Montana's Righteous Hangmen: the Vigilantes in Action

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revision of the Randall and Donald volume. The longest section of the book deals with the war itself—its social, intellectual, and racial aspects. The section on Reconstruction provides some new insights into the South’s failure to “modernize” and the sad consequences. This is a balanced, authoritative account and one surely to be recognized for years to come as worthy of scholars’ attention.


Based on the memoirs of Lew L. Callaway, secretary of the Montana Territory, county attorney, mayor of Virginia City, and chief justice of the Montana Supreme Court, this is the story of life in the Montana Territory in the last half of the nineteenth century—of gold fever, Indian warfare, cattlemen, and vigilantes. One might think an attorney would be on the side of the law when telling about the vigilantes, but surprisingly, he gives a more balanced and judicious view. One can certainly see that judging their actions by current standards is not a fair assessment. This work, based on primary source material, updates and verifies the classic work on vigilantes by Thomas J. Dimsdale, The Vigilantes of Montana, published in 1865. The book certainly makes a unique contribution to our understanding of the “wild West.”


This is volume five of a history of Indiana, three volumes of which (Volumes I, III, IV) have been previously published, and follows a topical organization with initial chapters devoted to the politics of the period and later chapters to social, economic, and cultural matters. The author utilizes local and community history to illustrate major themes and yet ties it all into the broader national themes of the era. The Indiana Historical Society can certainly be proud of this publication as it adds greatly to our knowledge of the people and their Hoosier state as they move through tradition and change in the years 1920 through 1945. Scholars should look forward to the completion of the second and sixth volumes of this state history and other states would do well to emulate such a project.