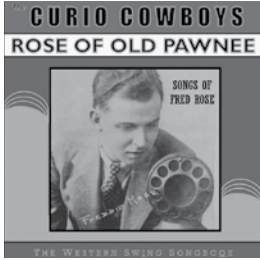


THE CURIO COWBOYS

Rose of Old Pawnee: Songs of Fred Rose

Ruido Records, \$15
CurioCowboys.com



Songwriter Fred Rose was only 56 or 57 (his birth date is a bit foggy) when he died in 1954, but he was a country music legend by then. He wrote “Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain,” “Kaw-Liga” and “Take These Chains From My Heart.” Rose, Hank Williams and blues yodeler Jimmie Rodgers were the first three inductees into the Country Music Hall of Fame when it opened in 1961. Solid credentials.

But Rose was also one of the foremost writers of Western swing music, that marvelous mix of cowboy, hillbilly and big band jazz. That part of Rose’s career is celebrated on this CD by the Curio Cowboys, an Albuquerque, New Mexico, Western swing preservationist band that has been making music in the Southwest since 1990.



OLLIE REED JR.

Slipping this 18-track disc into your CD player is like turning on the radio in the 1940s. You get grand old tunes such as “Rootie Tootie,” “Deed I Do,” “Texarkana Baby,” “Home in San Antone,” “You Don’t Care What Happens to Me,” the instrumental “Deep Henderson” and the title song, which was first recorded by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys in 1946. Nuff said.

GARETH

Sky Before a Storm

Gareth Music, \$10
GarethMusic.com



I heard Gareth Laffely, a young (I don’t believe he is 20 yet) Mi’kmaq/Cree flute player, perform at the Western Music Association convention in November and left that gathering with this eight-cut CD.

Driving to my newspaper job recently, a hard day to come heavy on my mind, I put the album into my car’s CD player. Talk about magic. The title track, the

final cut and the only vocal on the CD, was playing when I pulled into the publishing company parking lot. By that time, all my apprehensions about the day had been smoothed away by the music, which was in turns uplifting (“Spirit Horse”), calming (“Steal the Moon”), poignant (“Sky Before a Storm”) and flat-out impressive (“Flutitude”).

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

POETRY

KARLA K. MORTON

Wooden Lions

Texas Review Press
Trade paperback, 92 pages, \$10.95
TexasReviewPress.org

The 2010 Texas Poet Laureate gives us copperheads and coyotes, cattle and cats, frogs and dogs, vultures, doves and other beasts and bugs in an elegant and heartwarming tribute to animals. Some of the poems are reprints, others are new, but all reveal the heart and soul of Karla K. Morton. This collection is for the animal lover in us all – and for those who love words written from the heart.

– Johnny D. Boggs

JUVENILE

TIM CHAMPLIN

Tom and Huck’s Howling Adventure: The Further Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 234 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Veteran author Tim Champlin has picked up the reins to write a rousing extension of the tales started by Mark Twain (*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 1876; *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 1884; *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, 1894; and *Tom Sawyer, Detective*, 1896). An allergy-induced coma sends a present-day 13-year-old boy time-traveling to a rendezvous with Twain’s storied characters and setting. After the characters reconcile the fact that they belong in different eras, they set off to find their own adventures and make a great addition to the Young Adult genre.

– Lynn Bueling

JACK SCHAEFER

Shane

University of New Mexico Press
Trade paperback, 150 pages, \$19.95
UNMPress.com

Most readers probably don’t consider *Shane* a YA novel. But consider WWA member Robert Nott’s introduction in this new release of the 1947 novel: “What Schaefer did to raise the story to classic heights was to tell it through the eyes of a young boy – Bob Starrett. By letting such an innocent character bear witness to the story, Schaefer imbued the tale with a freshness that eased readers into an otherwise age-old story.” Schaefer, who won a 1961 Newbery Honor for *Old Ramon*, certainly knew how to write for young readers. *Shane* is the first of the University of New Mexico Press’s new editions of the books by Schaefer, who died in 1991. No matter your age, *Shane* is worth reading or revisiting.

– Johnny D. Boggs

NONFICTION

RILLA ASKEW

Most American: Notes from a Wounded Place

University of Oklahoma Press
Trade paperback, 162 pages, \$19.95
OUPress.com

Exceptional, thoughtful essays by an Oklahoman whose insight into the dramatic and sometimes cruel development of a people picks the scabs off the wounds, historical and contemporary. One need not be from Oklahoma to find these reflections meaningful. They expose all of us in our frailties and strengths. Rilla Askew's personal struggle with her own identity also rings true for many. For those from that very particular and peculiar region this is a must read.

