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Firearms of The American West, 1803-1865. By Louis A. Garavaglia and Charles G. Worman. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index, xiii + 402 pp. \$35.00.

The subject of this volume is not one with which most readers of the *Great Plains Quarterly* will be familiar, yet firearms were the basic tools of survival during the "conquest" of the plains frontier. Often they were also symbols of power.

Over the years, a popular literature concerned with firearms in the West has grown. Higher quality firearms history has, with too few exceptions (the books of Hanson and Carl Russel, for instance) not been brought to bear directly upon the West.

Many previous syntheses of western arms were the work of dedicated hobbyists lacking the training necessary for their books to stand both historical and technical scrutiny. The joint authors herein, however, are both editors as well as competent scholars. *Firearms of the American West, 1803-1865* is not without problems, but it is remarkably complete, technically and historically accurate, and wholly satisfying.

The authors note in their preface that "1803 suggested itself because in that year Lewis and Clark began preparations for their great journey to the Pacific. The obvious choice for a closing date was 1865, the end of the Civil War" (xii). The interval is historically and technically sensible. Although surely they were not the first, the Lewis and Clark expedition can be taken quite validly as the opening of the Trans-Missouri West, and 1865 brought into the plains and prairies the debouchment of a new breed of the disenfranchised and displaced, many of them ex-soldiers and many armed with the new and technically superior breech-loading rifles that fired self-primed, metallic cartridges. This was an innovation of great moment and marked the end of an era. Thus it gave the authors a reasonable break point.

The book contains six parts that explore six basic classes of firearms, within each of which are numerous sub-units and, necessarily, a degree of redundancy. Each of the sections is replete with accurate descriptions of relevant firearms and the manner in which they evolved (or were intruded into the West)

in response to perceived needs. There is also something of the contemporary mystique of certain arms, the Plains or Mountain Rifle, for instance, particularly as it was developed in the Hawken and other gunsmith shops of St. Louis. Moreover, successes and failures in the field are assessed, relying upon contemporary documents.

The authors explain how the need for firearms in the West gave remarkable impetus to the growth of private manufacturing enterprises, primarily in New England. Indeed much of the development of the machine tool industry prior to the Civil War is traceable to need for dependable, cheap arms for military and civilian use in the West.

The photographs illustrating the text are numerous and scarcely short of magnificent. Of course, many of them are of run-of-the-mill arms typical of the West or of well-known military weapons. In addition, however, there is a scattering of unique arms of dependable historical context.

A truly critical review of a book of this sort is difficult. One sees the good things and minimizes the bad because the latter seem negligible. Nonetheless, there are obvious problems. The historian and the anthropologist will find the introduction and summary sections both cursive and perhaps a bit arch. In addition there are imprecise or incorrect names given to various Native American groups. But no matter; incorrect usages, and misstatements are inevitable in a work of such scope. Garavaglia and Worman have produced a genuinely monumental book. It is vastly useful and informative and will serve writers, historians, anthropologists, and others for years to come. It is an excellent value for the money!

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