

Explorations in Sights and Sounds

K. Tslanina Lomawalma. *They Called It Prairie Light*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) 205 pp., \$25.00 cloth.

This work adeptly weaves the documentary history of the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School of Oklahoma (1884-1980) with the oral histories of sixty-one Indian students spanning the years between 1920 and 1940. While there are many works on Indian education, this one is unique because the core of the history is presented through the voices of former students.

The author respects these voices, letting them provide a series of portraits which challenge many of the stereotypes of Indian boarding schools. While expressing her own opinions on the clearly deleterious effects of the boarding school, she nevertheless allows the participants to tell their reactions to school life, both positive and negative. The first chapter of this work places the foundation of Chilocco in the context of the governmental ideology of assimilation and "civilization." The second chapter chronicles students' initial reactions to the boarding school and their recollections of school life. The third and fourth chapters respectively examine the education of males and females. Men were trained as agriculturists in keeping with the ideal of bringing the Indian students "up to civilization," whereas the women were trained for the domestic sphere. In fact, most of the students' time was used as free labor to keep the school running. The fifth chapter looks at the military regimentation in the school and the changes which occurred after the government reforms initiated by the *Meriam Report* in 1928 and Collier administration during the 1930's. The final chapter considers the society constructed by students at the school. Students formed various groups to resist the influences of the school and to simply enjoy life (not a big focus at the school). Without employing either positivism or cultural determinism, the author evaluates various factors which differentiated students such as ethnicity, tribal affiliation, gender, and age, in an effort to understand social dynamics among them.

While productively comparing the ideology of Indian boarding schools with that of schools established for African Americans, this study is disappointingly silent on the general educational policy of the government for the rest of the population. This missing information would have highlighted both the uniqueness of Indian boarding school education as well as its similarity to general educational philosophy. Despite this shortcoming, the book is a fine, well documented work, rich in ancillary sources, and clear on the origins of all the voices involved in the study. The author also supplies helpful appendices describing interviewees' backgrounds, interview techniques, and the schedule of questions used for the actual interviews.

Most importantly, this work shows that Indian students were able to shape their own lives despite the governmental efforts and pressures to assimilate them. Thus, the author concludes: "I believe there is a moral to the story of Chilocco, and it falls somewhere between the depiction of boarding schools as irredeemably destructive and Tillie's [one narrator] sentiment that Chilocco "really was a marvelous school." The moral is that no institution is total, no power is all-seeing, no federal Indian policy has ever been efficiently and rationally translated into practice, and much of the time practice produced unpredicted results anyway" (164).

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Charles F. Lummis. *Pueblo Indian Folk-Stories*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992) 257 pp., \$8.95 paper.

Pueblo Indian Folk-Stories is composed of forty-two stories (tales) that range from the teachings (and/or) exploits of Coyote to the adventures of the Wise Bear. These folk tales were collected and translated from Spanish to English, as well as interpreted by the late Charles F. Lummis. The original title of this book was *The Man Who Married the Moon*, published in 1894 by Century Company New York. This Bison edition is a reprint of another version published in 1910 by Century Company New York; being expanded and retitled. It also has an informative, new introduction by Robert F. Gish. In it we get a historical view of the old pueblo cultures of the Southwest, especially Isleta. The older introduction mainly deals with Indian storytellers and their folklore, focusing on Isleta oral tradition.

In general these pueblo folk tales stand high above other early translations of American Indian literature. The prose in this book is much more succinct and efficiently presented than earlier works on this American Indian genre. *Pueblo Indian Folk-Stories* is a fine collection by a man who was well versed in the oral tradition of the Rio Grande Pueblos of New Mexico, especially of Isleta, Laguna, and Taos. For example, Lummis uses phrases such as "coyote, are you coyote-true, or are you people" (from "The First of the Rattlesnakes," 40) hence demonstrating his working knowledge of the pueblo's unique form of syntactical expression, i.e., the Isleta's way of communicating their beliefs within the complex linguistic structures of the Tiwa (Kiowa-Tanoan) language.

The above-mentioned folk tale is also very special to those interested in the comparative world views of folk societies. For example, it is very different from the Afro-American version "how comerattlesnakes have poison" found in *Mules and Men* by Zora Neale