The unlikely trio fends off *Rurales* enforcing their own brand of law, renegade *vaqueros* and the angry *hacendado* father of a young daughter courted (and kind of kidnapped) by the outlaw, along a bloody trail to recover thieved gold, stolen circus horses and a jaguar’s hide taken from the judge’s saloon. Brett Cogburn again demonstrates a mastery of storytelling that has earned him multiple Spur Awards.

– Rod Miller

JAMES D. CROWNOVER. *Triple Play.* Five Star. Hardcover, 317 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

James Crownover takes a tidbit from history and expands upon it in this coming-of-age story that follows Tucker Beavers from 15 into young adulthood on a New Mexico cattle ranch in the 1880s. Although baseball figures into the novel, it is actually a metaphor for the larger plot. Tucker receives a remote pasture and range cattle to stock it from his father, as a start to build his own ranch, and learns the lessons of making his way in life and falling in love as he struggles to make a go of it. The novel is heavy on dialect, which is somewhat distracting, but Crownover uses it to build a strong voice for his protagonist. The novel is satisfying and builds to a gripping conclusion.

– Loyd Uglow

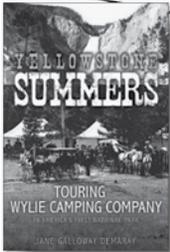
JANET DAILEY. *Texas Tall.* Kensington. Trade paperback, 249 pages, \$26, KensingtonBooks.com.

Janet Dailey was a fixture in Western romance fiction, a writer with a prodigious output. A pioneer – first American author signed by Harlequin – Dailey was a disciplined, intense writer. She died in 2013, but her publisher informed me Dailey had sold this trilogy to Kensington before her death. A spokeswoman said, “... she was well on her way with all the books in the series at the time of her death.” With this information, I read my first Janet Dailey: *Texas Tall*, third in the series. One thing I noticed immediately and appreciated was Dailey’s ability to send a story spinning. Rancher Will Tyler has been divorced eight years and is still not happy about it. He’s driving his daughter Erin home one night and hears on the radio of a killer on the loose. Tyler ends up confronting the man and shoots him in self-defense. But uh-oh, the real killer has already been apprehended. That’s the beginning of a taut, great read, or should be. Sadly, Dailey never saw a cliché she didn’t like: tall, tough Texan; equally tough, gorgeous ex-wife, still in love (maybe) with that hunky ex-husband; a bad woman who is *really* bad and blackmailing everyone in town to ensure Will is railroaded to prison for shooting her nasty brother. I couldn’t suspend enough disbelief to enjoy *Texas Tall*. I prefer more

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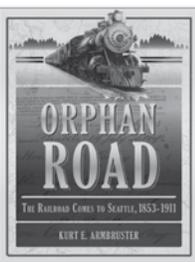
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subtle characters and less predictable endings.

– Carla Kelly

BUTCH DENNY. *Savage Winter: A Story of Wilderness and Survival.* Self-published. Trade Paperback, 282 pages, \$24.95.

Butch Denny turned from 16 years of researching and writing a biography to this work of fiction he wrote to “stretch my legs.” It reads as a real-life story occurring in 1974 and features the protagonist engaged in a yearlong psychological study called “Project Snow.” He would be observed standing against the harsh elements in Yellowstone National Park. Unseen observers, coupled with interested readers, track him through the year. Interesting concept.

— Lynn Bueling

WILLIAM A. DOUGLASS. *Death After Life, Tales of Nevada.* Black Rock Institute Press. Hardcover, 136 pages, \$25, BlackRockInstitute.org.

Uh-oh, I thought when reading the first few pages. Poetry. Too many metaphors. This is not going to be good. Boy, was I wrong. The other 12 stories are brilliantly written fictional but real stories of Nevada, where the author was born and raised. The subjects include early fur trappers, the casino industry, coming of age, the anti-Chinese movement, people who are broke, people who are too wealthy, being a Paiute Indian, cattle rustling, fires, ghosts and snakes. I especially enjoyed the stories involving snakes, even when the author got it a little wrong. “I have been thinking about rattlesnakes since we left the pavement.” I can easily relate to that. There is real history in these pages, told in powerful, masterful words.

– Richard Lapidus

MELODY GROVES. *She was Sheriff.* Five Star. Hardcover, 358 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

The heroine enters this tale unsure of herself – should she wait for the wandering man she thinks she loves? Should she nurture a possible romance with another? Will she ever marry? Should

she pin on the sheriff’s star? Surprised at that offer from the town council, she – like everyone in the growing community – doubts her ability to handle the job. But she learns to ride and shoot, withstands the ridicule that accompanies her every move and eventually gains the confidence of herself and others. An enjoyable and unusual story with plenty of twists and turns, but many readers will tie up the loose ends before the author does.

