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Review of *The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley* By Glenda Riley

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The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley. By Glenda Riley. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. Preface, introduction, black and white photographs, sources, index. xvii + 252 pp. \$24.95.

"Of what historical significance is Annie Oakley?" a fellow graduate student recently asked. Giving a balanced account of Annie's personality while discussing the ensuing legacy that grew up around her, Glenda Riley provides a vivid answer.

Riley proves an excellent writer, adeptly disclosing the personality of this private woman. Poverty ridden as a child, Oakley learned to hunt and became an expert markswoman. She married the first man she beat in a shooting competition, Frank Butler. Frank, perhaps the ideal husband, managed Annie and their engagements with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Throughout the years they maintained high moral standards; neither smoked, drank or cursed. Annie, ever the Victorian lady, always wore a dress and always rode side-saddle while proving herself a world-class sharpshooter. She never forgot those less fortunate than herself, providing gifts to orphanages and relatives.

The value of Riley's book is in chronicling the growing mythical American Western legacy during Annie Oakley's lifetime. As Annie's fame grew, reporters began to stretch her legend. Soon she was from the West rather than her native Ohio. European reporters stretched the truth severely during the Wild West's England engagement. She quickly became a heroine representing the true American, the rugged individual, able to overcome great odds and obstacles. Biographers, movie makers, and playwrights further altered the truth while building her legend to mythical proportions. By examining this myth building, Riley invites Americans to look at their heritage in a new light. In reality, the predominant twentieth-century images of American characteristics are based on this myth. Therefore, our popular history is more fiction than fact.

There is little doubt Glenda Riley admires Annie Oakley. Reading this account, one will come to respect both women. Certainly the United States Postal Service's recent stamp honoring Oakley is well deserved.

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