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Review of Paper Medicine Man: John Gregory Bourke and His American West

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Paper Medicine Man: John Gregory Bourke and His American West. By Joseph C. Porter. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986. Maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. xviii + 362 pp. \$29.95.

John Gregory Bourke (1846-1896) is best known to students of the American West as the author of *On the Border with Crook*, a classic record of frontier military life. He was also, like certain other army officers, among the pioneers of American anthropology. Like his commanding officer, General George Crook, he was a critic of federal Indian policy and an advocate of the rights of American Indians. His biography is, therefore, much more than the record of a frontier soldier. He is worthy of study as a chronicler of Western campaigns, a dedicated scholar of Indian culture, and a man whose life casts light on Indian-white relations.

The author has made thorough use, including extensive and justifiable quotes, of Bourke's voluminous writings, published and unpublished. He has ably presented the life of a complex man, a son of Irish immigrants who studied the native Americans, a Jesuit-educated Catholic who was fascinated by Indian religions, a cavalryman who went to war at sixteen and spent the rest of his life in uniform and who, while campaigning against the Sioux, made a point of reading one of Shakespeare's plays or Macaulay's essays every day.

Bourke, Porter concludes, was an idealist who never really adjusted to the changes in America in his lifetime; this was the basis of his criticism of America's treatment of the Indians. He possessed a capacity to win the friendship and confidence of Indians, including those he had fought, with the intellectual capacity and literary skill to evaluate and present what he learned from them.

Porter gives us rather more of Bourke the anthropologist than of Bourke the soldier, and rather less of George Crook, the brilliant frontier commander he served so long as an aide, than one might wish; this is justifiable because we already know much of their

campaigns. He often allows Bourke to speak for himself, which he was well able to do. Students of the Indians and of the frontier will not be able to dispense with this book and its many fine illustrations.

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