— Vernon Schmid

**MARGARET CASTERLINE
BOWEN and GWENDOLYN
JOSLIN HILES**

Jersey Gold: The Newark Overland Company's Trek to California, 1849

University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 368 pages, \$34.95
OUPress.com

This readable book focuses on the experiences of members of the Newark Overland Company in traveling across the North American continent to the California gold fields. Sponsored by Newark civic leader John S. Darcy, who recruited an assortment of men mainly from New Jersey, this company was the first to arrive in California, lured by the prospect of riches there for the taking. As often occurred, some men left the company, others joined it, and it split into separate units over such disputes as the preference for mules or oxen in pulling wagons. The authors do more than tell a story of wagon trains crossing the plains. They utilize diaries, journals and letters to create a narrative that closely follows the lives of the men and women who were involved in the rush for gold. The end result is a compelling story of gold seekers, success and failure, hardship and illness, and how the gold rush affected the people following the overland trails.

— Abraham Hoffman

JULIA BRICKLIN

America's Best Female Sharpshooter: the Rise and Fall of Lillian Frances Smith

University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 209 pages, \$24.95
OUPress.com

Few know that famed sharpshooter Annie Oakley had a rival, Lillian Frances Smith (1871-1930), who amazingly could fire and reload a single-shot rifle 25 times in a minute while hitting a bulls-eye 32 feet away. At a time when some target-shooting contests used real pigeons instead of clay ones, Smith laid waste to the bird population and on one occasion shot sick dogs as part of her act. While Oakley had a prim Victorian persona, Smith was a "free spirit." Married several times, perhaps simultaneously or perhaps not at all, she had a sister who might have been her daughter. For much of her career, she pretended to be a Sioux princess named Wenona. This well-researched book (with numerous photographs) provides a vivid back-stage view of what it was like to travel with Wild West shows at the end of the 1800s.

— David Morrell

MARK CLATTERBUCK (editor)
Crow Jesus: Personal Stories of Native Religious Belonging

University of Oklahoma Press
Trade paperback, 260 pages, \$25
OUPress.com

Mark Clatterbuck, a religion professor, assembles the testimony of 15 prominent Crow Christians, as well as three non-Indian practitioners, all from southeastern Montana. He summarizes the history of white missions, which have evolved to Crow control. Catholics boast the longest tradition, while Baptists and Pentecostals came along in the 20th Century. The Pentecostal love of outdoor revivals and emotional displays, as well as their prominent roles for women, explained their successes, though many see the Pentecostals as the least tolerant of traditional Crow practices. All three denominations are only loosely affiliated with their white equivalents, though all could be called fundamentalist. All three are in varying degrees tolerant of peyotism, itself Jesus-centered. Clatterbuck's subjects

come wonderfully alive in this unusual, readable, and often entertaining study.

— John Mort

JAMES L. COFFEY, RUSSELL M. DRAKE and JOHN T. BARNETT
Graham Barnett – A Dangerous Man

University of North Texas Press
Hardcover, 373 pages, \$29.95
UNTPress.unt.edu

Graham Barnett was his own worst enemy. This book is one of those gems about someone you've probably never heard of, but who was a fascinating character and certainly deserved this rich Western biography. Barnett was one who willingly wandered both sides of the legal line, as lawman, enforcer, bodyguard, killer and bootlegger. His life was a nonstop search for income to support his wife and children and was a life of nonstop trouble as well. The Great Depression only worsened their station. Born in 1890, Barnett, at age 8, was known to shoot doves out of the air with a rifle. He became a feared man, and as he lived by the gun, so would he die by the gun.

— Monty McCord

DAVID GRASSE
The Bisbee Massacre

McFarland
Paperback, 272 pages, \$39.95
McFarlandPub.com

In this fascinating account of crime and justice in 1880s Arizona Territory, David Grasse examines the crime known as the Bisbee Massacre and the resulting trial of the outlaws involved. Granting that frontier justice could sometimes be a brutal affair, reading the court proceedings as reported in surviving transcripts and the press makes the reader shake his head in amazement. Hearsay testimony and outright perjury that would not be tolerated in any court of law today seems to have been accepted without challenge back then, and more than likely resulted in the hanging of an innocent man. This is a meticulously researched book that will enlighten and anger at the same time.

