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Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War, 1846-1848 by James M. McCaffrey (review)

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tract of land sales of allotted land varied from agency to agency. By 1951, in thirteen central and western Oklahoma agencies, Indians retained from 2.8 to 69 percent of their previously allotted land.

Using data largely from the Northwest and northern plains, the author creates an unbalanced account, since other regions are mentioned only peripherally. Also, the fate of "noncompetent" allottees whose land was sold under federal supervision is ignored. During the Wilson administration, their trust funds were distributed more rapidly so that by 1934 many, young and old, were utterly destitute. Nonetheless, within its parameters, this is a well-researched and clearly written analysis that presents, quite correctly, a stinging indictment of federal Indian policy.

Lafayette, Indiana

DONALD J. BERTHRONG

Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War, 1846-1848. By James M. McCaffrey (New York: New York University Press, 1992. Pp. xvi+275. Preface, index, bibliography, notes, maps, photographs. \$45.00.)

May 13, 1996, marks the sesquicentennial anniversary of the United States' declaration of war against Mexico. Interest in a modern reassessment of this unpopular war of conquest is beginning to stir throughout both countries. The Hidalgo County Historical Museum has mounted an important exhibit on the war, and a bill to create a military park at Palo Alto has been introduced in Congress. In fact, the prospect of a free trade agreement between the U.S. and Mexico acted as a catalyst to stimulate a more general and deeper interest in the history and culture of the borderlands.

In this same spirit of rediscovery, James McCaffrey of the University of Houston-Downtown has completed a social history of the American soldier who fought and died to "conquer a peace" with Mexico. McCaffrey has attempted, successfully, to do for the soldiers of the Mexican War what Bell I. Wiley did for American fighting men of the Civil War. Rather than paint the history of the war with a broad brush, or even focus with some detail on the history of a single regiment, the author has chosen to examine the war from the microscopic viewpoint of the individual soldier. This unique view is based on McCaffrey's meticulous research of private journals and letters written by American soldiers. The Mexican War is described in a multitude of voices, some eloquent and some semiliterate, some from the common private soldier and some from the elite officer corps; all have been woven together to create a compelling tapestry. Army life is cussed and discussed, and judgmental fingers of blame are pointed, often in opposite directions. Perhaps military life has changed very little in the last century and a half. A chapter, titled "Nearly all who take sick die," on the mid-nineteenth century treatment of wounds and diseases is especially enlightening; the lowly amoeba killed many more soldiers than did Mexican musket balls.

Letters written home by American soldiers were often biased. Personal heroism and suffering could be exaggerated, while incidents of theft, rape, and murder against Mexican citizens could be omitted. Little was ever recorded in

official or private papers of the brutal guerrilla war fought in northern Mexico between the time of Buena Vista and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Nonetheless, this carefully written work is essential for understanding the life and times of the American soldier in Mexico.

University of Texas-Pan American

JOSEPH E. CHANCE

Jefferson Davis's Mexican War Regiment. By Joseph E. Chance (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991. Pp. xiii+220. Acknowledgments, introduction, black-and-white photographs, map, illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.95.)

The Mexican War Journal of Captain Franklin Smith. Edited by Joseph E. Chance (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991. Pp. xv+267. Acknowledgments, introduction, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.50.)

Volunteers: The Mexican War Journals of Private Richard Coulter and Sergeant Thomas Barclay, Company E, Second Pennsylvania Infantry. Edited by Allan Peskin (Kent, Oh.: Kent State University Press, 1991. Pp. 342. Acknowledgments, introduction, black-and-white photographs, maps, appendix, index. \$35.00.)

The Mexican War Journal and Letters of Ralph W. Kirkham. Edited by Robert Ryal Miller (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991. Pp. xxi+141. Introduction, black-and-white photographs, illustrations, epilogue, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.00.)

The Mexican Spy Company: United States Covert Operations in Mexico, 1845-1848. By A. Brooke Caruso (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 1991. Pp. vii+175. Preface, maps, conclusion, bibliography, index. \$28.50.)

The Mexican War, a relatively swift and decisive triumph of American arms beyond our borders, was the Operation Desert Storm of its era. Scholarly interest in the conflict, now often called the Mexican-American War, has surged to new heights in recent years as part of a rapidly growing fascination with American military history. The war had a brief but profound impact upon American citizens, many of whom doubted its necessity, while for the inexperienced soldiers who invaded Mexico it was a stunning introduction to full-scale combat. A startling number of these gallants resurfaced during the Civil War to play larger, sometimes ludicrous roles.

The Mississippi Rifles, officially known as the First Mississippi Volunteer Regiment, achieved a prominence few other Mexican War units could begin to match. Commanded by the brilliant and ambitious young congressman Jefferson Davis, the regiment was a crucial component of Zachary Taylor's army in his northern Mexico campaign, especially at Monterrey and Buena Vista. Joseph E. Chance's fact-filled *Jefferson Davis's Mexican War Regiment* offers excellent descriptions of the common soldiers and their field officers, as well as demonstrating how Davis manipulated the publicity over Taylor's victories—he was, after all,