BOOK NOTES


“No mission too difficult, no sacrifice too great—Duty First!” This is the motto of the First Infantry Division, which has left an indelible impression on the U.S. Army by playing a vital role in conflicts worldwide. This book chronicles the inception of this division and its actions from 1917 to 2017. Since World War I, the “Fighting First” has spearheaded notable operations in Germany, Vietnam, and Iraq, performing valiantly in the field. This book successfully manages to make a dense subject accessible to the average reader. In addition, maps and other images give context to the operations described, enhancing the narrative experience. This comprehensive and well-researched book is a welcome addition to military history and exemplifies one of the most storied divisions in U.S. military history.


In this revised and updated selection of George Washington Carver’s writings with annotations, editor Gary R. Kremer incorporates a new chapter of oral histories that he collected from people who knew Carver personally. This second edition offers new insight into Carver as a Tuskegee scientist and passionate advocate of agricultural improvement for struggling southern farmers in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Albert Bierstadt: Witness to a Changing West. By Peter H. Hassrick. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018, xxi + 217 pages, cloth $60.00, paper $35.00.)

Published in cooperation with the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Albert Bierstadt contains 173 color and 10 black-and-white beautifully reproduced illustrations created by Bierstadt and other notable artists, such as Thomas Moran, George Catlin, Peter S. Duval, Karl Bodmer, Alfred Jacob Miller, and Frederic Remington. “With new perspectives on Bierstadt as a principal witness to and chronicler of a changing West,” observes Karen B. McWhorter in the volume’s introductory essay, “this project explores how the artist approached buffalo and American Indians as prime subjects for his art.” Bierstadt engaged “not just the aesthetic issues of his time but also contemporary U.S. political and social debates around wildlife conservation and management, our national parks, and the indigenous peoples of the American West” (p. 5). Peter H. Hassrick, who has also published on the work of Frederic Remington and John Mix Stanley, is director emeritus and senior scholar at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West.


Initially published in 1959, this widely popular natural history guide has been reprinted to reflect recent changes in the Missouri landscape. This third edition is a lovely homage to the life’s work of the husband-and-wife team of Charles W. Schwartz and Elizabeth R. Schwartz. Maintaining the basic structure of the previous versions, The Wild Mammals of Missouri includes new illustrations by Mark Raithel and contains references for seventy-two full species. The elk and the river otter, which have been successfully reintroduced to the region, are included in these species. A credit to conservation efforts within the state, The Wild Mammals of Missouri is an extensive resource for nature enthusiasts, hunters, and scholars alike.

Remembering Reconstruction: Struggles over the Meaning of America’s Most Turbulent Era. Edited by Carole Emberton and Bruce E. Baker. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017, vi + 296 pages, cloth $45.00.)

Reconstruction was a transformative time in American history. This collection of essays focused on the memory and meaning of Reconstruction similarly transform our understanding of the period. In particular, essays that examine the emergence of black countermemories of Reconstruction and trace the impact of Reconstruction through the civil rights era and beyond expand and broaden our interpretation of the period. Is Reconstruction most aptly remembered as an era of bitterness, redemption, or survival? How do people’s personal experiences shape their perceptions of Reconstruction history, and can there ever be a true consensus of definition?

When Dream Bear Sings: Native Literatures of the Southern Plains. Edited by Gus Palmer Jr. Foreword by Alan R. Velie. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018, xlii + 358 pages, cloth, $75.00.)

Translating the stories of Indian peoples and rendering them into English is a difficult undertaking at best. Gus Palmer, of the Kiowa nation and professor of anthropology and Native American studies at the University of Oklahoma, has rendered a beautiful work that draws upon selected representative stories from twenty-four Indian nations. He divides his book into eight sections that he defines by language groups. Palmer presents most of the stories in the original native language with a side-by-side English translation; the remaining stories are provided only in English. Palmer’s work serves as an excellent primer on Indian stories, languages, and translation from which students, scholars, and lay readers will benefit.