— Rod Timanus

DOUG HOCKING

Tom Jeffords: Friend of Cochise

TwoDot
Trade paperback, 202 pages, \$16.95
Rowman.com

Doug Hocking has undertaken a seemingly impossible task here and has acquitted himself quite well. Tom Jeffords was a real man of mystery who left no personal journals or writings behind to chronicle his life. Even his few letters were handwritten by others, and he merely affixed his signature to them. That Jeffords and the Chiricahua Apache leader Cochise became friends during the time of conflict known as the Apache Wars is well known, but just how, where and when they first met remains unknown. Hocking uses various descriptions of Jeffords and the events he participated in that were penned by many others to piece together a good biography of an important figure in the history of the Southwest.

— Rod Timanus

MARK HOLLABAUGH

The Spirit and the Sky: Lakota Visions of the Cosmos

University of Nebraska Press
Hardcover, 264 pages, \$50
NebraskaPress.unl.edu

While interesting for its recounting of aspects of Lakota culture, much of the book attempts to explain away discrepancies between astronomical expectations concerning objects in the sky and scant historical and cultural records. For example, in comparing three winter-count chronicles of a solar eclipse, the author describes as “slight discrepancies” the fact that one sets it a year early and another records it as a lunar eclipse. “Would haves,” “could haves” and “may haves” are used frequently throughout. To the uninitiated, it may seem a Lakota opinion about the stars quoted near the end of the book sums it up: “They have nothing to do with mankind.”

— Rod Miller

NANCY TYSTAD KROUPAL (editor)

Pioneer Girl Perspectives: Exploring Laura Ingalls Wilder

South Dakota Historical Society Press
Hardcover, 317 pages, \$29.95
SDHSPress.com

This is not the book to buy for your 8-year-old niece who adores “Little House on the Prairie” reruns on television. *Pioneer Girl Perspectives* is a scholarly investigation of the life and literary endeavors of the beloved author, Laura Ingalls Wilder. Many essayists contributed to this examination of Wilder’s life and impact on American literature. The book investigates the role of women in frontier America, Rose Wilder Lane’s relationship to her mother, society’s concept of an ideal childhood and much more. My favorite part was the additional information about Laura Ingalls Wilder’s life and legacy beyond the “Little House On The Prairie” series. *Pioneer Girl Perspectives* is not light reading, but worth the effort for someone who grew up reading Laura Ingalls Wilder and is interested in delving into the social implications of her work.

— Candace Simar

Broken Arrow

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

Before becoming one of the infamous Hollywood Ten, screenwriter Albert Maltz wrote the superb script for director Delmer Daves’s *Pride Of The Marines*

(1947), starring John Garfield. In 1950, when Daves wanted Maltz to adapt Elliott Arnold’s novel *Broken Arrow*, the black-listed writer had to be fronted by



C. COURTNEY JOYNER

Michael Blankfort. Kino Lorber’s Blu-ray restores Maltz’s screenplay credit for one of the most successful, and serious, Westerns of the 1950s, one that still reverberates today.

Arrow’s story of ex-soldier James Stewart, who makes the choice to try for peace during the Indian Wars, putting himself between the cavalry and Cochise, has become the stuff of movie legend and Western cliché. Since its release, this narrative has influenced everything from episodic TV to *Dances With Wolves*, but Kino’s Blu allows us to rediscover the original, undiluted power of Daves’s and Maltz’s accomplishment.

The film’s center is still the grand work by Stewart and Jeff Chandler in his Oscar-nominated role as Cochise. Chandler’s casting would now be considered inappropriate, but the authority he projects is unerring and is steeped in emotional truth. His reactions to the promises of a treaty carry *Arrow*’s message as much as Stewart’s anti-war speeches.

Debra Paget as the beautiful Apache who falls in love with Stewart is fine, but she’s part of the film’s “Hollywood” moments. That fault can be forgiven given the story’s tragic outcome. Jay Silverheels stands out as the warrior who wants only blood, and clean-shaven Arthur Hunnicutt shines as Stewart’s loyal defender.

Daves would bring a claustrophobic, noir feel to his *3:10 To Yuma* (1957). For *Arrow*, his use of color and composition is stunning, framing Stewart against the red-rock terrain, tracking him through Apache territory. When two corpses are hung from a tree, Daves puts Stewart in foreground, unmoving, letting the image settle into our memory. Later, in the presentation of Apache dances and celebrations, his steady camera allows us be drawn into their meaning and importance.

Broken Arrow was a smash hit on its release, but the film’s status today seems muted, despite its lasting impact on the way American Indians were portrayed in Hollywood films. In some critical quarters, *Broken Arrow* has been dismissed, but its layers are many, as we consider the complex lives of its creators and their achievement. All we have to do is look. Kino gives us that opportunity.

