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Review of *Kit Carson: Indian Fighter or Indian Killer?* Edited by R. C. Gordon-McCutchan

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that the Navajos of the 1860s had a long history of fighting and raiding, that they needed to be controlled, and that until this was done the Southwest would remain chaotic. He then attacks Clifford Trafzer's *The Kit Carson Campaign* (1982) as the premiere example of inaccurate history written for a sympathetic yet uninformed pro-Native American audience. Lawrence C. Kelly continues this attack by uncovering what he considers sloppy Trafzer scholarship—in some cases working page by page, endnote by endnote. Marc S. Simmons joins the fray by noting that the historical record shows Carson to have been a man of positive character, a man appreciated by “Indians, Mexicans and Americans” alike. Robert M. Utley closes by suggesting that both warring cultures acted predictably from their own understanding, and that administrative and logistical failings of the white man were far more detrimental than the military operations.

How successful are these scholars in defending Carson's reputation? I found the essays enlightening, well documented, and to the point. They do, however, present only one side. For instance, the editor argues that Navajo culture justified its “aggressive and thieving impulses” by looking at all non-Navajos as “prey.” True, but the string of broken treaties (five in the span of a decade) were examples of failed American policy in the spirit of land-grabbing manifest destiny. It would also be helpful to hear a Native American voice raised on behalf of the other side of the controversy.

Kit Carson is a thought-provoking collection that says as much about the writing of history and the creation of an image as it does about the frontiersman.

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Kit Carson: Indian Fighter or Indian Killer? Edited by R. C. Gordon-McCutchan. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1996. Index. xiv + 105 pp. \$24.95.

The five essays in this slim volume set out to answer the question asked in the title—what was Kit Carson's attitude toward the Navajos he helped defeat during the 1860s. All five authors agree that Carson has been badly abused by other historians writing—often poorly—in the spirit of their own times without sympathetically understanding those of their topic. There is no hung jury on this verdict—Carson deserved better.

The defense's strategy is as follows. Darlis A. Miller lays the foundation by examining the role of dime store novels in creating a thrilling but fabricated reputation for a man who had no desire for notoriety. R. C. Gordon-McCutchan, the volume's editor, argues