– Rod Miller

JEFFREY P. HAVENS. *Lewis and Clark: Fraught with Difficulties, Volume One.* FWD-LLC. Trade paperback, 274 pages, \$24.95, FraughtWithDifficulties.com.

Jeffrey Havens writes a version of the often-told story of Lewis and Clark’s expedition from the perspective of Meriwether Lewis. He covers that part of the journey to the mouth of the Missouri River, leaving expectations of the promised second volume completing the journey. The author’s writing style is quite verbose. However, scholarship for this work is suggested by the large bibliography he consulted, and his prior experience as an investigative reporter probably aided him. Havens relates a journey “fraught with difficulties.”

– Lynn Bueling

DOUG HOCKING. *Wildest West.* Buckland Abbey. Trade paperback, 258 pages, \$14.95.

Regional historian Hocking presents a collection of short historical fiction and true accounts, all focused on the desert Southwest, circa 1860. His colorful characters range from familiar historical personalities such as Kit Carson and the Apache chief Cochise, to individuals born or developed in the author’s imagination, like the unconventional Peregrino Rojo. Several of them figure in more than one of the tales, and there is some redundancy in the incidents covered. The two sections of the book are of mixed quality, with the historical accounts, in my estimation, being stronger than the fiction. All of them, though, present a strong sense of the mid-19th Century Southwest,

with its unique blend of three cultures, sometimes in competition, sometimes in cooperation.

– Loyd Uglov

A.H. HOLT. *Ten in Texas.* Outlaws. Trade paperback, 346 pages, \$15.95, OutlawsPublishing.com.

Had Will Gantry, the wanderer, been running away from something or toward something? Where was this nebulous thing called home? Was he at home anywhere or nowhere? He followed the siren’s call, to strange lands and stranger people. Through no deliberate thought of his own, he stumbles upon Running Water Draw, where the land, sky and gentle stream bounded by grassy banks ensnares him. Buying ranching acres on this Texas/New Mexico border, he sets out to put down roots. Will finds a widow woman, her young son itching to have another papa, and together the three of them forge a new life.

– Melody Groves

C. COURTNEY JOYNER. *Shotgun: The Bleeding Ground.* Pinnacle. Mass-market paperback, 346 pages, \$6.99, KensingtonBooks.com.

Dr. John Bishop, who lost an arm to outlaws and has replaced it with a double-barrel 12-gauge, is back in an entertaining sequel to *Shotgun* that’s just as much fun as the original. This time, Bishop is hired to help John Chisum (yes, Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid make appearances) protect his land and cattle from a mean bunch of bad men – led by Bishop’s evil brother. A screenwriter and film historian, Courtney Joyner peppers this homage with characters straight out of Spaghetti Westerns and comic books, plus dialogue that smacks of a 1940s RKO film *noir*. Think *Sabata* meets *Jonah Hex* meets *Murder, My Sweet*. And enjoy the bloody ride.

– Johnny D. Boggs

JOE R. LANSDALE and JOHN L. LANSDALE. *Hell’s Bounty.* Subterranean. Hardcover, eBook, 192 pages, \$40, \$6.99, SubterraneanPress.com.

H.P. Lovecraft meets Louis L’Amour! A dynamite-wielding bounty hunter

named Smith meets his demise in the town of Falling Rock, but the Devil gives him a chance at redemption. Smith is sent back to the West to rid the world of a crazed killer named Quill who has sold his soul to even worse deities than Satan. It's up to Smith and a posse of heroes from hell, including Wild Bill Hickok and Belle Starr, to save all of humanity from a fate worse than eternal damnation. Only Joe Lansdale – with help from his comic-book writing brother – could dream up such a fantastic, fun-filled corruption of genres.

– Johnny D. Boggs

JD MARCH. *The Stacked Deck.* Five Star. Hardcover, 324 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

This author dared to show the reader the disagreeable side of the hero, if you can call a young, despicable gunslinger a hero. From the very beginning, I found this character, Johnny Fierro, to be an angry, selfish killer without remorse. And, so did March, who continually displayed Fierro's overconfidence and disdain for those who wished to help him. Then one day two marshals from Utah came to town to take Johnny back for a trial, a trial that would most likely end with Johnny swinging from a rope. Most men would be eager for friends who wanted to help. Not Johnny, however. Strangely, I liked this book. It dug deeply into the angst shrouding a young man whose gun was all he'd had to give him confidence. The ending is satisfying and logical. A well-written tale by someone who obviously understands the harsh frontier life in the 1880s.

