

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



James P. Ronda. *Beyond Lewis and Clark: The Army Explores the West*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003. 128 pp. \$14.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-295-98356-1.

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This book is an admirable adjunct to the exhibition of the same name created by the Washington State Historical Society and “on tour” between 2003 and 2006. As one would expect from Professor Ronda, it is well researched (though not extensively documented) and gracefully written. As a “stand-alone” book, it constitutes a brief introduction to the people and places associated with the mapping and great surveys of the American West. Among the individuals whose activities are surveyed, the reader encounters both the well-known (Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, Zebulon Pike, Stephen Long, John C. Fremont and even G. A. Custer) as well as the lesser-known “soldier-explorers,” including G. K. Warren, Colonel John J. Abert and his son Lieutenant James W. Abert, William Emory, Isaac I. Stevens, Clarence King, and George M. Wheeler. Collectively, these “soldier-explorers,” to use Jefferson’s metaphor, “filled up the canvas” of the western half of the United States, a contribution that Professor Ronda so effectively summarizes in his final chapter.

The treatment accorded to each of the individuals covered varies, of course, on the basis of accomplishment and contribution. A general reader unfamiliar with the “Pathfinder’s” subsequent career would benefit by a more extensive summary of the exploits of John C. Fremont. As it stands, the coverage leaves Fremont at mid-career, then refers to him several times in subsequent chapters, creating something of a “disjointed” effect.

In addition to the informative and well-organized text, coverage of the subject indicated by the book’s title is enhanced by the presentation of eleven maps and eighteen illustrations. Six of the maps are reproductions of originals by Clark, Pike, Long, Fremont, Gouverneur

Kemble Warren, and Wheeler. The other five maps show the routes taken by the soldier-explorers, the United States-Mexico Boundary Survey, and the proposed routes for constructing a railroad to the Pacific coast. Collectively, they constitute a tribute to the fortitude and the cartographic skills of these nineteenth-century “soldier-explorers.”

Of the eighteen illustrations, eight are portraits of individual explorers; single illustrations portray Jesse Benton Fremont, Thomas Jefferson and Sir Joseph Banks. There are in addition two sketches and/or paintings, one by John Mix Stanley. Of the remaining four illustrations, two are photographs taken during Clarence King’s expeditions, one is a photograph of the Grand Canyon, and the final photograph was taken during George Armstrong Custer’s 1874 Black Hills expedition.

This reviewer has only one very minor question. Why was Doris Ostrander Dawdy’s *George Montague Wheeler: The Man and the Myth* not included among the suggested readings?

The exhibition for which this volume is a supplement will be on display at the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (July 1 through December 30, 2003); Washington State History Museum, Tacoma, Washington (February 14 through October 31, 2004); Kansas History Center, Topeka, Kansas (December 10, 2004 through August 14, 2005); Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri (October 8 through December 31, 2005); and the Frontier Army Museum at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (from April, 2006). Anyone planning to take advantage of this exhibition most assuredly would benefit if they first acquired and read this most reasonably priced offering from the University of Washington Press.

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