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



JANNE LAHTI (editor)
*Soldiers in the Southwest Borderlands:
1848-1886*

University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 234 pages, \$29.95
OUPress.com

Through use of journals, census and genealogical records, Janne Lahti has gathered a variety of biographical tales illuminating nearly 40 years of Southwestern borderland struggles. These soldiers are a composite of America's Indian and European roots. The list includes Hispanics, African-Americans, Indians, Anglo, both American-born and immigrated. Some of the names are familiar to those interested in Western Americana. It runs from Mickey Free, who has been named as the source of the years of wars between the U.S. and Apaches, to the mysterious former slave George Goldsby. This mix of soldiers who served on the borderlands brings to life the daily drudgery and sometime violence. This is an entertaining look at an overlooked historical aspect of the spread of the American Empire.

– Vernon Schmid

JOHN H. MONNETT (editor)
*Eyewitness to the Fetterman Fight:
Indian Views*

University of Oklahoma Press
Hardcover, 248 pages, \$29.95
OUPress.com

One of the two significant victories of Plains Indians over the U.S. Army in the Old West took place a short distance from Fort Phil Kearny along the Bozeman Trail in what was called Red Cloud's War. There were no survivors among the 79 cavalry and infantry soldiers and two contractors in the Dec. 21, 1866, Fetterman Fight, leading historians to conclude that Captain William J. Fetterman, commander of the detachment, was inept and to blame for the crushing defeat. A different picture of the battle emerges as a result of John H. Monnett's use of previously unpublished sources and newly discovered interviews, both of varying lengths, with Oglala and Northern Cheyenne leaders and warriors. As Monnett so aptly states: "This book is not another narrative history of all the events of the Fetterman Fight ..." but rather an

effort "... to understand the validity of the relevant Indian views collected in interviews by non-Indian ethnologists through the early decades of the 20th century." Monnett is to be commended for presenting the other side – the survivors. As a result, he enriches readers with a better understanding of Red Cloud's War and credits the skillful planning of participating Plains Indians with their victory.

– Stan "Tex" Banash

SAMUEL M. OTTERSTROM
*From California's Gold Fields to the
Mendocino Coast: A Settlement History
across Time and Place*

University Of Nevada Press
Hardcover, 224 pages, \$44.95
UNPress.nevada.edu

Written for academics, this volume's detailed scholarly narrative, along with numerous maps and charts and graphs, illustrates every aspect of how, when and why settlements in the greater gold field region came and went and sometimes stayed and grew during the latter half of the 19th Century. History buffs willing to wade through the esoteric academic jargon will find several interesting accounts of individuals and groups who settled in California for a variety of reasons – primarily to get rich in the gold fields or by supplying the Argonauts.

– Rod Miller

STEPHEN L. PRINCE
*Hosea Stout: Lawman, Legislator,
Mormon Defender*

Utah State University Press
Trade paperback, 368 pages, \$19.95
USUPress.com

Meticulously researched, richly detailed and well-written, this biography paints a vivid portrait of its subject. Hosea Stout, a pivotal figure in the 19th Century Mormon Church, has largely faded from popular memory. This book reminds us of his importance. A vicious and impulsive defender of his leaders and religion, Stout's violent tendencies tempered over time and he learned to employ rhetoric in the courtroom as a more effective means of defense. The author's even-handed approach treats Stout's accomplishments as well as the controversies surrounding the man. All in all, an important addition to the

history of Mormons and the American West.

– Rod Miller

STEVEN SABOL
*The Touch of Civilization: Comparing
American and Russian Internal
Colonization*

Hardcover, 298 pages, \$55
University Press of Colorado
UPColorado.com

Russia's eastern frontier (the steppes) and the United States' Western frontier (the Northern Plains) have more comparisons than contrasts. In a deeply researched exploration into comparative history, Steven Sabol provides evidence that Russia and the U.S. shared similar motives in moving into these frontier zones. Both wanted to bring "civilization" to nomadic, indigenous people, Kazakhs in the steppes and the Lakotas in the Northern Plains. Where the U.S. government made treaties and, ultimately, placed the Lakotas on reservations, the Russians issued directives and set up districts. Both nations had settlers taking indigenous lands, fighting battles, proselytizing Christianity and putting indigenous children into schools to learn Russian or English. In both cases, the nations wanted indigenous people to give up their culture and nomadic lifestyle. The book is another fine example of comparative Western history.

