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**Fort Robinson and the American West, 1874–1899.** By Thomas R. Buecker. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003. 265 pages. \$19.99 paper.

Perhaps no other military post on the western frontier was as important as Fort Robinson. Erected in northwestern Nebraska in 1874, the garrison played a vital role in securing the northern plains region for American settlement. During its first twenty-five years of existence the fort evolved from a temporary camp founded to protect an Indian agency to a crucial base of military campaigns against the Native peoples of the vast area. Throughout this early history, Fort Robinson was the site of important events, including the death of the enigmatic Sioux leader, Crazy Horse, the Cheyenne Outbreak, and the Ghost Dance uprisings. Yet for all its significance to frontier history, historians of the American West have paid little attention to Fort Robinson. In this volume, the first of a two-part endeavor, Thomas Buecker, curator of the Fort Robinson Museum in Crawford, Nebraska, has succeeded admirably in writing the first in-depth, comprehensive history of the fort. Drawing upon an array of rich sources that include special archival materials, government documents, and secondary texts, Buecker has provided a scrupulously researched biography of one of the most significant military installations in the late nineteenth-century frontier West.

The author organizes his narrative into eight chapters. The opening chapters detail the genesis of “Camp” Robinson. After years of intermittent attacks on westward-bound American settlers, the Sioux and Northern Cheyenne in 1868 had seemingly made peace with the United States through the Treaty of Fort Laramie. The treaty located the Sioux and their allies on a large reservation in Dakota Territory and reserved their right to hunt in certain areas, including the sacred Black Hills. While some Sioux, convinced that continued fighting with the army was futile, were willing to concede to U.S. demands that they settle down to a sedentary life of farming, others were sickened by this acquiescence, and continued their attacks on whites living on or near the new reservation. Troubles at the Red Cloud agency, and the Sioux’s murder of the acting agent, Frank Appleton, encouraged the Army to establish a permanent military establishment in 1874 nearly a mile from the agency. Using a wide range of primary and secondary sources, Buecker aptly reconstructs Fort Robinson’s beginnings, providing a comprehensive historical context. The author also demonstrates the growing tension and factionalism among the Sioux, as well as the rising conflict between military and civil leaders over responsibility for Indian affairs.

In the third chapter, Buecker concentrates his attention on army life at Fort Robinson. Blending government documents and correspondence, he produces a unique, detailed social history of the Nebraska post, including the relationships among officers, enlisted men, and civilians living near the fort. In addition, the author examines both combat and noncombat duties of the frontier army, from drilling and fighting against Indians, to building barracks and roads and escorting emigrant wagons through the Sioux reservation. Buecker’s probing examination of the regular frontier army dispels any

romanticized view of military life. Far from exciting and adventurous, life for the garrison at Fort Robinson could be mundane and dull.

In the next three chapters, Buecker discusses the causes and consequences of the conflict known as the Great Sioux War and what this struggle meant to Fort Robinson. Although a few Sioux leaders and U.S. officials agreed at Fort Laramie in 1868 to cease hostilities, peace between the two groups was tenuous at best. And even though the Sioux and their Northern Cheyenne allies had presumably been confined to the reservation, a number of bands fled the reservation boundaries to the Plains and the Black Hills. Miners, lured to the Black Hills by the discovery of gold in 1874, angered the tribes and provoked attacks on mining camps and raids on nearby white settlements. After futile attempts to purchase the Black Hills from the Sioux, the United States issued an ultimatum to the stranded bands to either return to the reservation or risk being considered "hostile." Realizing that the bands would not report to the agency during the cold winter, the army sent expeditions to the Black Hills against the "hostile" Sioux and Northern Cheyenne bands. The result was a series of battles, the most famous being the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876, where George A. Custer lost his entire command at the hands of Sioux warriors led by the Oglala Sioux leader Crazy Horse. The victory was short-lived, however, as Crazy Horse and his band, famished and weak, surrendered at Fort Robinson in May of 1877. Several months later, Crazy Horse was bayoneted and killed while resisting arrest. Crazy Horse's death, according to Buecker, resulted from political jealousies among his avowed enemies. Throughout these chapters, Buecker displays a remarkable talent for synthesizing the research of other scholars and demonstrating that Indian hostility toward the United States stemmed from a government policy that intended to limit the Indians' land base and curb their traditional freedoms.

