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Review of *Fort Reno and the Indian Territory Frontier* By Stan Hoig

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Fort Reno and the Indian Territory Frontier. By Stan Hoig. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. xii + 285 pp. \$34.95.

A prolific writer on the Southern Plains and the people who have lived in the region,

Stan Hoig focuses here on the Fort Reno and Darlington Agency of the Indian Territory, contending that these were "center posts around which western Indian Territory was transformed from raw frontier" to an "agricultural/commercial domain of the white man by the end of the 1880s." Until the mid-1880s, these twin outposts served primarily as agencies for controlling and suppressing the activities of the relocated Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. Later, the military outpost served largely to intercept and remove white settlers in Indian Territory. Hoig argues that the ultimate failure of the government to restrain these interlopers led inexorably to the collapse of Indian Territory. "The linchpin," he further asserts, "would prove to be the Oklahoma Lands. Once this core piece of land was removed from the whole, both Indians and whites knew full well, the rest was certain to follow. . . ."

At times the narrative is engaging, at others tedious. The author makes only a modest attempt to separate truly significant events from the more mundane episodes of frontier life. The reader is confronted with all the details, from the itinerary for a Fort Reno New Year's masquerade ball to considerations of Little Wolf and Dull Knife's decision to lead their Cheyenne people out of the Territory and northward in 1878. A sharper focus would have rendered this chronicle considerably more compelling.

Hoig is at his best when describing the Land Runs in the unassigned regions of Indian Territory. Once again his emphasis is on the events of the moment. The reader is regaled with stories of conniving "Sooners" and misfiring starting pistols. Unfortunately, these details are not accompanied by a more searching analysis of the political factors behind the opening of the unassigned lands, aside from a brief note that the election of Benjamin Harrison sealed the matter. What is missing, ultimately, is an overarching analytical framework for these and other events surrounding Fort Reno and the Darlington Agency. If these outposts were truly the "center posts" in a trans-

formative frontier, readers would benefit from learning more about that process and why these government installations in central Oklahoma served as the locus.

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