

John Ross, Cherokee Chief

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cant documents such as Long's orders and instructions, his efforts to recruit colleagues, and some of the financial records of the two expeditions. This supplementary material rounds out the picture of Long's activities and helps to clarify the process of frontier exploration. The introduction places the explorers' work within the mainstream of American territorial expansion, frontier exploration, and scientific development during the early nineteenth-century. The documents themselves are presented clearly, documented carefully and completely, and made easy to read—no small feat in documentary editing. The explorers' contributions in fields as varied as ethnology, geology, linguistics, botany, zoology, cartography, and even climatology, are all noted and explained clearly.

Although aimed primarily at research scholars, this volume will prove interesting to persons curious about the early history of the upper Mississippi Valley. Pictures of the explorers as well as many contemporary sketches—often by members of the exploring parties—supplement the text and notes. Sketch maps help orient the modern reader, but a current (1970s) map would certainly be of use. The index is carefully cross-indexed and valuable for the researcher. The lack of a bibliography makes the notes somewhat harder to use, but omitting one seems to have been an economic rather than a scholarly decision.

This volume includes much that is of interest to students of the Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin frontier. It sheds light on important aspects of American exploration of and penetration into those states, and by doing this helps us understand more clearly the role played by government activities prior to actual frontier settlement. This book is a model to which others editing regional materials might well look for guidance.

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John Ross, Cherokee Chief, by Gary E. Moulton. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1978. pp. ix, 282. \$12.00.

Most American history textbooks note the removal of the Cherokee Indians from Georgia during the 1830s. Likewise, John Ross is often mentioned, for he was the principal chief of the tribe at that sad and tragic time. Indeed, Ross played a major role in Cherokee affairs for many years. During those years, he dealt with white political leaders, faced the bloody turmoil of tribal factionalism, and fought for the well-being of the tribe during the Civil War and Reconstruction, as

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well as opposing removal and subsequently suffering through the Trail of Tears. In all, Ross was one of the most prominent and influential Indian leaders of his times. Unfortunately, there has not been an adequate biography of Ross until now with the publication of Gary E. Moulton's *John Ross, Cherokee Chief*.

John Ross was born in 1790, the son of Daniel Ross, a Scotsman, and Mollie McDonald, a quarter-blood Cherokee. Although Ross was only an eighth Cherokee and spoke the Cherokee language poorly, he identified with the tribe. He became close to chiefs Pathkiller and Charles Hicks, and, following the deaths of those two mentors, he was elected principal chief by the General Council in 1828.

Ross assumed the leadership of the Cherokee Nation when the citizens of Georgia were assaulting the tribe's right to hold land in Georgia. Thus, Ross was charged with the task of turning back the determined Georgians and their supporters. He failed. Presidents Jackson and Van Buren, as well as many Southern politicians, sided with the Georgians. Moreover, some Cherokee spokesmen accepted the inevitability of removal, and, in defiance of Ross, signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835, which surrendered the contested lands to the whites. And although Ross and the anti-treaty faction of the Cherokees had the support of such powerful congressional leaders as Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, the Senate ratified the treaty.

Because of his opposition to removal, Ross gained a reputation as a foe to any concessions. However, Moulton alters this view, pointing out that Ross reluctantly proposed that the tribe relinquish most of its land in return for the federal government's guarantee to protect the Cherokees' ownership of their remaining holdings. In fact, Moulton suggests that Ross hoped, if his compromise were accepted, the Cherokees would eventually become citizens of the United States. But Secretary of War Lewis Cass rejected Ross' plan, and removal could not be avoided. Moulton further argues that Ross recognized the impending reality of removal before many of his followers did and that Ross nonetheless continued his spirited public opposition to it in order to retain the allegiance of a majority of the tribe. In turn, once the process of removal began, Ross was able to use his influence to mitigate some of the resulting problems.

When Ross and his followers reached the Indian Territory in 1839 after enduring the infamous Trail of Tears, hostilities erupted. Several leaders of the pro-removal faction were murdered. Ross was seen as the instigator of those slayings, but Moulton holds that Ross was too wise to sanction any violent acts which further splintered the tribe. Nonetheless, Ross' life was threatened, and, as both factions armed,

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the Cherokee Nation verged on civil war. Eventually, tempers cooled. And in 1846 a new treaty was signed in President Polk's office, at which time Ross shook hands with Stand Watie, the leader of his opponents.

Peace, however, did not prevail. The American Civil War began, and the Cherokees were forced to take a side. Pressured by pro-Southern tribal members led by Watie, confronted with generous Confederate promises as well as the ominous threat of nearby Confederate troops, and determined to maintain the tribe's fragile unity, Ross signed a treaty with the Confederacy. But Ross soon regretted this alignment and led many of his followers into Kansas, pledging his support for the Union. After the war, however, federal authorities, while negotiating a new treaty with the Cherokees, used the fact that Ross had signed a treaty with the Confederacy to support their demand for the Cherokee Nation to cede some of its land to the government. Ironically, they also supported Watie and his faction's demand that the tribe be officially divided into northern and southern branches. Ross would not accept such requests and he lost this battle. Ross died on August 1, 1866, but ten days later the Senate ratified a treaty which recognized only one Cherokee Nation and kept its land intact.

The years during which John Ross served as principal chief of the Cherokee Nation constituted a period of frustration, transition, and dissension for the beleaguered Cherokees. Extensively documented and partially based on previously unused sources, *John Ross, Cherokee Chief* is the most authoritative biography of Ross to date. Furthermore, it offers a poignant view not only of Cherokee tribal politics but also of the relationship between the Cherokee Nation and the federal government from 1812 to 1866. This work is a welcome addition to the literature on the history of the Cherokee and of the American Middle Period.

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The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture 1665-1965, by James A. Clifton. Lawrence, Kansas: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977. pp. xx, 529. \$22.50.

Professor Clifton has produced both an exciting and an exasperating volume. Most subtitles reveal and limit the scope of the author's subject matter; in this case it expands as well as explains. Clifton sets out to do nothing less than delineate the social, economic, political, cul-

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