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**Review of *Massacre along the Medicine Road: A Social History of the Indian War of 1864 in Nebraska Territory* By Ronald Becher**

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*Massacre along the Medicine Road: A Social History of the Indian War of 1864 in Nebraska Territory.* By Ronald Becher. Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 1999. Illustrations, map, appendices, bibliography, index. xxii + 475 pp. \$32.95 cloth, \$22.95 paper.

The Indian War of 1864 provides the historian of the West with a wealth of sources, as one may imagine after nearly a century-and-a-half of accumulation. Official army reports and contemporary newspaper accounts join later reminiscences and oral histories to form a sizeable, if not formidable, body of information. Add to these some newly appreciated sources, such as the vast bureaucratic paperwork generated by the 1890s Indian depredation claims found in the National Archives, and it could only be a matter of time before a book like *Massacre along the Medicine Road: A Social History of the Indian War of 1864 in Nebraska Territory* appeared. Drawing upon every scrap of information available, Ronald Becher gives a detailed day-by-day (actually hour-by-hour) accounting of the events along the Overland Trail in August 1864.

This lengthy book is divided into four parts, the second of which drew this reviewer's particular attention. For a few days in August, Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho raiders conducted a brutal and thorough wasting of overland stage stops and lonely road ranches dotting the Little Blue and Platte River valleys. The human carnage horrified Nebraska settlers then and might even surprise the modern reader, mystified that such a bloody massacre garners such scant remembrance today among the general public.

One hopes Becher's book will help redress this, but it may be difficult. First, readers will

have to wade through nearly a hundred pages of introductory context on Indian-white relations, which wander as far back and as far afield as the seventeenth century's Pequot War in New England. Afterwards, though, they will be rewarded with a lively narrative of the thrilling events that occurred in Nebraska Territory. Parts three and four continue the story of this war along the Western trails and trace the civilian and military reactions to the Indian raids and the government's efforts to reopen this vital communication and transportation corridor.

Ultimately the building of the Union Pacific Railroad across the territory—later state—of Nebraska made much of the Indian resistance in the Central Plains a militarily moot question. As with many great events, this later, greater event overshadowed the Indian War of 1864. The author has made a commendable attempt to counter this.

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