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Comanche Jack Stilwell: Army Scout and Plainsman by Clint E. Chambers and Paul H. Carlson (review)

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to both students and researchers alike. This volume, like the previous two, is a must-read for any serious scholar of the Civil War.

East Central University

CHRISTOPHER BEAN

Comanche Jack Stilwell: Army Scout and Plainsman. By Clint E. Chambers and Paul H. Carlson. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019. Pp. 288. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.)

While certainly not as famous as contemporary luminaries such as Kit Carson, George Armstrong Custer, Wyatt Earp, and William F. Cody, Simpson Everett “Comanche Jack” Stilwell nevertheless played a meaningful role in the exploration and settlement of the Great Plains. “His story is part of the fabric that holds the western frontier together,” authors Clint E. Chambers and Paul H. Carlson maintain. “He should not be forgotten” (201).

The book’s primary aim is to provide a straightforward biography of Jack Stilwell (co-author Clint Chambers’s great-great-uncle) and to place his story within the context of western history during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. “Comanche Jack” left little written evidence behind for historians to peruse, but by diligently combing widely scattered army records, census rolls, court testimonies, and commentaries in newspapers and magazines, the authors succeed in providing both an interesting read and a balanced assessment of this rather remarkable individual.

Born in Iowa in 1850, Stilwell had a childhood marked by pronounced parental dysfunction. His mother suffered from various physical afflictions, and his father abandoned the family. At the age of thirteen, Jack Stilwell dropped out of school and joined a wagon train bound for Santa Fe, New Mexico. For the next four years (1863 to 1867), he worked as a teamster hauling freight along the Santa Fe Trail. His familiarity with the geography and peoples of the region helped Stilwell secure employment as a civilian scout for the U.S. Army in Kansas and the West—a position he would hold intermittently for the next two decades. His familiarity with Comanche culture and language may have produced his nickname. A watershed moment in his career occurred in September 1868 at the Battle of Beecher Island in Colorado. When troops under the command of Major George Forsyth (Ninth Cavalry) came under siege by a large force of Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Lakota warriors, Stilwell and another scout made their way on foot through enemy lines to get help. After a walk of some eighty-five miles, the two scouts arrived at Fort Wallace, Kansas, and sounded the alarm. Dispatched troops arrived at Beecher Island three days later and lifted the siege. Stilwell’s reputation as a fearless and first-rate scout, guide, and courier followed him for the rest of his life.

During the 1870s, Stilwell's scouting exploits continued. He worked with the Tenth Cavalry's Buffalo Soldiers across the Southern Plains and during the Red River War in the Texas Panhandle, and he served under Ranald S. Mackenzie in and around Fort Sill in Indian Territory. When his scouting responsibilities lightened, he worked as a cowboy in Indian Territory as assistant foreman on the Word-Bugbee Ranch. From 1885 to 1892, he served as deputy U.S. marshal in the Northern District of Texas and later as a police judge in El Reno, Oklahoma Territory. In 1895, Stilwell found work as a federal court commissioner in Anadarko, a position that brought financial stability and a respite of sorts from his many years in the saddle. In May 1895, he married for the first time and appeared to be well positioned for a more sedentary life. Poor health, including broken bones, arthritis, and perhaps alcoholism, and the opportunity to join longtime friend William "Buffalo Bill" Cody in northwest Wyoming led him to his final occupation, as land commissioner for Bighorn County. Comanche Jack Stilwell died from pneumonia on February 17, 1903, at age fifty-three.

Chambers and Carlson do an impressive job piecing together the life of a significant but heretofore largely unknown army scout, cowboy, sheriff, judge, and land commissioner. Their attention to detail—especially as it pertains to geographic location and place—will be of considerable interest to scholars of the frontier West. The general reader, meanwhile, will appreciate the remarkable story of one individual's ability to make and remake himself when faced with great adversity.

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

THOMAS A. BRITTEN

Red Meat Republic: A Hoof-to-Table History of How Beef Changed America. By Joshua Specht. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2019. Pp. 352. Notes, bibliography, index.)

Eating animals rests at the core of American selfhood in ways that historians are only beginning to consider, let alone critically examine. In *Red Meat Republic*, Joshua Specht explores the struggles of beef eaters and beef producers to both democratize and profit from meat-eating in America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their efforts ensured beef's central place in America's economy as well as its importance in managing Americans' troubled notions of democracy.

In Specht's wide-ranging analysis—which spans the dispossession of the so-called "open range" of the Native American Great Plains, the markets and slaughterhouses of Chicago, the tables of Delmonico's Restaurant in New York City, and beyond—the modern United States emerged alongside the industrialization of beef production in the years following the Civil War. The creation of a national market for beef underpinned fed-