– Phil Dunlap

KEITH McCAFFERTY. *Buffalo Jump Blues: A Sean Stranahan Mystery.* Viking. Hardcover, 304 pages, \$26, PenguinRandomHouse.com.

Keith McCafferty has evolved into one of my favorite writers. Not only does he write an excellent mystery, but he also has something to say about world events. This time, his plot revolves around the government's slaughter of free-roaming bison. Two young Indians have a plan intended to bring attention to the buffalo's plight. Unfortunately,

the plan goes badly awry. The result is murder. Sean Stranahan, the series' main character, is good-hearted, smart, and subject to woman trouble. Aside from solving mysteries, fishing is his passion. The novel includes an intriguing cast of characters, notably the mermaids at the Trout Tails Bar and Grill. But most of all, McCafferty has penned one of the most powerful scenes I've read in a long while, where a broken mother explains the actions of her children. Highly recommended.

– Carol Crigger

LINDSAY McKENNA. *Wind River Wrangler.* Zebra. Mass-market paperback, 327 pages, \$7.99, KensingtonBooks.com.

For authors, there are interesting insights into the process of writing from an author who has been known as the "Top Gun of Women's Military Fiction" since 1983. She has sold 22 million books and has penned 180 romance novels. The first book in the "Wind River Series," *Wind River Wrangler*, is the love story between a best-selling romance writer, Shiloh Gallagher, and a black ops ranger, Roan Taggart. Roan now works as a wrangler on a Wyoming ranch, to which Shiloh comes from New York City to escape a stalker. Lots of authentic Western atmosphere, sexual tension, and two lovers who are willing to commit to one another in a meaningful way.

– Linda Jacobs

DAVID OSBORNE. *Carly's Revenge: A Carly Barton Novel.* Five Star. Hardcover, 226 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

Random acts of violence create the inciting incident and the revenge story of the title begins. Aided by Lee Marvin, oops, Clay Daggert, drunken famous gunslinger, Carly Barton learns how to draw lightning fast and shoot inhumanly straight then sets off to gun down the three escaped convicts who murdered her parents and raped her. She succeeds in bringing face-to-face slow death and pain to the villains and along the way falls in love with her now sobered up gunslinger coach and (from

a distance) protector. Oh, by the way, by the end, we come to like her quite a bit, too.

– Edward Massey

ANN PARKER. *What Gold Buys.* Poisoned Pen. Hardcover, trade paperback, large print, eBook, 412 pages, 576 pages, \$26.95, \$15.95, \$23.95, \$9.99, PoisonedPenPress.com.

In *Mercury's Rise*, Inez Stannert's husband, Mark, shows up after deserting her for 18 months. In *What Gold Buys*, Inez continues with proceedings to divorce him, not easy in 1880s Leadville, Colorado. The divorce is a risk Inez means to take in order to be free of her cheating husband. Meanwhile, body snatchers are at work, and when a young "newsie's" mother, a soothsayer named Drina, is strangled in their hut, only Inez seems caring enough to help the child find the woman's body, which has mysteriously disappeared. Ann Parker's characters are always interesting and entertaining. Her historical depiction of daily life in the 1880s is spot-on, and the setting of her novels puts the reader right in the scene. I'm looking forward to the next book.

– Carol Crigger

MATT PRESCOTT. *The Gunfighter Cincinnati.* Tortuga. Trade paperback, eBook, 258 pages, \$14.95, \$2.99, Amazon.com.

Cincinnati is an enigma. Basically, he's a brutal killer on the trail of outlaws with bounties on their heads. His morals are questionable. He kills without remorse, but only if he can make money on the body. Cincinnati's trail crosses that of Embrey Denman, a man who needs to get a lot of money to Missoula, Montana. He hires Cincinnati for protection. The story does move along quite well and is easy to read, well written and enjoyably paced. It could have benefited from editing.

– Phil Dunlap

DEAN HALLIDAY SMITH. *The Wastage.* Rowe. Trade paperback, 580 pages, \$20, RowePub.com.

The era of the Civil War destroyed our own family of American citizens.

During that divisive time, there arose many points of view, especially from various military commanders and the regular citizens. Included in this novel is tons of history, too much for a single novel. Way too many story lines are mingled where they do not mesh. Head jumping from character to character sometimes within the same paragraph sent this reader's head spinning. Multiple "rabbit tracks" of subplots create a non-cohesive story. Extremely difficult to follow any character although the history was informative.

