

legends about him (including those in Mark Twain's *Roughing It* and Prentiss Ingraham's dime novels about Buffalo Bill) are largely false, but the truth has been difficult to establish.

Dan Rottenberg was faced with three challenges in writing this book: the first to deal so extensively with Jack Slade: a lack of reliable documentary evidence; an abundance of factitious material; and the complexity of the character of his subject. By all accounts, Slade gave the appearance of an educated, soft-spoken, generous, and kind individual when he was sober. After one of his drunken rampages his recognition of the damage he had inflicted on others horrified him. There is little in his story that is not in dispute to some degree, including the killings of Andrew Ferrin and Jules Beni and the background of his wife Maria Virginia Slade. His career came to a sudden and dramatic end on March 10, 1864, when he was hanged in Virginia City, Montana, on a charge of disturbing the peace. Until now his story has been left largely to the folklorists.

In spite of these challenges, Rottenberg has left no document, publication, or interview unexamined in his search for the truth. He presents his conclusions dispassionately and eloquently, supported by ninety pages of extensive notes and twenty-two pages of bibliography. Slade's story is told in the context of the times, making it as much the story of communication and transportation in the Great Plains as the story of a fascinating individual. The building of the stations along the Oregon Trail and the route of the Pony Express and the physical challenges faced by men who braved floods, droughts, blizzards, bandits, and hostile Indians to transport goods and the mail are recounted in considerable detail. If Slade remains an enigma in the end, it is not the fault of the historian who has made a concerted effort to present us with more of his story than anyone else.

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*Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane: Deadwood Legends.* By James D. McLaird. Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2008. 174 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$12.95 paper.

For decades after the Civil War, people trekked west across the United States to find new homes, make quick fortunes in gold or silver mining, or as soldiers of the Indian-fighting army. No area attracted more attention during this era than the northern Great Plains. When gold was discovered near Deadwood, South Dakota, in the middle 1870s, the region drew characters of dubious reputation. Among these were Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane, two vagabonds from the Midwest whose alleged exploits made them famous in the Northern Plains and across the country.

James McLaird peers into the lives of these characters to prove that screen and print have distorted their popular image. It is necessary, he suggests, to understand how the myths about Hickok and Calamity Jane originated before separating fact from fiction. In 1867, George Ward Nichols began the Hickok fraud in a *Harper's* article that extracted Hickok from obscurity to become one of the West's most popular figures. Journalist Horatio McGuire did likewise for Calamity Jane. Dime novelist Edward L. Wheeler also focused upon Calamity in his Deadwood Dick series, further spreading her fame. Subsequent writers accepted and expanded these myths.

McLaird argues that almost nothing the public read or later viewed in cinema about Hickok or Calamity was true. Hickok had a short stint as sheriff in Abilene, Kansas, during the cattle trailing days, but accomplished nothing other than hanging out in bars and shooting some Texas cowboys. He did not bring law and order to the Wild West. He briefly joined Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show, but devoted his time to drinking rather than performing. In June 1875, while in Cheyenne, Wyoming, Hickok was arrested for drinking, gambling, and loitering.

Calamity Jane's popular reputation as a heroine also was a myth. In fact, she was a heavy-drinking, rough-hewn woman who prostituted her way across the Northern Plains. Hack writers fabricated stories of her scouting for the army or nursing wounded soldiers. Tales of a romantic relationship between Hickok and Calamity were fantasy. A few contemporary writers doubted the stories about Calamity. Don Scott, writing in Deadwood's *Daily Champion*, described her as "repulsive," and claimed her scouting for the army and Pony Express riding were "entirely fictional."

This is an interesting, professional, and well-written study in the tradition of the work of Joseph G. Rosa, an Englishman whose studies of the myths surrounding Hickok and his ilk are well-known and respected for their accuracy. Anyone interested in northern Great Plains history or the West would enjoy this volume.

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*Mennonite Women in Canada: A History.* By Marlene Epp. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008. xiii + 378 pp. Photographs, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 cloth, C\$26.95 paper.

Marlene Epp's overview of two hundred years of Mennonite women's history in Canada focuses largely on the two major sites of Mennonite settlement—Ontario and the Great Plains of Manitoba. Her discussion of the Manitoba settlers—so-called "Russian Mennonites" whose Germanic ancestors migrated to Russia in the early nineteenth century—encompasses their history from the group's arrival on the Plains in the 1870s to the present. Her study provides a wealth of material for historians of Great Plains women, immigrants, and religious minorities.

Mennonites' rejection of infant baptism and other aspects of Protestant orthodoxy subjected them to generations of persecution in Europe

before they found refuge in North America. As a result of this history, Mennonites who settled in the Great Plains possessed a number of characteristics conducive to survival in the sparsely populated, semiarid region. These included a desire for community self-sufficiency and an openness to agricultural innovation. In Manitoba, Mennonites transplanted the street village (*Strassendorf*) strategy they had employed in Russia, combining the homestead allotments of ten to thirty families and then building their homes and barns closely together along a central road. For Mennonite women, the close proximity to female neighbors eased their adjustment to Great Plains life and spared them the hardships that many other Plains women endured. In contrast to the isolated female protagonists of numerous Great Plains memoirs, diaries, and novels, Mennonite homesteaders easily shared their domestic labor, child care responsibilities, midwifery skills, and household supplies. Unlike immigrants on widely spaced homesteads, the Mennonites' street village strategy also helped women to continue and reinforce traditional dietary practices, community celebrations, and other ethnic customs. As a result, Mennonites in Manitoba have maintained a strong cultural identity for over 130 years.

Mennonites' commitment to literacy—so that members could read the Bible and the biographies of Mennonite martyrs—enabled Mennonite women to produce the many diaries and other literary sources Epp so skillfully employs. Her rich evidence and insightful analysis remind the reader that ethnicity, religion, and cultural history played important roles in women's reaction to the Great Plains. Her discussion of Manitoba Mennonites provides the latest challenge to historian Walter Prescott Webb's famous statement in *The Great Plains* (1931) that the Plains environment universally repelled female settlers.

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