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Peter Nabokov, Lawrence Loendorf. *Restoring a Presence: American Indians and Yellowstone National Park.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004. xi + 381 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8061-3589-2.

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Geyser Myths, Wiser Truths: Indians in and around Yellowstone

In this book's introduction, the authors justify the need for their study by claiming that scholars have largely ignored the histories of Indians in America's national parks and particularly in Yellowstone. They write that, with a few exceptions (notably Mark Spence's work), scholars prior to this book bought into a deeply entrenched myth that Indians were afraid of Yellowstone's thermal fields and geysers and, therefore, avoided the region. Their goal is to show readers that not only did Native Americans once live and thrive in the Yellowstone area, but that official National Park Service (NPS) "stereotypes" of Indians "have affected attitudes and policies relating to the park" (p. 31). In restoring an Indian presence, as their title indicates, in the Yellowstone region's history, Peter Nabokov (a cultural anthropologist at UCLA) and Lawrence Loendorf (an archaeologist at New Mexico State) hope to both inform the public and to help negotiate a healing process between the NPS and various Indian groups.

Historians familiar with the literature on Indians and the NPS will rightly find the opening sentence of this review to be a curious one. In addition to Spence (*Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* [1999]), a number of studies about Native Americans and various parks appeared in print years before *Restoring a Presence.* Nabokov and Loendorf do not mention this in their introduction, but do acknowledge the literature in the last few pages of their conclusion. There they note the works of Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek (*American Indians and National Parks* [1998]), Philip Burnham (*Indian Country, God's Country: Native Americans and The National Parks* [2000]) and others. Although they fail to note one of the earliest and most perceptive looks at the subject, Louis Warren's chapter on the Blackfeet and the history of Glacier National Park in *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (1997). "Truth be told," Nabokov and Loendorf write, "most of our document was produced in ignorance of this emerging discourse. The downside was a discernable lack of sophistication in our general statements" (p. 304). It was a smart move by the authors and their editor to put these two sentences in the conclusion, because an admission like this in an introduction might leave a reader wondering why he or she should soldier on. And readers should soldier on with *Restoring a Presence* because this is a very useful book. Although it lacks the well-crafted narrative and the multifaceted type of argument found in a book like Warren's, this work offers a profusion of information regarding the life ways of Native American groups in the Northern Rockies. For any historian writing about various bands of Crow, Shoshone, Bannock, Nez Perce, Salish (whom the authors usually refer to as the Flathead even after noting that "*Salish* is often preferred"), Blackfeet, and especially the Sheep Eaters, this study will likely teach readers plenty they did not already know and will almost certainly guide them toward some useful primary documents (p. 99).

I certainly wish that this book had existed seven years ago when I studied the Salish and other native peoples of western Montana. Back then, for example, I never came across a story like the one they recount in a subsection titled "How the Indians Saved the Yellowstone Buffalo." Nabokov and Loendorf offer here several traditional tribal stories that emphasize how the Salish began to notice changes to the bison herds during their treks to buffalo country in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. As herds diminished, some hunters wanted to bring bison back with them to their wintering valleys in the mountains. Eventually, one boy returned to the Jocko Valley with two breeding pair. These bison were eventually sold to a man named Michael Pablo, who bred buffalo in the Jocko as early as the 1880s. Although Nabokov and Loendorf confusingly describe Pablo on one page as "half-Piegan" and on the very next page as "Flathead Indian," their point that his animals eventually became part

of the herd that helped to strengthen Yellowstone's bison population illuminates one of the many interesting and complicated intersections between Native American land use practices and park management at the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century (pp. 117-122).

Some of the best information (and colorful stories) in this book appear where the authors attempt to refute the claim that Indians were afraid of geysers and hot water holes in the Yellowstone region. In the account of the Crow medicine man known as "the Fringe," for example, we learn that he immersed sick people in the waters with him, then used a stuffed otter, which "could swim around and bite the wounds and heal them" (p. 55). The Crow may have been awed when the Fringe walked on water, but they were not afraid of geysers, apparently, nor were they opposed to cooking food in a thermal pool. While a Shoshone man in more recent years claimed that hot springs were akin to a "natural jacuzzi" [sic] for him and his people, his ancestors buried their dead there. In two of the more startling firsthand accounts reprinted in the book, for example, we learn that when the chief Pocatello died in 1884, his people deposited his body into a hot spring, then killed eighteen horses and rolled them into the spring on top of Pocatello's corpse and into what appeared to them and the Euro-American who witnessed the burial to be a bottomless hole; or that a Mormon missionary the next year saw a hot spring with at least six submerged and salt-encrusted, mummified Indian corpses with stone weights tied around their feet (pp. 278-280).

One of the most important and compelling points Nabokov and Loendorf make is that early explorers and, later, NPS officials projected their own beliefs "onto native cultures" regarding Yellowstone's geysers and thermal fields (p. 273). Early Anglo explorers referred to geysers as "Satanic," "frightful," "diabolical," and so on. By example, in 1852 the Jesuit priest Pierre-Jean De Smet wrote that Indians thought of the region as "a kind of hell" (p. 272). The authors note that Devil's Slide, Hellbroth Springs, Brimstone, and other place names in Yellowstone are among "the more than fifty diabolic toponyms once used in the park" (p. 274). All of this becomes relevant when Nabokov and Loendorf argue that the NPS had an agenda for presenting Yellowstone as a place Indians did not like and, therefore, supposedly avoided. The NPS wanted to make the park appear Indian-free for a multitude of reasons. Early, after the Nez Perce killed tourists in the park during their run for the Canadian border in 1877, park officials attempted to assure wary tourists that Yellowstone was safe by arguing that Indians were not there, had never really lived there, and that the actions of Chief Joseph's band in entering the park in the first place were aberrations rooted in despair. Later, the very idea of national parks as preserves of an earlier, wilder America, "wilderness" personified, precluded discussion of anything more than a transitory human presence.

What this book lacks in theoretical sophistication (by the admission of its authors), it makes up for in the many details it offers about Indian life ways in the Northern Rockies. Readers should be forewarned that this is not a history as much as a "documentary overview" of anthropological and archeological evidence. I borrow this description from an earlier version of this study by Nabokov and Loendorf, published by the NPS in 2002 under a contract with Loendorf and Associates, titled "American Indians and Yellowstone National Park: A Documentary Overview." This NPS report and the University of Oklahoma Press version covered in this reviews are identical enough that if your library has one and not the other, either should suffice. I would actually recommend the NPS report because it includes some things Oklahoma excluded, including useful illustrations in the text and some wonderful primary documents in extensive appendices. In addition, I could not help but notice that the book version gained more than a few typographical errors in its transformation from government report to academic press.

Regardless of any problems, this is a necessary and important work. In their examinations of tribal oral traditions, first-hand accounts of non-Indian explorers to the region, and, most clearly, in their studies of the Yellowstone landscape, which holds countless pieces of archeological evidence supporting the notion that native peoples lived in and around the park for thousands of years, Nabokov and Loendorf meticulously show that a human presence, an Indian presence, in Yellowstone's history is clear.

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