
BOOK NOTES

Old Blue's Road: A Historian's Motorcycle Journeys in the American West. By James Whiteside. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015, xii + 282 pages, paper \$19.95.)

Sometimes when a person reaches his or her mid-fifties, they take it upon themselves to do something crazy, or at least something they normally would not otherwise do. This is what James Whiteside did. A retired history professor, he decided to buy a motorcycle he named "Old Blue" (for no apparent reason), take off from his home in Denver, and ride across the West until meeting up with his wife in Vancouver, British Columbia. The trip began a series of other western forays imparted in this volume. This book is more than his travel log, it tells a history of the places visited. Whether it's Yellowstone Park, or Four Corners, Whiteside paints a vivid picture of then and now, making travel and history interesting. Of particular note to the readers of this journal is his brief excursion into western Kansas where he gets as far as the El Cuartelejo ruins in Scott County before turning south to Dodge City and then heading back to Denver.

Thomas Johnson's Story and the History of Fairway, Kansas. By Joe H. Vaughan. (Independence, MO: Book Lady Press, 2014, 160 pages, paper \$21.95.)

The 1865 murder of Reverend Thomas Johnson remains one of Kansas's unsolved mysteries. Johnson was a Methodist missionary who founded the Shawnee Methodist Mission, in present-day Fairway, Kansas, to serve and convert the Shawnee tribe, several hundred members of which had been forcibly relocated west to Kansas Indian Territory. Johnson was also a well-known slaveholder and pro-Southern sympathizer during the territorial struggle in Kansas, but, at the outbreak of the Civil War, Johnson signed a Unionist Pledge. Thus, according to Joe Vaughan, a longtime committed preservationist of eastern Kansas and author of this volume, plenty of people in Kansas would have wanted Johnson dead. Vaughan does not attempt to solve this murder mystery, instead explaining Johnson's role in the founding of the mission and trace the development of Fairway, Kansas. The book includes many historic images of Fairway, its people, and its institutions through the years.

The Kansas Relays: Track and Field Tradition in the Heartland. By Joe D. Schrag. (Flagstaff, AZ: Adina Publishing, 2014, xxxvi + 292 pages, cloth \$34.95.)

For many Kansas high school and college athletes, the Kansas Relays are an enduring "track and field tradition," a kind of rite of spring. Joe Schrag, a native Kansan, University of Kansas alumnus, and longtime high school coach, has here assembled a beautifully illustrated history and reference book about the classic, "one of America's signature events in athletics" that was launched in 1923 (p. ix). Seventeen chapters cover the history of the Relays—including its star competitors and their medals—from its inception to its recent move from Memorial Stadium on the university campus to Rock Chalk Park on the city's western fringe. Appendixes highlight the event's "most outstanding performers," its referees and starters, the Hall of Fame, world records set at the relays, and "year-by-year summaries," and are illustrated with annual program covers.

Forts and Posts in Kansas during the Civil War: 1861-1865. By William C. Pollard, Jr. (Avon Park, FL: William Pollard, 2015, 336 pages, paper \$12.20.)

Forts and Posts is based on William Pollard's doctoral dissertation, completed in 1997. The book includes a brief introduction about the general tenor of the Civil War as it was fought in Kansas, as well as comprehensive coverage of every fort or post within the state of Kansas during this period. Not every fort or post is treated equally; some receive only a few lines, while others take up multiple pages, as is appropriate depending on each fort's tenure and importance to the war. Each chapter provides the history of the fort's location, sometimes through the eyes of those who served there. *Forts and Posts* is very well researched, based on materials from the Kansas State Historical Society archives as well as other published sources, both in print and online, as well as the author's own personal experiences in having visited many of these locations himself. There are four appendices, the largest of which includes maps of nearly every location in the book, although occasionally those maps are blurry or difficult to read. Nonetheless, *Forts and Posts* is a useful reference work for anyone interested in Kansas during the Civil War.

The Quotable Amelia Earhart. Edited by Michele Wehrwein Albion. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015, vii + 255 pages, cloth \$24.95.)

One of the most famous female pilots in American history and a strong proponent of women's rights, Amelia Earhart is most remembered for disappearing over the Pacific in July 1937 while attempting to circumnavigate the globe. Emphasis on this one event has served to obscure the pilot's numerous achievements, both in and out of an airplane. *The Quotable Amelia Earhart* seeks to shed light on the life, rather than death, of this female aviator by providing "a concise, documented collection of Earhart's quotations so that her words, as well as her achievements, may inspire a new generation" (p. x). Consisting of quotations drawn largely from the last decade of Earhart's life, the book successfully conveys her sentiments on subjects such as aviation, gender roles, women's rights and the press. The result is a colorful and realistic narrative of "Lady Lindy's" personal and professional life.

The Ogallala Road: A Story of Love, Family, and the Fight to Keep the Great Plains from Running Dry. By Julene Bair. (New York: Penguin Books, 2015, 278 pages, paper \$17.00.)

Julene Bair's *The Ogallala Road* is part love story and part love letter to the Great Plains region and the people who have made it home. The memoir, a recipient of numerous awards including being named a Notable Book of Kansas in 2015, was recently released in paperback. In *The Ogallala Road*, Bair returns from San Francisco to her native Kansas and the family farm she has inherited. A single mother, she plans to make a home for herself and her son in Kansas and thereby honor her father's commandment to "Hang on to your land!" But life becomes complicated when Bair meets Ward, a Kansas rancher, and as she begins to understand the troubling water legacies of farming the Great Plains. Bair struggles to make a new life for her family and find a new, more environmentally responsible way of farming.