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Review of *General William S. Harney: Prince of Dragoons* By George Rollie Adams

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General William S. Harney: Prince of Dragoons. By George Rollie Adams. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. Maps, photographs, notes, selected bibliography, index. xix + 389 pp. \$50.00.

The foremost army officer (next to Winfield Scott) from the end of the War of 1812 to the beginning of the Civil War, William S. Harney experienced the entire spectrum of military activity during the period. More than anything else, he was an army officer of the Indian frontier, and it was on the frontier opposing Indians that he made a name for himself.

Harney was tall, powerful, and athletic as well as volatile, profane, and violent. This combination tended to bring him to the fore wherever he was stationed. He was at his best during active command in the field. Harney was aggressive, innovative, and highly effective as a field commander versus the Seminoles from 1837 to 1841, during the Mexican War in 1847, and against the Sioux in 1855 and 1856. He could be extremely stubborn and vindictive and was prone to insubordination, as his conflicts with Stephen Watts Kearney and Winfield Scott reveal.

Harney did not fare so well when he took an administrative paymaster job to gain pro-

motion, and later a diplomatic post in the Northwest. He attained his greatest reputation on the Indian frontier: in the Old Northwest, in the Seminole War, on the Texas frontier, and on the Northern Plains with the Sioux. His reputation with the tribes on the Northern Plains was so great that he served as a highly successful negotiator in the treaties that followed the Civil War.

Harney's most signal failure was as commander of federal troops in Missouri at the beginning of the Civil War. His inability to suppress secessionist activity vigorously enough led to his removal from command and forced retirement by the Lincoln Administration. Harney's focus on maintaining the peace in Missouri failed to adjust to the fact that war had already begun and that there were many in Missouri actively attempting to remove the state from the Union.

Author Adams proves that William S. Harney is a subject worthy of a definitive biography. His book is well researched and well written. Only a single—and superficial—biography of Harney, written in 1878 while the general was still alive, predates Adams's. One might question the author's criticism of Harney's attack and suppression of the Sioux at Ash Hollow as unusually harsh. The incidental killing of women and children during attacks on villages and the taking of prisoners afterward became standard operating procedure by army officers campaigning against Plains Indians.

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