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Review of A Whirlwind Passes: News Correspondents and the Sioux Indian Disturbances of 1890-1891

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Kerstetter, Todd, "Review of A Whirlwind Passes: News Correspondents and the Sioux Indian Disturbances of 1890-1891" (1994). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 805.

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resulted in the grisly massacre at Wounded Knee. George R. Kolbenschlag's *A Whirlwind Passes: News Correspondents and the Sioux Indian Disturbances of 1890-1891* sheds light on the men and women responsible for reporting on the Ghost Dance and the Wounded Knee Massacre and lends understanding to the nature of the reporters' activities.

Kolbenschlag identifies twenty-five correspondents representing eighteen papers on the scene at Pine Ridge. He provides a thumbnail biography of each before describing their work and wrestling with their general condemnation by historians. He admits that some, notably the consistently alarmist Charles "Will" Cressey of the *Omaha Bee*, probably the most widely read of the correspondents thanks to the *Bee's* Associated Press membership, deserve criticism for fabrications that contributed to the era's tensions. Kolbenschlag notes, by the way, that Lakotas regularly obtained newspapers and knew well not only of troop movements but also of the profoundly anti-Indian sentiment expressed in reports and editorials. Most other reporters, he argues, did their best to get at the truth. Factors such as "spectacularizing" editors, sensationalist reporters such as Cressey, and the difficulty of getting accurate information from the Army, however, ultimately distorted the news product by the time it appeared in print.

This book has several shortcomings. Kolbenschlag misses an important angle to the story by not including Sioux correspondents. Several Sioux, probably Dakotas, reported on the Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee in *Dakota* in *Iapi Oaye*, and in English in *The Word Carrier*, papers published monthly at Santee Agency, Nebraska. Kolbenschlag also uses some distressing terminology. He adopts his subjects' "hostile" and "friendly" distinctions for various Lakotas, and he uses the U.S. Army's description of events at Pine Ridge as a "disturbance" rather than a "war," although by the book's end he calls it a war and identifies the "hostiles" as "enemies." This simplifies the complex cultural and political currents among the Lakotas and distorts the slaughter

A Whirlwind Passes: News Correspondents and the Sioux Indian Disturbances of 1890-1891. By George R. Kolbenschlag. Vermillion: University of South Dakota Press, 1990. Preface, list of correspondents, maps, epilogue, endnotes, bibliography, index. xii + 116 pp. \$9.95 paper.

Newspapers played a key role in disseminating information and, unfortunately, misinformation about the Ghost Dance among the Lakotas. They also contributed to tension between the United States and the Lakotas that

of hundreds of Lakotas, including unarmed women and children. Kolbensschlag also might have included a brief analysis of the papers for which the correspondents worked. Cressey's employer, the *Omaha Bee*, for instance, has been described as a tabloid prone to sensationalism. In terms of production, the book contains a number of typographical errors, and some endnotes are incomplete.

Although general readers probably will not find much here of interest, Kolbensschlag has provided a useful reference tool for researchers working on Lakota and media history.

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