

BOOK REVIEWS

The Chickasaw Rancher. By Neil R. Johnson (The Redlands Press, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1961. pp. 242. \$5.00)

In Oklahoma history, one of the most intriguing developments was the absorption of the people of the Five Civilized Nations by white civilization. Within this amalgamation process, none was more complete than that of the Chickasaws. In *The Chickasaw Rancher*, Neil Johnson, by telling the story and writing the biography of his grandfather, Montford Johnson, shows how in two generations, through intermarriage and association with white people, the Chickasaws changed from the tribal life of the Indian to the more complicated way of the white man.

The author of *The Chickasaw Rancher* lets the story tell itself. There is nothing didactic nor are there preachments in the narrative. Yet, the story plainly shows that in the latter days of the existence of the Five Nations, and before statehood, that the business and political leaders in Oklahoma were frequently the people of mixed Indian and white ancestry. They were the aristocrats of the Indian Territory when western Oklahoma was opened to white settlement. They were the people with established families and often of established wealth. It is no wonder that their influence on Oklahoma life has far transcended their numbers.

The Chickasaw Rancher as written by Neil Johnson is a remarkable narrative portraying the life of ranching people in the period following the Civil War up to the time of the opening of Oklahoma to white settlement. It shows how far the fiction writers and television script authors miss the mark in their portrayal of the cowboy and the Indian. This book should be required reading for all Hollywood script writers of the Western scene. This biography of Montford Johnson shows how men lived from day to day on cattle ranches. How grueling and often unpleasant was much of the work! How intense were the hours of joy and play!

It is most difficult for anyone born in the ranching country to lay this book down once he has begun to read. *The Chickasaw Rancher* should have a wide reading in Oklahoma, because of the many Sooners who have ranching backgrounds. It should be read by everyone in Oklahoma who wants to know how ranching was done before the sodbusters moved in.

—Elmer L. Fraker

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NOTABLE REPRINTS

Man of the Plains 1856-1882. Edited by Dr. Donald F. Danker, with "Forword" by George Bird Grinnell. (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1961. Maps, appendix, chronology, index. Pp. 350. \$4.75).

This book is based on the script as written by Luther North originally. North's story was tossed around evidently by a number of historians for a number of years. Luckily it was printed as it is except for editorial requirements. Dr. Danker has done a commendable job as editor.

The North brothers, Frank and Luther, were a pair of prominent military frontiersmen in the Platte River countries of Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado. The Norths led bands of Pawnee scouts in the Indian wars of the 1860's and 1870's. The Pawnee hated the Sioux, so did the Norths, who saw a lot of action on the plains.

George Bird Grinnell was the real chronicler of the Norths, and urged Luther to put his life in writing. North's views of people and events are most interesting. We can tell that it was difficult for him to recall some of the events he writes about. The book is valuable for the accuracy of details: little insights into characters, such as Buffalo Bill; his account of the battle of Summit Springs is well worth studying. The Powder River Campaign adds another man's recollections. Some of Luther's tales are fascinating, well like the Indian who was killed by his own arrow. An enemy plucked it from his shoulder, fitted it into his bow and zing! This book ranks among the best for its freshness. It belongs to an overall great plains frontier picture. For those who understand this picture here is excellent reading and source material.

Crazy Horse. "The Strange Man of the Oglalas," a biography by Mari Sandoz. A Bison Book, paper back. (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1961, pp. 428. \$1.65).

This is a reprint of Miss Sandoz' finest production. *Crazy Horse* is basically the story of the great Siouan exodus, written in prose-like style as a Sioux might relate it. No warrior surpassed the field and head work of Crazy Horse. He was a fighter and with strong medicine. He hated white men with a passion. His inexcusable death at Fort Robinson Nebraska, in September, 1877, tolled the "end" for the noble Oglala people.

We are glad to see this popular edition. When thinking of Mari Sandoz' writing, we generally think of her early books—like *Old Jules* and *Crazy Horse*.

—Dean Krakel

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