



Battles and Massacres on the Southwestern Frontier: Historical and Archaeological Perspectives

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Battles and massacres are intimate affairs for combatants and others involved, their physical and emotional violence often stemming from fervor and fear. Although mass killing characterizes both battles and massacres, the two are profoundly different. Battles take place between armed forces; massacres are one-sided events in which the dead are mostly innocent victims. Yet the fog of war shrouds both massacres and battles in a functional amnesia. Participants remember what exactly happened during such a violent encounter only imperfectly, and later clarity cannot always rectify accounts thus rendered. Even naming the events as battles or massacres already imposes an interpretive framework upon them.

This unique study centers on four critical engagements between Anglo-Americans and American Indians on the southwestern frontier: the Battle of Cieneguilla (1854), the Battle of Adobe Walls (1864), the Sand Creek Massacre (1864), and the Mountain Meadows Massacre (1857). Editors Ronald K. Wetherington and Frances Levine juxtapose historical and archaeological perspectives on each event to untangle the ambiguity and controversy that surround both historical and more contemporary accounts of each of these violent outbreaks. Both disciplines, the contributors make clear, yield surprisingly similar narratives and interpretive agreement; and the lessons learned from these nineteenth-century killing fields about wartime reporting and command failures remain relevant today.

Contributions by T. Lindsay Baker, J. Brett Cruse, Will Gorenfeld, Shannon A. Novak, Lars Rodseth, Douglas D. Scott, and Joe Watkins

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