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Review of The Papers of Chief John Ross Edited by Gary E. Moulton

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The Papers of Chief John Ross. Edited by Gary E. Moulton. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985. Frontispieces, calendar of Ross papers, biographical sketches, notes, indices. Vol. 1, xxxiv + 787 pp.; Vol. 2, xxvi + 765 pp. Two volume set \$95.00.

John Ross was the foremost leader of the Cherokee people during the nineteenth century if not the whole of tribal history. Born in 1790 of mixed-blood parentage and educated largely by private tutors, he served as chief from 1828 until his death in 1866. Because most of those last century events—removal, factionalism, civil war—that dramatically shaped the destiny of the Cherokees, as well as other Indian peoples, occurred during Ross's tenure as chief, to understand him and his role in those events is to have a better insight into a large slice of American history. *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, edited by Gary E. Moulton, remarkably facilitates that understanding.

Thanks to grants from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and the Center for Great Plains Studies, Moulton has reproduced in two large volumes more than eleven hundred documents and manuscript items that detail Ross's public career and aspects of his private life. Among other things, these materials reveal him as an astute politician and consummate diplomat, who in his interaction with the federal government took pains to establish a precise written record upon which current and future policy decisions would be made. The documents also suggest that the motivating principle of Ross's public life was Cherokee patriotism and tribal unity despite the rampant factionalism that bedeviled his chieftaincy. They reflect as well that he maintained an almost mystical faith in the good will and sense of justice of the United States, attitudes that would prevail given peaceful resistance and patience on the part of the tribe.

Moulton's editorial skills are admirable. Published with only minimal alterations, each document is identified by type and location. The editorial decision not to correct or identify

misspelled words was probably appropriate, although on occasions this tends to disguise what must be typographical errors. Rather than identifying Ross's correspondents as they appear in the text, Moulton has included their biographies at the end of the second volume, a useful addition that ought to have been described in introductory material in the first volume. Although it is certainly not inadequate, the index would have been enhanced had analytical entries such as "education," "missions," "factionalism," and "courts" been included. Yet by any measure this is a remarkable work of scholarship that will renew interest in and reshape our perception of the history of John Ross, the Cherokees, and Native Americans in general. Moulton, the University of Oklahoma Press, and the two grant agencies can take pride in this major contribution to the historical record.

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