Twenty-five Years among the Indians and Buffalo: A Frontier Memoir

J. T. Murphy
Indiana University South Bend

Recommended Citation
Murphy, J. T. "Twenty-five Years among the Indians and Buffalo: A Frontier Memoir." The Annals of Iowa 76 (2017), 238-239.
Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12389
was a former physician from Sioux City, Iowa, before he took the position as agent at Red Cloud, a position selected and administered by the Episcopal church.

Buckley’s photo collection includes a number of images of Camp Robinson, natural features of the surrounding area, and Arapahoe and Lakota (Teton Sioux) camps and people. Of special interest are two images of the Brule Chief Spotted Tail, his wife, and one of his daughters at the residence of Camp Robinson trader J. W. Paddock. One image shows the chief and members of his family seated at the table taking breakfast in Paddock’s home. Noticeable is the absence of an image of Red Cloud, the agency’s Oglala Lakota namesake. Another image of considerable interest is one of the “Grave of Crazy Horse.” The grave consists of a low scaffold with a blanket covering a wooden box surrounded by a crude wooden fence. This photograph was taken by soldier-photographer Pvt. Charles Howard overlooking Camp Sheridan, the military camp guarding the Brule Lakota Spotted Tail Agency located 40 miles northwest of Red Cloud Agency. This image was one of two probably taken less than a month after Crazy Horse’s death.

The images in the Buckley collection vary greatly in quality from excellent to poor. What is consistent, however, is Buecker’s exacting guide and identification of each image, including details difficult to distinguish without his aid. This visual source is another piece presented here, much of it for the first time, that is important for understanding the white-Indian cultural interaction surrounding the agencies and their attendant military posts in northwestern Nebraska.

_20\text{-}five\ Years\ among\ the\ Indians\ and\ Buffalo:\ A\ Frontier\ Memoir_, by William D. Street, edited by Warren R. Street with an introduction by Richard W. Etulain. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016. xxxi, 525 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer J. T. Murphy is professor of history at Indiana University South Bend. His research and writing have focused on frontier settlement, the Oregon Trail, and the military history of the nineteenth-century U.S. West, among other topics.

In April 1870, William D. Street remembered, “A party from Iowa came out onto the frontier in search of homesteads” (161). They were greenhorns on the Kansas plains and sought out Street, an experienced pioneer though only 19 years old. Born in Ohio, Street grew up in Kansas, went to work as a teamster in 1867, and, as a member of the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, participated in the winter campaign of 1868–69 against the Cheyenne. After his military service, he filed a homestead claim in Jewell County and later added land in De-
catur County. Over the subsequent decade, Street worked as a buffalo hunter, a cowboy, and a messenger for the army. He describes those experiences in a memoir of meticulous detail. His account of the hide trade is a treatise, informative and thorough, and although he laments the diminishing herds, he recalls being “puffed up” (140) over his first buffalo kill. Relating his busy life, Street name-drops the famous people he knew or saw from afar. In doing so, he places himself within the West’s mythic narrative.

Street intended to share his story with interested readers, but final preparations for publishing the manuscript were left to his great-grandson Warren R. Street, a professor emeritus of psychology at Central Washington University. This edition includes a foreword and notes, and an introduction by historian Richard W. Etulain places Street’s memories within a broader context, rightly concluding that “his is a Huckleberry Finn story of a boy becoming a man” (xxvii).


Reviewer Joni Kinsey is professor of American art history in the University of Iowa’s School of Art and Art History. Her books include Thomas Moran’s West: Chromolithography, High Art, and Popular Taste (2005) and Plain Pictures: Images of the American Prairie (1996).

In contrast to the sweep suggested by its title, Narrating the Landscape does not offer a broad treatment of printed landscape portrayals within the larger framework of national expansion but rather considers aspects of “the narrative structuring of spectatorship . . . by which landscape images conveyed concepts of history, consumption, and identity” in nineteenth-century America (87). A revision of the author’s 2004 dissertation, the book asserts that printed images established “new temporal frameworks” for understanding terrain in ways that were substantially different from paintings of the same period. Readers looking for discussions of the origins, production, and dissemination of published imagery, or even a sustained analysis of the differences between landscape paintings and prints, should look elsewhere; Johnston is more interested in how structuralist theory explains how printed images functioned in a culture where relationships with land were rapidly changing.