

[PDF] Oh What A Slaughter: Massacres In The American West: 1846--1890

Larry McMurtry - pdf download free book

Books Details:

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist McMurtry (*Lonesome Dove*) recounts six Western frontier massacres in this meandering mixture of memoir, literary criticism, jeremiad and history. "In most cases," McMurtry acknowledges, "the only undisputed fact about a given massacre is the date on which it occurred." Rightly enough, such disputes don't keep him from approaching these subjects with strong opinions. "Whites killed whites" at Mountain Meadows (1857); "a camp of one hundred percent peaceful Indians" was attacked at Sand Creek (1864). At Marias River (1870), Blackfoot Indians "dying anyway" of smallpox were slaughtered, and at Camp Grant (1871) "all the people killed—excepting one old man and a 'well-grown' boy—were women and children." McMurtry's easygoing voice and hop-and-skip pace leave comprehensiveness to the many books to

which he refers, but his own volume would have been stronger, and more accessible to readers unfamiliar with frontier history, if it had been organized more systematically. As is, the book feels tossed off, and his passing references to contemporary massacres—in Rwanda, New York and Iraq, for example—don't add much resonance.

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From A recurring theme in McMurtry's works, both fiction and nonfiction, is the difficulty in bridging the gap between myth and reality in comprehending the settlement of the West. Here, he utilizes a healthy skepticism, sharp analytical skills, and a strong sense of moral outrage to examine six massacres in the trans-Mississippi West. Five involved the slaughter of Native Americans by whites, and one involved the slaughter of whites by other whites. Several, including the Sand Creek, Mountain Meadows, and Wounded Knee massacres, are well known to aficionados of western history. Others, while more obscure, are equally as gripping in their carnage and brutality. But McMurtry is no bleeding heart out to trash white settlers or soldiers. His accounts are balanced and scrupulously fair. Although acknowledging that the truth regarding some essential details will never be known, he leaves us with the inescapable reality of the rotting corpses of men, women, and children and a gnawing sense of justice denied. This is, of course, a deeply disturbing work; however, these things happened and are part of our history. This book will make an outstanding addition to western history collections. *Jay Freeman*

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