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Review of *Indian Wars: The Campaign for the American West* By Bill Yenne

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Indian Wars: The Campaign for the American West.
By Bill Yenne. Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing,
2005. x + 325 pp. Maps, appendix, index. \$26.00.

Arguing that the Indian Wars after the Civil War were the longest campaign ever waged by the United States military, Bill Yenne once again covers well-trod territory. To anyone familiar with the work of Robert M. Utley, Yenne's *Indian Wars: The Campaign for the American West* is immediately recognizable. Yenne states that his work will break down old stereotypes about the Indian wars and that "this book places the people and the battles in the context of the overall history of the nineteenth century and the Indian Wars in the West so that their place in American history will be better understood and their names not be forgotten." Yenne fails to place the Indian Wars in the context of the larger history of the nineteenth century. Also, the already well-worn path of discussion concerning the Indian Wars makes this reviewer wonder if the names of those involved in the various campaigns that make up the Indian Wars were ever in danger of being forgotten. In short, while *Indian Wars: The Campaign for the American West* claims to provide a new look at a well-studied set of events, there is no there there.

The story of the Indian Wars is a complex one dominated by such mythic figures as Crazy Horse, Nelson A. Miles, Sitting Bull, and George A. Custer to name a few. These personalities rose to their

stature because of their heroic or infamous actions during the campaigns, and yet, in Yenne's hands, these men move like pieces on a Risk game board. There are no people in this work, no dominating personalities, no heroes or antiheroes, no ebb and flow of events making the Indian Wars what they have come to be in American history. Those people that are present seem to be the same old stereotypes that have dominated Indian War historiography. The men of the United States Army are brave and daring; on the other side, the Indian warriors are savage and blood-thirsty. Yenne's stated purpose was to destroy these old ways of thinking, and yet at every turn he relies on them to make his point.

Finally, the labeling of Sand Creek, Washita, and Wounded Knee as battles is abhorrent. These events are recognizable as massacres, as Yenne labels the Custer fight. The slaughter of women and children and the parades that followed events such as Sand Creek are left out of the discussion, although the treatment of the "brave" men who perpetrated these crimes and the subsequent Congressional Medals of Honor these "heroes" were awarded is detailed for posterity. If the events at the Little Big Horn constitute a massacre, then certainly the winter slaughter of Big Foot's band at Wounded Knee must also.

Yenne's *Indian Wars: The Campaign for the American West* is a military history. Yenne's handling of this topic is troublesome. Although the author of numerous, excellent works, Yenne fails to accomplish his stated purpose and has done little more than employ a historiographic perspective that came to an end in the 1970s. Those seeking a detailed account of troop movements and military artillery will be rewarded with Yenne's offering; those seeking something more would be advised to look elsewhere.

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