– Abraham Hoffman

STEVEN C. SCHULTE
*Wayne Aspinall and the Shaping of the
American West*

University Press of Colorado
Trade paperback, 297 pages, \$19.95
UPColorado.com

Originally published in 2002, this biography is now available in paperback. Meticulously researched and richly detailed, the author paints a many-faceted portrait of Wayne Aspinall. During his long tenure as chair of the U.S. House of Representatives Interior Committee, 1959-1973, Aspinall oversaw the re-engineering of Western rivers and attempted to hold back the rising tide of a new environmental ethic. A staunch supporter of multiple use of public lands, he fought for unrestricted logging and mining and against designation of wilderness areas. Aspinall's views

increasingly put him at odds with evolving public opinion and his own Democratic Party, but for years he was arguably the most influential representative of the arid West.

– Rod Miller

EDDIE WILSON with **JESSE SUBLETT**

Armadillo World Headquarters: A Memoir

TSSI Publishing
Hardcover, 502 pages, \$34.95
UTPress.Texas.edu

If you were into psychedelic, stoner, drug-driven acid rock in the 1970s, and within two hours of Austin, you might love this book – unless you're one of the author's score-settling targets. Labeled a memoir, it's an informal double biography, of the author and the institution, delivered in a stream-of-consciousness with lots of name-dropping. And the performers at Armadillo World Headquarters were names to drop: Frank Zappa, Shiva's Headband, Timothy Leary, but also Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Janis Joplin, Bruce Springsteen (1974 ticket price: \$1), Bill Monroe It was no small challenge to turn a gigantic arch-roofed former National Guard armory into a music venue and beer garden while dealing with the egos of some pretty far-out performers – as well as the egos of hippier Austinites who whined that they shouldn't have to pay admission because charging for music was so ... *bourgeois*. It's all here, the trials and struggles, conflicts and crises, glorious victories and final closing in the face of inexorably rising property values.

– Ralph Estes

FICTION

DAVID BOOP (editor)

Straight Outta Tombstone: Ride the Gruesome Trail!

Baen Books
Trade paperback, 259 pages, \$16
Baen.com

It's hard to dislike an anthology of horror Westerns that begins with a story that leads off with the sentence, "Bubba Shackelford got off the train in Wyoming, eager to find some cannibals

to shoot. He loved his job." Clearly the 16 authors in this mostly entertaining collection, including Robert E. Vardeman, loved writing these works, and their enthusiasm is infectious, even if the tales don't often pay off as well as the set-up promises. Here, one Western hero and heroine after another mostly succeeds in vanquishing demons, zombies, cannibals and other monstrosities that roam the American West. The stories range from one about a pair of inter-galactic gunfighters doing away with hordes of the undead to a *Shane*-inspired tale of a stranger on horseback who protects an itinerant farmer and his family from evil land grabbers with the help of a horse whose supernatural power involves heavy flatulence.

– Robert Nott

C.J. BOX

Vicious Circle: A Joe Pickett Novel

G.P. Putnam's Sons
Hardcover, 367 pages, \$27
PenguinRandomHouse.com

The 17th book in C.J. Box's Wyoming game-warden series featuring Joe Pickett starts off with a bang. While looking for a lost hunter from the air, Pickett witnesses a murder. Problem is, he sees via a special program on an iPad, and the people aren't visible. *Vicious Circle* is a thrill-ride of a story, one that has the seeds of its conception months before and ties Pickett and his family into this murder. Fans of the Pickett novels will remember jail-bound Dallas Cates. Now he has been released, but he's not done with vengeance. The novel is well crafted and fast paced. The ending is twisty in a satisfactory manner. The reader will certainly finish with a sigh of, "Well done."

– Carol Crigger

MICHAEL CRICHTON

Dragon Teeth

Harper Collins
Hardcover, 295 pages, \$28.99
HarperCollins.com

Michael Crichton's "newly discovered" novel dramatizes the so-called Bone Wars of the late 1800s in which two paleontologists, Othniel Charles Marsh and Edward Drinker Cope, competed fiercely to see who

could discover the most dinosaur fossils in the American West. Joining the hunt is a spoiled Yale student who matures into an adventurer as he survives Indian attacks and becomes a gunfighter. George Custer and Wyatt Earp make guest appearances in this episodic, factoid-filled narrative that's entertaining but not compelling. The author's widow supplies an afterword but doesn't indicate when Crichton worked on the novel or how much of it was completed before his death in 2008.

