

The Publication for Traditional Black Powder Shooters

# MUZZLELOADER

\$5.50

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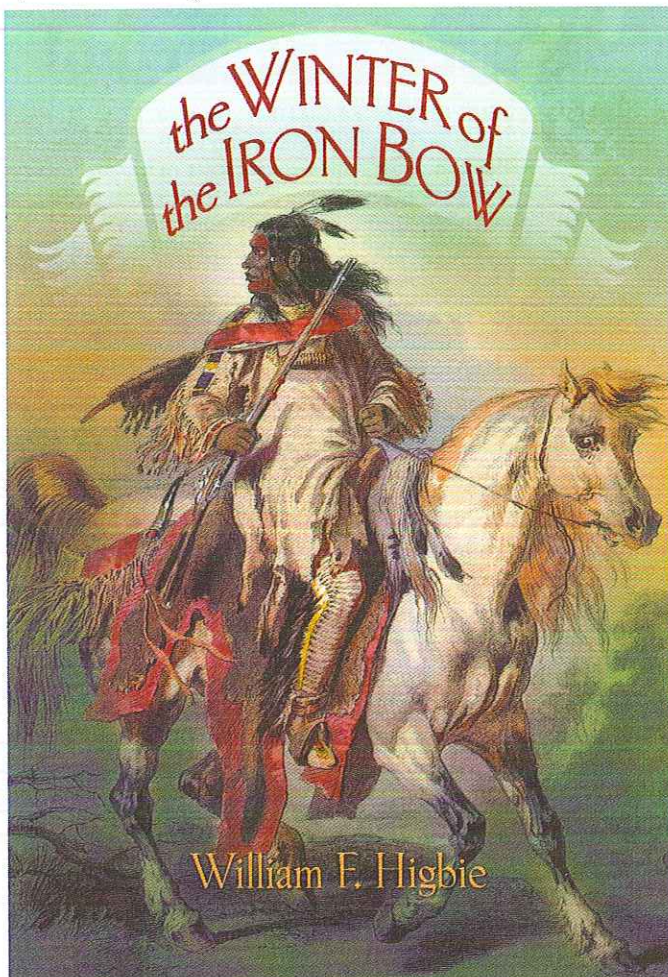


## FOR THE BOOKSHELF

### IRON BOW

Reviewed by Mike Nesbitt

*The Winter of the Iron Bow*  
By William F. Higbie



**W**HILE THIS BOOK IS CONTAINED in only 217 pages, it is quite complete. It's a tale about a teenage Cheyenne Indian lad that is told from the Indian's point of view and done very well in my opinion. The reader gets to follow, if not join him and his family and tribal members as he goes through the rituals of becoming a man where his vision gives him a new name, going on his first horse stealing raid, and following the steps that must be taken during courtship.

The author's name, William Higbie, might sound

familiar and rightly so because he has authored other books plus articles for *MUZZLELOADER*.

This story is told in several short chapters that cover those 217 pages and it takes place at the time when the Cheyennes received their first introduction to firearms, at the hands of the Crows, and their first meeting with white traders from the Northwest Company.

While it is historical fiction, which means it is not based on actual fact, there is a very good chance that things might have happened much like it is presented in this story. The author has done a lot of research into the beliefs and habits of the Cheyenne and the situations the book's main character goes through are told very well. Even though it is fiction, I learned some things from this book about the possible social life and structure of the Cheyenne.

The story is told very well too. There was no point in the story where things can be easily anticipated and that is important because it keeps the reader busy, keeps them reading. And, so you can't really anticipate what the story is really about, I won't tell you what the iron bow is. In order to find that out, you've got to read the book yourself unless you already know from other tales or from Indian lore.

Did I enjoy reading this book? Let's just say I really hope there is a sequel because I want more.

*The Winter of the Iron Bow* by William F. Higbie is available from the publisher, Christopher Matthews Publishing, 410 Henry Drive, Belgrade, Montana 59714. Finding them on their website is easy at [<http://www.christophermatthewspub.com>] where this fine book can be ordered for \$12.95 or as an e-book for \$4.99.

### OBSTINATE HOPE

Reviewed by Todd Glover

*Obstinate Hope: the Western Expeditions of Nathaniel J. Wyeth, Vol I 1832-33*

By Jim Hardee

500 pages, hard cover, \$24.95

ISBN: 978-0-9768113-7-4

**A**CADEMIC HISTORIANS SPECIALIZING IN the fur trade of the American West and living history enthusiasts who endeavor to portray the life styles and material culture of those who lived during that time period know how valuable are the journals of those who were actually there. Within these various journals are often found nuggets of invaluable information that give

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us more clear insight into those days of long ago. One such journal is that of Nathaniel J. Wyeth.

