

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Churchmen and the Western Indians, 1820-1920. Edited by Clyde A. Milner II and Floyd A. O'Neil

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1p52z9sn>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 10(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Bowden, Henry Warner

Publication Date

1986

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

There are a few things with which one might want to argue in Madsen's book. For example, although the inference is probably justified, one must ask how Madsen imputes the emotional motivation of "anger" to Shoshonis along the Humboldt Trail (pp. 14, 57) without any clear statement from the Shoshonis themselves. And my meticulous search of nearly 100 emigrant diaries, as well as secondary sources, makes me question Madsen's reference to "the many trading posts" (p. 20) along the Humboldt Trail that "were hangouts for both White and Indian bandits." Prior to construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, there were only two permanent trading posts east of Ragtown (Fallon); all others were temporary, makeshift affairs consisting of this or that entrepreneurial emigrant selling from his wagon tailgait, or an occasional serendipitous series of transactions at one of the Overland Mail or Pony Expressway stations.

However, these points are minor. Madsen has thoroughly searched the National Archives for letters and documents of the Office of Indian Affairs, diaries in the Yale University and Bancroft libraries, as well as published secondary sources. In addition, he has combed the archives of two important newspapers published at either end of the Fort Hall-Humboldt Road: The *Sacramento Bee* and the *Deseret News*. The result is a meticulously documented history of Indian-white relations in a previously ignored area that by far was the scene of the most intensive Indian-white contacts in the Great Basin between 1846 and 1868: the emigrant roads and mail routes that pierced the heart of Shoshoni country. *The Shoshoni Frontier* is thus a welcome expansion of detail on the comprehensive work of the late John Unruh in *The Plains Across* (University of Illinois Press, 1979), and is of immense value to those of us concerned with constructing a full ethnohistory of the Great Basin.

Richard Clemmer
University of Denver

Churchmen and the Western Indians, 1820-1920. Edited by Clyde A. Milner II and Floyd A. O'Neil. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985. 264 pp. \$19.95 cloth.

Many collections of essays suffer from uneven quality, disparate references, and topics too diffuse to constitute a cogent theme.

Happily, this volume is an exception to that rule, and the six chapters provided here supplement each other by addressing common issues as well as supplying specific information. Each essay concentrates on a central missionary figure, representatives of various denominations associated with tribes sufficiently different from others to allow for comparative observations. Authors of each chapter have based their reports on the fundamental spadework essential to historical thinking. Not only have they supplied basic data, but their sophisticated research techniques raise larger questions with a view to tackling overarching interpretive problems. The book is solid in giving us fresh information about concrete persons. It is more than that because it occupies a place on the cutting edge of scholarship in this genre.

There is not enough room to analyze each essay as it deserves, and selecting a few would suggest invidious comparison. In more general terms, then, the volume focuses on persons from six churches in as many chapters: Presbyterian Cyrus Byington, Methodist John J. Methvin, Mormon George W. Bean, Catholic Joseph M. Cataldo, S.J., Quaker Albert K. Smiley, and Episcopalian Henry B. Whipple. The tribal focus includes Choctaws, Kiowas, Utes, Nez Percés, and Ojibwas, corresponding respectively to the missionaries in order of mention except for Smiley who lived with no native group but supervised the annual Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian. It is worth noting that the bulk of these groups clustered in the central third of the continent. Except for Utes and Nez Percés, the book does not consider natives in territory west of Mississippi River drainage.

These essays are truly noteworthy because of their sensitive attention to detail and because they ask hard questions, even when they cannot be answered at this stage of general intellectual progress. This accuracy and boldness is what classifies them as state-of-the-art contributions to the field. Too often missions history is one-sided, either extolling ministers for exemplary lives or condemning them as agents of cultural imperialism. These essays move beyond uncritical extremes and assess data with more appreciation for the nuances found in each case study. They treat both white and red Americans as real people, not as cardboard cutouts pasted up to fit predetermined viewpoints. Each author notes how such factors as language, kinship patterns, sex roles, customary subsistence, native leadership, and the crucial function of mixed-bloods came into play. Every essayist recognizes

the assimilationist tendencies of missions as they confronted native preferences. The most important aspect of these studies lies in their showing how these missions *changed* during interaction with native groups. The key is adjustment, limited experimentation, and adaptation on the part of white preachers as well as native respondents. This realistic feature moves the book beyond hagiography or an anatomy of aggression. It opens the way for calm scrutiny of complex phenomena, and this is the reason everyone interested in the field will find it rewarding reading. An additional reason for gratitude is the financial sanity of Oklahoma University Press. It is rare these days for a book of this size, containing 12 plates and 3 maps besides index and short bibliographical note, to be so affordably priced. The Press is to be thanked for making available essays of this quality at a price that makes purchase possible and even reasonable.

Henry Warner Bowden
Rutgers University

A Bibliography of Native American Writers 1771–1924: A Supplement. By Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. and James W. Parins. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1985. 339 pp. \$27.50 Cloth.

Littlefield and Parins have completed several Native American bibliographies during the last 10 years. Their original volume on Native American writers (1981) was about the same length as the present supplement. They have expanded the number of persons identified as Native American writers to just over 1,200; 942 persons are listed in the supplement, and of that number, 250 were also listed in their first volume. All the features found in the 1st edition are repeated here, for example, only works in English, verification of claims of Indian or Inuit descent, biographical sketches are included for some persons, and entries for persons known only by pen name. Again, their index by tribal affiliation is a useful feature. All in all, it is well done and a useful update and expansion of the 1981 book.

In a field that is becoming overcrowded, how does this "set" compare? Arlene Hirschfelder's *American Indian and Eskimo Authors: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (1973, Interbook), despite its subtitle, lists less than a quarter of the writers found in Litt-