– David Morrell

B.J. DANIELS

Outlaw's Honor

Harlequin Books
Trade paperback, \$7.99, 347 pages
HQBooks.com

Fans of *New York Times*-bestselling author B.J. Daniels's first Western romance about the Cahill family from Gilt Edge, Montana, will not be disappointed with the second novel in the series. This time, saloon owner Darby Cahill risks all for love. His attraction to a woman who tried to steal his wallet leads the cowboy businessman on a journey to learn the mysterious thief's motive. As Darby learns about Mariah Ayres and begins to fall for her, he finds he must deal with a violent man bent on killing the beautiful tortured pickpocket. Daniels is an exceptional storyteller, and *Outlaw's Honor* possesses a nice mix of suspense, intrigue and passion.

– Chris Enss

W. MICHAEL FARMER

Marianna's Knight: The Revenge of Henry

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 308 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Growing up in southern New Mexico, I was familiar with the mystery surrounding the 1896 disappearances and assumed deaths of lawyer Albert Fountain and his 8-year-old son, Henry. Speculation still runs rampant. W. Michael Farmer's novel adds one more flame to the speculative fire. Did Henry survive, mentored by an old white man and middle-aged Apache? *Marianna's Knight*, slow at first due to backstory, eventually picks up momentum and rushes toward an exciting conclusion. Henry, now a teenager, seeks revenge for

his pa's murder. It's a gripping tale full of history – real and imagined – and characters hard to forget. What a terrific idea.

– Melody Groves

MARCUS GALLOWAY

Snake Oil: Easy Pickin's, Book One

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 268 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Professor Henry Whiteoak is a purveyor of cures, remedies and, for want of a better term, additives. He has his sights set on the town of Barbrady, Kansas, where things are a mite strange. Could he be going there because it's home to some of the wealthiest men in Kansas? After saving a fellow named Byron from robbers who seem to know more than they should, Whiteoak quickly makes friends and enemies among the populace. Before long, the revelations begin, and the reader is left guessing until the last pages. The book's wavering point of view and long, cumbersome action sequences are balanced out by Whiteoak himself – he's just a likeable rogue who has you rooting for him all along the way.

– Loyd Uglow

JAMES J. GRIFFIN

Blood Ties: A Texas Ranger Will Kirkpatrick Novel

Sundown Press
Trade paperback, 178 pages, \$12.99
SundownPress.com

Hooked from an early age on the history and exploits of the Texas Rangers, James J. Griffin has produced yet another novel featuring a strong Texas Ranger hero, Will Kirkpatrick. A young lawbreaker is remanded to the supervision of the Ranger instead of being sent to prison and becomes the Ranger's sidekick as they ride in quest of the gang that robbed the bank owned by the Ranger's father. An easy-reading traditional Western, it calls to mind the old pulp variety of storytelling that still claims its audience.

– Lynn Bueling

M.M. HOLADAY

The Open Road

Five Star Publishing
Trade paperback, 441 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Take a wandering spirit, combine with a down-to-earth soul, add an attractive woman, throw a few Indians into the mix, top with prejudice and you have one lengthy story with deep roots on the Colorado frontier. Wandering Win Avery can't stay in one place for more than a few weeks. His buddy, Jeb Dawson, would love to stay put. Meg Jameson is a young orphaned woman, who rides Biscuit, her only true possession and a four-footed friend. However, she suffers from an overbearing uncle and desperately needs to turn 21 to free herself from said uncle and inherit substantial wealth from her late parents. This is a novel full of chance meetings. The plot doesn't exactly twist and turn but progresses at a trudging pace. It would have been better as two or even three shorter books. It's not boring, just extremely long.

– Sandy Whiting

JOHN C. HORST

Roosevelt's Boys

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 353 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Despite his father's reluctance to let his favorite son and heir enlist, Jonathan Whelihan longs for the glory and adventure of battle. Taking along his never-do-well, adopted brother, Rocky Killebrew, the two of them go off to join Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders. This is an engaging story about how the glories of battle often fade the moment the shooting starts. It also illustrates how dreams and futures are forever altered as a result. *Roosevelt's Boys* is also a tale of all those others touched by war – the nurses who treat their bloody wounds and the loved ones at home inflicted with wounds of another kind. Although a few of the scenes are certainly not for young readers, the book is compelling and well done.