— Sandy Whiting

JOANNE SUNDELL. *Arctic Will: Watch Eyes Trilogy, Book Three.* Five Star. Hardcover, 319 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

Alaska in the first decade of the 20th Century is an unforgiving land, especially for a team of Chukchi sled dogs and their human "guardians," Anya and Rune. Dark spiritual forces are at work beyond the earthly dangers, threatening both humans and huskies alike, forces symbolic of Stalin's communist scourge plaguing Anya's native Siberia. This struggle plays out against the backdrop of the brutal All Alaska Sweepstakes Race.

JERRY WILSON. *Across the Cimarron.* Mongrel Empire. Trade paperback, 213 pages, \$18, MongrelEmpirePress.org.

Set primarily atop a chicken coop floating down the flooded Cimarron River, the novel flashes back to the 1892 land rush into Cheyenne and Arapaho land in Indian Territory and the subsequent six-plus decades in the lives of a young couple that homesteaded there. Drought, loneliness, poverty, racial tension and finally rain and flood throw up challenges to the family's existence. While it's a good story based on an interesting premise, the book unfortunately suffers from significant distracting errors in editing and proofreading.

— Rod Miller

MIKE THOMPSON. *The Turbulent Trail.* Five Star. Hardcover, 288 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

We have a tale here! If you can stick it out for the first seven pages of non-stop narration (Chapter 1), you will be well rewarded. No matter what he does, Charlie Deegan keeps getting in trouble. No matter what kind of trouble, Charlie Deegan's guardian angel pulls him out of it. Of course he does. He needs to send Charlie into the next harrowing situation. Charlie recognizes this and leaves him prayers and gold along the way. Me? I think it's Mike Thompson. While his omniscient author gets in the way for my taste, I could hear him laughing as he dunked Charlie under the water one more time, just to pull him out and send him on his way to another stumble. Labeled Historical Western by Five Star, it should have been called Great Entertainment!

— Edward Massey

JULIE WESTON. *Basque Moon: A Nellie Burns and Moonshine Mystery.* Five Star. Hardcover, 250 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

Julie Weston, an Idaho native, has penned an interesting mystery novel set in that state in 1923 where Basque shepherders play a prominent role. She drew on her contemporary friendship with Basque people to color her work with accurate depictions of their traditions, food, dogs and language. In the book, Nellie Burns and her dog, Moonshine, come upon a murdered sheepherder. The story's conflict develops and whirls around cowboys wanting to keep sheep off their range, moonshiners operating a still and a married woman's involvement with a cowboy. An intricate, well-told story.

— Lynn Bueling

MICHAEL ZIMMER. *Charlie Red.* Five Star. Hardcover, 238 pages, \$25.95, gale.cengage.com/fivestar.

Book Five in the "American Legends Collection" – a series so well-crafted some readers actually believe the author's premise that the books come from a depression-era oral history project – *Charlie Red* is the tale of an express company shotgun guard on the trail of stolen payroll money. Along the way he tangles with hunger, thirst, desert heat,

hostile Indians, gunplay, spent mounts and an exiled Mormon plural wife. The title character is only briefly mentioned through the course of the narrative, but when he appears fully-fledged it will come as a surprise to many readers. Western Heritage Wrangler Award-winning author Michael Zimmer presents us with another novel readers will enjoy and writers will envy.

— Rod Miller

BOOK NOTES

JOHNNY D. BOGGS. *Return to Red River.* Pinnacle. Mass-market paperback, 371 pages, \$7.99, KensingtonBooks.com.

Johnny Boggs continues Borden Chase's novel that became the classic John Wayne Western movie *Red River*. Twenty years after Thomas Dunson's legendary cattle drive, Dunson's foster son, Mathew Garth, is forced to make another hard drive to Kansas to keep the Dunson legacy alive.

JAN CERNEY. *Calamity Jane and Her Siblings: The Saga of Lena and Elijah Canary.* History Press. Paperback, 163 pages, \$21.99, ArcadiaPublishing.com.

Historian Jan Cerney tracks down Martha Jane Canary's often-overlooked siblings, chronicling brother Elijah's horse thieving and sister Lena's denial of Calamity Jane's tall tales.

JAMES HITT. *The Courage of Others.* Open Books. Trade paperback, 238 pages, \$16.95, Open-Bks.com.

Although set in Texas, there is nothing intrinsically Western about this book – the locale could be anywhere in the Jim Crow South on the heels of World War I. When a white teenager in a hick town befriends a young black man and falls in love with a black girl, there is a certain inevitability to the way the story will end. All that aside, it's a beautifully written book with richly drawn characters, well-constructed conflict and chilling, if understated, violence.

— Rod Miller