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**Review of *A Naturalist in Indian Territory: The Journals of s. W. Woodhouse, 1849-50* Eds. John S. Tomer and Michael J. Brodhead**

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*A Naturalist in Indian Territory: The Journals of S. W. Woodhouse, 1849-50.* Eds. John S. Tomer and Michael J. Brodhead. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992. Illustrations, maps, introduction, appendix, bibliography, index. xv + 304 pp. \$29.95.

"We are still very far from being aware of the dimensions and ramifications of our ethnocentric illusions." Although more than forty years have passed since Joseph Epes Brown penned these words in preface to *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of*

the *Oglala Sioux*, Americans still struggle to find a national identity that transcends our European heritage and its Judeo-Greco-Roman foundations. If one doubts just how pervasive (and sometimes counterproductive) the Eurocentric illusion could be, a reading of the *Woodhouse Journals* and a bit of introspection should suffice to convince. Woodhouse wrote a century before Brown. The surprisingly homely style, haphazard spelling, lack of punctuation, and charming period photography make his journals seem like something one would find among a deceased uncle's attic effects. Compare them to Lorenzo Sawyer's *Way Sketches* (also 1850, but describing incidents encountered on the way from St. Joseph to California) and you will be struck by the lack of polish of the former and the smooth and pleasant style of the latter. To appreciate the *Woodhouse* volume one must look beyond first appearances.

Editors Tomer and Brodhead have done a fine job of introduction and annotation. Readers will likely review the history further, for it is a telling episode in the chronicle of federal government-Indian affairs. The Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole) were so named because they were friendly to whites. Their dislocation from ancestral lands in the Southeast and displacement to the Indian Territory in the 1830s and 1840s was traumatic. Their vulnerability to Comanche, Pawnee, and Osage was a source of uneasiness. But the predicament was made worse when the federal government removed the Cherokees in the Arkansas Territory to Creek lands west of Arkansas. It was to resolve this issue and remedy this error that the U. S. Corps of Topographical Engineers dispatched the Creek boundary survey party of 1849, to which Doctor Woodhouse signed on as physician and naturalist. He recounted daily activities and his observations of the inhabitants, the flora and fauna, geologic features, and weather, as well as the specimens collected for shipment back to Philadelphia. The editors make a cogent argument for Woodhouse's receiving greater recognition and re-

spect for his work in natural science, and perhaps publication of his journals will help. The volume will be of special interest to genealogists searching out Creek or Cherokee connections. Not only was Woodhouse congenial and naturally gregarious, but he took note of those he met; the editors have done fine work identifying many of these persons.

Yet after reading *The Journals of S. W. Woodhouse*, one is faced with an unanswered question: Why would a man collect fifteen hundred plant specimens and not make a notation of their uses? Doctor Woodhouse had curiosity regarding local cures and remedies but must not have thought it worthwhile to ask native informants or fellow physicians. He visited many medical practitioners in the course of his travel to and from the Indian Territory. He even recounts an interview with "rather a singular character of a countryman" whom he met on board the packet boat bound for Pittsburgh. The entry describes the man's experience with a variety of unlikely remedies. It is unfortunate that Woodhouse did not study the native uses of prairie and plains plants. He was working in that collision zone just east of the hundredth meridian where so many species are found. Moreover, he must have had access to native healers, for he met personally with great chiefs such as Tallee and Clermont of the Osage, Oh-ha-wah-kee of the Comanche, Elijah Hicks of the Cherokees, and the Creek chiefs McIntosh and Perryman. Perhaps the ubiquitous ethnocentric illusion of the day that all things European were better than anything Native American was operative. Ethnobotany's loss can be our gain if we commit ourselves to a little introspection, acquire a little cultural humility, and peer beyond and through this illusion to behold the rich multicultural tapestry of the American past.

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