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REVIEWS

American Indians as Cowboys. By Clifford E. Trafzer. New Castle, California: Sierra Oaks Publishing Co., 1992. 80 pages. \$10.95 paper.

American Indians as Cowboys does two important things for young readers: (1) It presents examples of real Native Americans who were cowboys, and (2) it takes generalized cowboy data and makes it specific to American Indian cowboys. A children's book on this topic fills an important need, because, until now, most books about cowboys portray Indians as enemies and because the contributions of native people to greater American culture have not been explored to any extent in children's literature. After all, the first cowboys were Indians, mostly from northern Mexico.

The most charming parts of the book include stories told to the author by various native individuals who grew up cowboying. One of these central characters is Charlie Ponchetti, who apparently gained some local recognition for his storytelling and ranching skills. In explaining the unique relationship that many American Indians had with horses, the author relates one of Charlie's stories about himself. Charlie reputedly had bragged that "no horse could throw him" (p. 18). However, a new horse threw him when "his guard was down," and, as a result, Charlie had to admit that the horse had "forced him to eat his words" (p. 18).

Unfortunately, the story is told in third-person essay style, so it loses some of its potential flavor. In another chapter, Charlie serves as an example of Indian children who grew up with

ranching. Charlie's parents worked for a non-Indian rancher, but his mother encouraged him to become a ranch owner in his adulthood. Consequently, with his wife's help, Charlie was able to buy his own ranch.

A substantial part of the book consists of technical data regarding cowboy gear, such as ropes, saddles, spurs, and clothing—boots, hats, and chaps. This part is nicely done. Not only does it supply some generalized information regarding these items, but it also describes how various Indian cowboys or Indian groups adapted the styles for their own purposes. The section on round-ups and branding, however, differs little from that which might be found in any book on cowboys. Moreover, the use of illustrations is uneven, with pages showing changes in boot and saddle styles but nothing comparable for hats.

American Indians as Cowboys contains some generalized information about the development and placement of cowboys in greater American culture, but it lacks historical perspective and thus is very difficult to follow and evaluate. In fact, it suffers from two major problems: selection and presentation of information, and readability of text. Although Trafzer provides some background information about the development of cowboy culture in the United States, he does not give enough to enable a thorough understanding of the examples he presents. The second chapter, "Indians, Mustangs and Cattle," jumps from A.D. 1540 to the twentieth century within only paragraphs. This kind of leap often occurs in essayistic literature when an author is simply listing examples. However, in this case, several hundred years of development and influence on American culture and economy are lost. Without a proper historical perspective, the author's examples lack significance for younger readers.

Another problem is that California examples dominate the book. Other individuals or tribes are mentioned, for the most part, only in passing. Perhaps a better title for this book might be *Californian Indians as Cowboys*. The truth of the matter is that mainstream cowboy culture occurred in two geographic areas: pre-Civil War Texas and the post-Civil War Midwest. The book lacks substantial examples of Indian cowboys from either of these two areas.

The author is completely correct in beginning with Spanish missions in the Southwest. However, he should have extended his discussion to include Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico—the last of which was actually settled much earlier than the other two. Pueblo Indians in the Southwest became expert breeders of live-

stock, soon building herds that outnumbered those held by their Spanish counterparts. Later, several bands of Apache made a fortune with their cattle herds, enough to make them some of the richest Indians in the nation. Currently, many Navajo and Zuni raise cattle as well.

Another problem with concentrating on California is that, despite the fact that cattle raising began in California, Californios did not exert a lasting influence on the industry. After the cessions of the Mexican-American War, Texas became the major supplier of beef to the United States, including the California territory. This period was dominated by long-distance cattle drives through Indian Territory—a major problem, since the Choctaw and Cherokee there had a thriving cattle industry of their own. Neither group is mentioned in this book, nor is the fact that the Chisolm Trail was named for Jesse Chisolm, a mixed-blood. Further, the book includes many pictures of Quanah Parker, a mixed-blood Comanche, and his family but neglects to explain how the Comanche became cowboys. This would have been an interesting addition, since most books describe the Comanche only as harassing the cattle drives.

Eventually, the Midwest came to dominate the cattle market, and such towns as Dodge City became famous. Indeed, the economies of modern Kansas City and Omaha still reflect this legacy. The most notable omission from this book is the midwestern Indians and their involvement with cattle-raising. For example, prior to World War II, the Lakota had a thriving cattle industry. Others, such as the Omaha and the Nebraska, certainly must have worked alongside non-Indians on cattle ranches. Cherokee entertainer Will Rogers is mentioned as an example of a modern-day Indian cowboy, but this subject is developed no further. Moreover, there is no discussion of the relationship between the demise of the buffalo and the rise of the cattle industry.

In addition to the lack of historical development and the limited number of Indian groups covered, the book contains some stylistic problems as well. When this reviewer asked several fifth- and sixth-grade students to read the book, only one was actually able to do so. A readability formula determined that the text was written at the college level. Much of the material could have been presented in a more readable and interesting manner through the use of narrative structure, chronological presentation, and more descriptive language. Many of the details about cowboy gear could have been more directly related to the stories of individual

Indian cowboys. For example, what kind of gear did Charlie Ponchetti use? Quanah Parker?

While the book contains a substantial number of black-and-white photographs and illustrations, they do not necessarily support the text. In addition, color illustrations would have increased the book's appeal to children significantly. No maps are included.

American Indians as Cowboys therefore is a disappointment. A children's book addressing the topic of Indians as cowboys is badly needed. In most children's books about cowboys, Indians are presented as the enemy—they stole cattle; they taxed cowboys crossing their lands. Children deserve not only the truth but also well-written texts with supporting illustrations. This reviewer hopes a revised and improved version of *American Indians as Cowboys* will appear in the near future.

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Anasazi Places, The Photographic Vision of William Current.
By Jeffery Cook. University of Texas Press, 1993. 152 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

Anasazi Places is a photographic work documenting the ancient ruins of the prehistoric Anasazi people of the Southwest, as seen through the camera lens of William Current. The preface states that photographer William Current began his unique studies of Anasazi ruins in the 1960s. Based on this original work, the Amon Carter Museum, together with the University of Texas Press, published Current's studies in *Pueblo Architecture of the Southwest*, 1971, which is currently out of print. *Anasazi Places*, 1993, contains Current's original studies, with additional photographs from his extensive portfolio.

In the foreword, Karen Current Sinsheimer writes a brief biography that portrays the passionate character of her late husband, William. Crippled in war, his foot nearly amputated, Current faced the painful ordeal of learning to walk again. Loaded down with camera equipment, he managed fifteen-mile hikes to document his beloved subjects. This tenacious love shows in all aspects of his work and is especially evident in the unique composition arrangements and in the printing of landscape scenes. There are