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## B O O K N O T E S

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*South Pass: Gateway to a Continent.* By Will Bagley. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014, 325 pages, cloth \$29.95.)

The South Pass, “a twenty-mile wide, sagebrush-covered plain in central Wyoming,” is naturally uninspiring and lacks any historic buildings, according to prolific author Will Bagley. However, Bagley highlights how this unassuming piece of land was almost solely responsible for the rapid settlement of the American West (p. 21). The South Pass, he explains, was the only place in the Rockies where wheeled vehicles could tread with relative ease, making it the only logical pass for the Oregon, California, and Mormon trails, the Pony Express route, and the first transcontinental telegraph line. Bagley traces the history of South Pass from its discovery by white settlers to its use by fur traders, missionaries, gold seekers, mail carriers, and, of course, migrants. Drawing on numerous contemporary accounts, *South Pass* integrates the fascinating accounts of famous and not-so-famous travelers with environmental history. Bagley reminds us that natural landscapes, often taken for granted, sometimes play pivotal roles in shaping the course of history.

*Shot All to Hell: Jesse James, the Northfield Raid, and the Wild West’s Greatest Escape.* By Mark Lee Gardner. (New York: Harper Collins, 2013, x + 309 pages, paper \$15.99.)

Although staged hundreds of miles from the Kansas–Missouri border, where the James–Younger gang shot and robbed its way to infamy and celebrity, the Northfield, Minnesota, raid of September 7, 1876, is an inextricable part of the legend of these most notorious western outlaws: Frank and Jesse James; and Cole, Bob, and Jim Younger. In *Shot All to Hell*, historian Mark Gardner, an authority on the American West and author of *To Hell on a Fast Horse* and other stories of the “Wild West,” offers a carefully researched and detailed account of the Minnesota bank robbery and shoot-out. His “efforts to uncover the true story of the raid and its aftermath” led “to new discoveries—and new answers to old questions” (p. 2), which should be of interest to many students of Kansas and western history.

*Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future.* By Robert Wuthnow. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, xx + 498 pages, cloth \$35.00.)

In this study, Princeton University social scientist Robert Wuthnow, who has focused much of his scholarly attention of late on the Midwest and Kansas in particular—*Remaking the Heartland: Middle America since the 1950s* (2011) and *Red State Religion: Faith and Politics in America’s Heartland* (2012)—profiles eleven small towns across the United States, including Ellis, Kansas, and Lexington, Nebraska. Wuthnow uses material from these communities and many others, as well as several hundred interviews, to provide “an account of how the residents of America’s small towns find community, what it means to them, and why it is important” (p. xiii). In many respects, small-town America is much like the nation’s urban and suburban areas; it is important “to understand small-town life for what it is, with all its attractions and limitations, but not to imagine that it is the solution to the problems of the larger society” (p. xvi).

*The Great Plains Guide to Buffalo Bill: Forts, Fights & Other Sites.* By Jeff Barnes. (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 2014, xiii + 240 pages, paper \$19.95.)

This exploration of Buffalo Bill Cody’s life retraces his adventures through the Midwest, unearthing colorful characters, tall tales, and dubious claims along the way. Independent historian Jeff Barnes acts as tour guide, docent, and storyteller throughout the volume, keeping his prose lively with an eclectic mix of history and myth. Readers will learn about not only the legendary Cody but also his rivalry with General Custer, the history of Leavenworth’s first cemetery, and the heartwarming story of the “original” Buffalo Bill. Barnes leaves the reader well-equipped to visit the many historical sites highlighted in the book, always providing succinct descriptions, up-to-date directions, information about related sites, and recommendations for further reading. Whether recounting the legends of Buffalo Bill or debunking them, this guide offers a sensible and entertaining approach to discovering Great Plains history.

*Kansas Fishes.* By Kansas Fishes Committee. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014, xxiii + 518 pages, cloth \$39.95.)

The Kansas Fishes Committee has brought together over fifty authors to create a comprehensive guide to the diverse fishes of Kansas. The first handbook of its kind published since 1995, it offers updated information on over 160 species of fish native to Kansas streams and adjoining waterways. The authors have designed the guide to appeal to general enthusiasts as well as specialists by adding introductions to fish anatomy and physiology as well as Kansas’s rivers. Each species entry includes a color drawing and descriptions of the fish’s habitat, reproduction cycles, and feeding habits. Yet this book is more than merely a spotter’s guide. *Kansas Fishes* also presents the story of an ecosystem harmed by late nineteenth-century farming practices and post–World War II irrigation projects. By chronicling the disappearance of some species and the introduction of new ones to the region, the project organizers emphasize the importance of conservation to Kansas’s environment.

*Making Rocky Mountain National Park: The Environmental History of a National Treasure.* By Jerry J. Frank. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014, xiv + 253 pages, cloth \$34.95.)

This well-researched, engaging, and visitor center-worthy study traces the first century of Rocky Mountain National Park. After reviewing the expected local boosters, conservationists, and federal officials who pushed for the iconic park’s creation in 1915—not coincidentally, Congress created the National Park Service the next year—historian Jerry Frank concentrates on the evolving tensions between the two animating forces that have continually remade the park: tourism and ecology. (Automobiles were essential to increasing visitation, for example, but the infrastructure surrounding them degraded the park; elk herds satisfied tourists’ definitions about what a national park should offer but became seriously overpopulated.) Refreshingly, the author proceeds thematically rather than chronologically, devoting a cleverly titled chapter each to cars, trails, trees, elk, fish, and ski slopes.