

Book Reviews

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**Western Art, Western History:
Collected Essays**

Ron Tyler. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019. 300pp. Illus. Notes. Biblio. Ind. Cloth, \$65.00.

Packed with beautiful full-color images, this coffee table book brings together Ron Tyler’s research on western documentary art and its creators. Tyler’s long career as a curator of western art at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth, Texas, provided him with the enviable opportunity to study the collections of artists who created historical documents through their work. Some of these artists accompanied scientific expeditions or the American tours of European royalty. Others struck out on their own, fascinated by the unique peoples, landscapes, flora, and fauna of the American West. Throughout the eight essays in this volume, Tyler convincingly argues that these firsthand visual representations constitute historical records as rich in information as the written record to which historians traditionally turn. The firsthand drawings, lithographs, and paintings that these artists rendered offer valuable and unique insights into the region’s history.

Tyler points to earlier generations of historians who also commented on the tendency of the historical profession to neglect the treasure trove of evidence available in these eyewitness depictions. For example, in 1965, Smithsonian anthropologist John C. Ewers noted that “the student of Western history should learn to distinguish between the primary pictorial

document which the artist created from his own firsthand knowledge . . . and the spurious realism of the historical reconstruction. The best of such painters were both fine artists and reliable historians” (p. 4).

Western Art, Western History is divided into three chronological sections, with each essay reflecting one of the major means through which documentary art was produced: as a visual record for a scientific or military expedition of exploration; in conjunction with a tour of the West by European royalty; or as a significant portion of an artist’s body of work. Tyler’s essays include both the well-known, such as Karl Bodmer, John James Audobon, and Frederic Remington, and the almost forgotten, such as Louis Choris, Alfred E. Mathews, and George Caleb Bingham. The essays provide the essential context and analysis for categorizing the work of these artists as eyewitness accounts. “The common theme for these artists,” Tyler notes, “is that they observed firsthand what they painted and distributed their work through illustrated books or journals” (p. 10).

Underscoring the importance of the visual record to scientific expeditions, Tyler found that a sizeable chunk of the U.S. military budget from 1840 to 1860 was directed toward expeditions and their illustrated reports. A search through the records of the U.S. Department of Treasury reveals large numbers of government contracts for lithography, and a concomitant amount of corruption. The book includes a summary of Tyler’s research into this aspect of documentary art.

An important consideration for Tyler is the reach of these artists among the public at large. He contends that “these images revealed ‘the Great West’ to a waiting and curious public, would-be settlers, and vicarious thrill-seekers alike” (p. 10). As a result, they undoubtedly shaped public opinion and perhaps even motivated would-be emigrants to hit the trails to the West. Tyler’s lavishly illustrated and clearly written narrative is suggestive of further research in many areas, as well as instructive for general readers interested in western documentary art.

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Too Strong to Be Broken: The Life of Edward J. Driving Hawk

Edward J. Driving Hawk and Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve. University of Nebraska Press, 2020. 200pp. Illus. Notes. Biblio. Cloth, \$27.95.

Edward J. Driving Hawk’s memoir, cowritten with his sister Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, chronicles his eighty-five years (and counting) of life. Born on 4 March 1935, Driving Hawk’s life has included a variety of accomplishments, including his election as the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Chairman in 1975. As the title of his autobiography indicates, Driving Hawk has also overcome immense obstacles in life, some self-inflicted and others outside of his control, such as the death of his father from cancer at the age of twelve.

Divided chronologically into six chapters, Driving Hawk begins by detailing his *tiospaye* (family), his childhood, and his teenage experiences. Contrary to the stereotype that Native people were isolated only on reservations, his autobiography demonstrates a young family that traveled

back and forth between the Rosebud Indian Reservation and numerous towns for economic opportunities. Despite economic hardship and the death of many close family members, Driving Hawk and his family often found humor and joy in moments, including when their family dog named Soup survived a tornado on the plains. Another story describes Edward’s mother’s request at one supper for him to sit up straight and eat exactly like their visitor Father Barbour, which resulted in Edward mimicking his every move.