Afraid that the death of Crazy Horse would incite the Northern Cheyenne to raid outside the reservations, the government decided in 1878 to remove the tribe to Indian Territory where its members would join the Southern Cheyenne. Suffering from disease and hunger, the Northern Cheyenne, led by Dull Knife, escaped from the reservation and headed north, managing to elude army forces and reach Red Cloud agency. The Northern Cheyenne were then taken to Fort Robinson, where they were imprisoned in an old barracks building while awaiting their fate. In 1879, some sixty-four Northern Cheyenne were killed while attempting to escape from the barracks. In this chapter, the multitude of Native voices, woven seamlessly into the narrative, capture the beliefs, thoughts, and actions of a people undergoing dramatic cultural change. For example, Dull Knife's poignant plea to U.S. officials that his tribe be permitted to remain in its ancestral homeland humanizes the painful events leading up to the Cheyenne Outbreak.

In the final two chapters, Buecker addresses the expansion of Fort Robinson and introduces readers to some of the fort's most legendary residents, the "buffalo soldiers." By the 1880s, the U.S. Army had successfully confined the Plains Indians to isolated reserves. No longer needing a vast string of forts to protect the western frontier from Indian attacks, the government began its policy of consolidating forts. While several forts on the upper plains

were abandoned, Fort Robinson was selected for expansion, with troops from nearby Fort Laramie and Fort Sheridan joining its garrison. Also, the Ninth Cavalry, a unit comprised solely of African American army regulars (the “buffalo soldiers”) was deployed to Fort Robinson. These were among the first troops to arrive at Pine Ridge, the new name for the Red Cloud agency, which stood about fifty miles north of the original location and played a key role during the Ghost Dance campaign of 1890.

Exhaustively researched and lucidly written, *Fort Robinson and the American West* makes a welcome addition to the field of western American history. Buecker’s study not only enhances our understanding of Fort Robinson and the people whose lives revolved around it, but also places the unfolding events of its history within the wider context of American westward expansion. In so doing, Buecker offers gripping insights into the history of the Sioux and Northern Cheyenne, U.S. Indian policy, and army life on the trans-Mississippi frontier. The book is graced with photographs documenting the post’s expansion and of the many soldiers who called Fort Robinson home. It is a story that scholars and a general audience will greatly appreciate.

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**The Great Encounter: Native Peoples and European Settlers in the Americas, 1492–1800.** By Jayme A. Sokolow. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2003. 296 pages. \$64.95 cloth; \$25.95 paper.

The growing literature of “new Indian history” continues to generate studies that aim to rectify earlier American Indian history. The method of new Indian history places American Indians at the center of the scene of encounter and thereafter to understand the reasons for their actions. This method makes American Indians active players in the history that unfolds in the Americas, and it renders a less biased narrative in the story of encounter. Jayme A. Sokolow contributes to the field of American Indian history an excellent example of new and corrective American Indian histories. *The Great Encounter: Native Peoples and European Settlers in the Americas, 1492–1800* foregrounds the important role that Americans Indians played throughout the Western Hemisphere as Spain, Portugal, France, and England established colonial settlements and created empires. The premise of *The Great Encounter* is that Spanish, French, English, and Portugal empires failed to transplant their traditional societies in the “New World” because American Indians played a crucial role in the expansion of European settlements and in the development of colonial powers.

Similar to Sokolow’s precursors, Richard White’s *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Neil Salisbury’s essay, “The Indians’ Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 53 (July 1996), *The Great Encounter* places American