– R.G. Yoho

CRAIG JOHNSON

The Western Star

Viking
Hardcover, 290 pages, \$28
PenguinRandomHouse.com

Visiting a saloon Wyoming sheriffs have patronized for years, Sheriff Walt Longmire's attention is caught by an old

photograph. It shows a group of sheriffs and one deputy, himself, in front of the "Western Star," the last of the steam locomotives to see service. Longmire is swept back to his first adventure, one that has ties to the present, in ways he can't foresee. The action shifts back and forth in time between the two eras. Action-packed, the past puzzle brings the reader to the present, drawing Cady, Walt's daughter, and his granddaughter, Lola, into harm's way. Like all of Johnson's "Longmire" books, the dialogue is crisp and succinct, the setting spot on and the characters and plot gripping right up to the end.

– Carol Crigger

KALEN VAUGHAN JOHNSON

Robbing the Pillars

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 369 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Underground mining, determined settlers and unscrupulous businessmen are meshed into a tale set in California in the years after the Civil War. Several story lines, including that of a hodge-podge group that began life in England, are written into this novel. However, the multiple tangle of storylines is jumpier than a jackrabbit in a cactus patch. Cohesiveness of plot is lacking. Many attempts at portraying a Scottish accent via the use of misspelled and truncated words made reading difficult. Yet there are some good details in this novel relating to the difficulty of a life of mining along with the discrimination that occurs between the haves and have-nots. The novel also dramatizes the lives of some of the early group that left mining for other pursuits. These are the major pluses for this work.

– Sandy Whiting

PAUL JOSEPH LEDERER

The Byrds of Shywater

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 256 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

With *The Byrds of Shywater*, the late Paul Lederer presents an intriguing portrayal of contrasting narratives of westward expansion in the 1830s. The novel begins in the Wyoming Territory with Jonathan Byrd, a young fur trapper, who decides to leave the

fur trade and settle down with his Crow wife in a beautiful valley. The novel really takes off, however, when the narrative shifts to Seth Byrd, a cousin and a drunk, who decides to join a wagon train and move his wife and children to Wyoming to share in the riches it is rumored Jonathan has accumulated. The destruction, wrought by alcohol, of Seth and his family is more gripping than the gunplay that ensues at the climax.

— Tom Carpenter

McKENDREE LONG

Brodie

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 204 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Young deputy Brodie and Marshal Curley Jack Sentell chase a vicious murderer called “Preacher,” but Brodie’s wounded in an ambush and loses all of the fingers on one hand. As the posse continues its chase, love, more ambushes and an inventive solution to Brodie’s dilemma become part of the moving storyline. *Brodie* is close to a perfect story – perfect because everything fits into the 19th Century timeline, the novel has a smooth pace and reads like you would expect it to read if it were actually written in the 1800s.

— Phil Dunlap

LEE MARTIN

The Last Wild Ride

CreateSpace
Trade paperback, 130 pages, \$6.50
Amazon.com

Lee Martin gives us a story based in Colorado where the protagonist helps a woman and her son escape the vengeance of a man whose son she has killed in a fit of self-preservation. On the run, they must depend on men of questionable character to help them through unfamiliar, dangerous country to reach the safety of her family in Texas.

— Lynn Bueling

MATTHEW P. MAYO

North of Forsaken

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 233 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Roamer wants to be left alone. But that’s not in the cards, especially after long-lost brother Thomas latches on to the big, ugly hero there in Forsaken, Wyoming. Thomas has a deed to a ranch that other, less reputable individuals also desire. Although the brothers head north from Forsaken, things go south for them immediately. Thank goodness for Roamer’s friend, the mountain man Maple Jack, who helps give the two a fighting chance. Matthew Mayo’s novel is enjoyable, and it has enough balance to be believable – a hero who is strong but ugly, capable but no superhero. It’s a little light on suspense in some places, but the colorful characters balance that out.

— Loyd Uglow

ROBERT D. McKEE

Out of the Darkness

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 356 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Micah McConnors is the local boy who’s made good, returning to his hometown of Probity, Wyoming, in 1900 to practice law. His boyhood pal, Chester Hedstrom, is the town doctor and an inveterate lover of the new century’s gadgets and technology. But Hedstrom’s penchant for progress doesn’t stop with hardware. He’s also partial to new ideas and changing standards. An impulsive act of conscience by the doctor brings him and McConnors up against long-held beliefs, corrupt officials and the sadistic local bully in a contest with tragic consequences. McKee weaves a tale of tradition and change on a collision course, a tale that may disturb some readers, depending on where they stand on the issues involved.