The Rocky Mountain fur trade was reaching its zenith in the early 1830s when Wyeth, a New England based entrepreneur and inventor, saw opportunity in the trade and developed plans to further his interests. Luckily for us, Wyeth was well educated and kept a journal of his travels.

Western Fur Trade scholar Jim Hardee has recently released volume one of a two volume study of Wyeth's journals. Though this is not the first time Wyeth's journals have been published, Hardee's new approach to the journals is a long overdue work and greatly aids in the research and study of this fascinating period of American history.

This new book includes a thorough biographical sketch of Wyeth's early years which gives insight into the character and personality of the man. In the introduction Hardee states that "Wyeth is not numbered among America's greatest heroes," but the rest of the book seems to build the case that perhaps he should certainly be held in much higher regard. The introduction is excellent in putting Wyeth and his travels into historical context and helps us understand the broader forces and factors within which he pursued his enterprise.

Whenever I had previously read about Wyeth, it was always mentioned that he was an "Ice Merchant." I had had some vague notions about what that might entail but had no idea of the actual nuts and bolts industry. I certainly gained an education on the topic here, as Hardee gives a thorough explanation and history of ice harvesting operations as they related to Wyeth. I found this section of the book very interesting and historically informative. Where things really got exciting for me however was when the journal pages began to cover the western trails; ground that I am more familiar with.

I really liked Hardee's approach to the layout of daily journal entries. He puts Wyeth's actual journal entries within a grayed out box so it's easy to quickly locate them. To me the real value of this book is the commentary contained between the journal entries. Hardee uses his intimate knowledge of the western

fur trade to add an incredible amount of detail and explanation. He also, where definitive geographic locations permit, compares other contemporary travelers' experiences, i.e. HBC or American trapping parties, over the same ground. This further enriches the narrative and aids us in viewing a larger picture of the history of this time and place.

Primary sources such as Nathaniel J. Wyeth's journals are the foundation of accurate historical research. This new effort on the part of Jim Hardee to better illuminate the value of Wyeth's contributions is in itself invaluable and deserves a place in any western fur trade library. I can hardly wait for volume II.

Obstinate Hope is available through the publications tab at [<http://www.museumofthemountainman.com>] or Amazon.com

## SOUTHWEST TRIBES

Reviewed by Andrew Hind

*American Indian Tribes of the Southwest*

By Michael G. Johnson  
ISBN: 9781780961866

**S**AY THE PHRASE 'INDIAN Tribes of the Southwest' and it's almost inevitable that it is the Apache that come to mind. That's certainly understandable. Through peerless mastery of their terrain and determined resistance to the white man, the Apache people not only wrote themselves into the histories of New Mexico and Arizona, but also indelibly stamped themselves into the American consciousness. As a result, mesas and Apache seem to go hand-in-hand.

Nevertheless, there were more tribes in this region than just the Apache. *American Indian Tribes of the Southwest* reminds us of that important fact.

Osprey, a British publisher of lavishly illustrated military histories, has made a determined effort to bring to life the historical origins, ways of life, religious beliefs, material culture and history of North America's aboriginal peoples. In this, the 488th entry in its Men-at-Arms series, Osprey turns its gaze towards the

Southwest. We meet the Apache of course, but the book also takes pains to highlight other native tribes: the Navajo, Southern Paiute, Comanche, Yuma, and those descended from the ancient Pueblo cultures.

Author and historian Michael G. Johnson, who has researched Native American culture for more than 35 years and was presented with the prestigious The Denali Press Award by the American Library Association for his Macmillan Encyclopedia of North American Tribes, does a masterful job of cataloguing and condensing the richly varied cultures of the southwest in a slender 48-page volume. What's immediately striking is that the popular perception of Arizona and New Mexico as consisting of desolate desert is incomplete. In fact, the region consists of mountains, forested highland ranges, grasslands, and deep canyons supporting juniper and pinon. This remarkably diverse geography helps explain the great variations in culture between neighboring tribes.

The book's matter-of-fact approach, along with the many maps, period photographs, and graphic descriptions (by Jonathan Smith, a painter specializing in Native American subject matter) helps readers digest what is a broad subject. For those interested in more in-depth reading on the tribes of New Mexico and Arizona, an extensive bibliography is provided.

This concise book is more than just an encyclopedic exploration of the history and cultures of the Indians of the Southwest. By understanding their beliefs and ways of life, readers