Driving Hawk eventually enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1957. After basic training, he was shipped to Korea and later served in the Vietnam War. He stated, “It was all so new and strange and different than being on the reservation and I was scared yet excited about what would happen” (p. 48). Edward served a total of twenty years in the military as a radio operator. Throughout his service, Driving Hawk always felt that his ancestors protected him. For Driving Hawk, the military served as a form of economic stability for his wife and family, while also allowing him to travel across the world.

Driving Hawk acknowledges his own personal demons and struggles throughout his life, including alcoholism. Through the help of his commander and Alcoholics Anonymous, Driving Hawk managed to stop drinking and has stayed sober for more than forty years. Driving Hawk also argues that tribal politics led to the several accusations of mismanagement of the U.S. Reservation Bank and Trust funds leveled against him, resulting in his eventual eight-month imprisonment. He later reflected, “I came out with a renewed belief and faith in God. I was both physically and spiritually strong—too strong to be broken” (p. 159).

Too Strong to Be Broken offers readers insight into the complexity of being

American Indian in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As Driving Hawk claimed, "I am a proud Lakota man and cherish the cultural heritage I gained from my parents and grandparents. I hope this recollection will let my descendants know and understand their heritage" (p. xii). His autobiography illuminates an individual who has accomplished many things from military service and tribal advocacy, but also recognizes that individuals sometimes make poor decisions. Most importantly, Driving Hawk's narrative articulates the will to never quit, stating, "I expect to be here a while longer even though I live with pain and there are times when I want to ride off into the sunset" (p. 164). Driving Hawk truly exemplifies the strength to never be broken.

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John Finerty Reports the Sioux War

Edited by Paul L. Hedren. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020. 288pp. Illus. Map. Notes. Biblio. Ind. Cloth, \$34.95.

John Finerty, a nineteenth-century war correspondent for the *Chicago Times*, fought for his life when he was trapped with a small army scouting party in 1876 during the Great Sioux War of 1876–1877. After a two-hour firefight, the situation seemed hopeless. The group knew that the American Indians would torture them if taken alive. Each man resolved to "blow out his own brains" before surrendering. Finerty wrote in his dispatch to the newspaper. "I had often wondered how a man felt when he saw inevitable sudden doom before him. I know it now, for I had no idea of escape, and could not have suf-

fered more if an Indian knife or bullet had pierced my heart" (p. 119).

Finerty did escape, as he and the others abandoned their horses and slipped away to a mountain until the Indians gave up their pursuit. About thirty-five years later, Finerty published his memoirs of the campaign in a well-known book entitled *Warpath and Bivouac; Or Conquest of the Sioux* (1890). Although primarily based on Finerty's newspaper articles, his memoir included extraneous asides, such as his recounting of pressing a flower in the pages of his notebook in between exchanging gunfire with the Indians. While Finerty's memoir is engaging, it lacks the immediacy and intrigue of the original daily dispatches reproduced in Paul L. Hedren's fine edited volume *John Finerty Reports the Sioux War*. Hedren, a former National Park Service historian who is an expert on the Indian wars, has produced an exciting read and a useful tool for the historian.

Hedren, like most scholars of the Great Sioux War, had prior knowledge of Finerty's memoir. While researching press accounts of the war, however, Hedren noticed frequent discrepancies between the memoir and Finerty's original reporting. Hedren discovered that the newspaper stories contained substantial additional detail. These aspects include interesting descriptions of places and critical assessments of U.S. Army leaders like General George Crook, who Finerty witnessed in action at the Battle of the Rosebud in June 1876. Finerty also reported on problems with the Springfield carbine, a fact of particular interest to Little Bighorn scholars who still debate the weapon's weaknesses and its role in the army's defeat.

No one has written a full biography of Finerty, but Hedren includes an excellent summary of his career in the opening chapter. The succeeding chapters, which

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consist largely of Finerty's reporting, are organized chronologically by dateline. Hedren writes a brief introduction for each chapter, providing background for the reader and bringing the individual newspaper stories into a coherent narrative.

John Finerty Reports the Sioux War is not a replacement for *War-Path and Bivouac*, and Hedren notes in his introduction that both the newspaper stories and the memoir are unique accounts of the war. The memoir

is a history written from the distance of more than three decades with more sources than are available to a journalist covering a conflict. Thanks to Hedren, students of the Great Sioux War can now easily read the "first rough draft of history" as it was lived by one of the leading correspondents of the Indians wars.

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