— Loyd Uglow

ROBERT LEE MURPHY

Golden Spike: The Iron Horse Chronicles, Book Three

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 292 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

The driving of the Golden Spike at Promontory Summit, Utah, completes this trilogy of novels about the building of the transcontinental railroad. Young

Will Braddock and Jenny McNabb and other continuing characters face murder attempts, kidnapping, vandalism, robberies and further misadventures as they work in various capacities for the railroads and other employers. Plenty of action drives the story, and detailed, informative research into the progress of the rails across the West is woven throughout. An engaging read, but readers may find much of the language in dialogue overly formal and the dialects (less prevalent in this volume) overdrawn.

— Rod Miller

THOM NICHOLSON

Pinkerton’s Gold

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 274 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

John Whyte, one of the best Pinkerton agents, is trailing a gang that plans to rob the train carrying gold from the Colorado mines to the refinery and Denver mint. With comrades Khan Singh, his loyal Sikh manservant, and Curly Bill Williams, Whyte’s friend from Texas, the trio must bring down a sophisticated adversary with full intentions of destroying the Pinkerton Agency. Thom Nicholson is one of the best-detailed describers of his surroundings in the Western genre. He doesn’t miss a lick for describing everything from the garnet stone in a ladies necklace to the gold chain and clasp and how it locks. The story is solid, the characters are believable, and there is plenty of gunplay and surprises galore.

— Phil Dunlap

IAN STANSEL

The Last Cowboys of San Geronimo

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
Hardcover, 192 pages, \$23
HMHCo.com

This debut novel weaves two storylines together in a tapestry of psychological angst and criminal pursuit. Set in Northern California, *The Last Cowboys of San Geronimo* is a Cain and Abel tale with a chase that is empowered by vengeance. It is a modern Western only in the sense that it is set in the West. The author’s first work of fiction was a collection of short

stories, a finalist in the PEN/Bingham Prize competition. This is a far different kind of work, of sibling rivalry and a complicated love of brothers. It is a literary manhunt worth pursuing.

– Vernon Schmid

WALLACE J. SWENSON

Slate Creek: Journey to the White Clouds

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 306 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Last in a series of Old West novels featuring Simon Steele and Buell Mace, this story finds Simon reaching the White Cloud Mountains of central Idaho, where he holes up along Slate Creek in an isolated valley and takes up a solitary existence. While he revels in his reclusive life, danger is often at hand and death comes calling, only to be turned away by Simon's dog, Spud, and an elusive Indian he calls Red Socks. A packer Simon befriended on the trail carries in supplies and helps him adapt to the high country, but becomes a complication when gold enters the story. The author brings the series full circle at the end, reuniting Simon and Buell and the life they left behind. The late Wally Swenson is an author we didn't get enough of.

– Rod Miller

LOYD M. UGLOW

Slow Train to Sonora

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 339 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

Veteran Lieutenant C.W. Langhorne is assigned a dangerous and clandestine mission to gather information on revolutionary Mexico in 1911. Assigned to accompany him is Lieutenant Calvin Jester, known for being something of a ladies' man. Although there were a few times during Jester's romancing of the locals when I wondered if *Slow Train to Sonora* was ever going to reach its destination, every page involving C.W. Langhorne is not to be missed. Langhorne is a brilliantly drawn character, and I would welcome any further reads by the author on this fictional military officer.

The author, however, would be better served by leaving out Scripture verses that precede each chapter. Although interesting, they detract from the work by often revealing the chapter's content before the reader gets to it.

– R.G. Yoho

C.M. WENEDELBOE

Backed to the Wall

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 248 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

The hero starts out in jail, wrongly arrested for murder and robbery. He escapes to rescue the woman he loves – who has been kidnapped by a renegade mixed-blood Lakota warrior – while corrupt lawmen pursue him. They chase one another through the pages in a race to see who catches who first. The trails do get a bit tangled toward the end, when everyone seems to be following everyone. But the writing is descriptive and colorful, the characters well drawn (although some seem larger than real life), the threats palpable and the action vivid. All in all, a fine traditional Western.

– Rod Miller

ETHAN J. WOLFE

One If by Land: The Regulator, Book Four

Five Star Publishing
Hardcover, 282 pages, \$25.95
Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar

In this novel, Scotland Yard is in Scotland and Indians and soldiers reenact “the Battle of Bull Run and other famous skirmishes of the West” in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Also glaring are a demonstrated lack of knowledge of geography, travel time, camp cooking and all things related to horses (including a saddle horse that weighs a ton). Through the confusion, a Secret Service “Regulator” pursues a killer of prostitutes from New York to Galveston and all places in between (and not). While the story has its moments, readers with even a smattering of knowledge and appreciation of the Old West may want to avoid this one.

– Rod Miller

