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Review of *The Black Hills Journals of Colonel Richard Irving Dodge* Edited by Wayne R. Kime

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The Black Hills Journals of Colonel Richard Irving Dodge. Edited by Wayne R. Kime. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. Maps, photographs, bibliography, index. xiii + 274 pp. \$29.95.

Formal exploration of the Black Hills was long thwarted by their remoteness in northern Indian country and then by their inclusion in the Great Sioux Reservation created by the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. Changing national circumstances by 1874, however, led to Custer's well-publicized Black Hills survey where gold was discovered, as he reported, among the roots of the grass. Though several practical miners traveled with Custer, his expedition's pronouncements were not scientifically grounded, and doubt shrouded his discovery.

Across the nation the prospect of a new El Dorado grew irresistible, and the federal government soon authorized a formal scientific study of the Hills to better judge their mineral wealth. The 1875 mission was organized by Professor Walter P. Jenney of New York's Columbia School of Mines. His corps numbered seventeen, including two geologists, a topographer, astronomer, naturalist, photographer, head miner, and laborers. Commanding Jenney's military escort was Lieutenant Richard I. Dodge, Twenty-third Infantry, who led eight companies of soldiers drawn from the Second and Third Cavalry and Ninth Infantry, in all 452 men and seventy-one supply wagons.

Dodge, appreciating the national significance of his assignment, compiled a record of daily activities and observations from the time of his departure from Omaha Barracks, Nebraska, in early May until his return in mid-October; it is these detailed journals that are presented here. A West Pointer, class of 1848, Dodge was a seasoned soldier with a reputation for discreet good judgment and administrative competence. More important, he had a literary bent, being both an avid reader and aspiring writer, and drew upon the observations he penned in 1875 for an official report

of the expedition and his second book, a natural history of the Black Hills published in 1876.

The present work comprises precise transcriptions of Dodge's six daily journals covering the period 6 May through 19 October 1875. His keen eye makes his narrative a lively one, paying steady heed, as it does, to the natural environment of the Hills, Jenney's determined scientific surveys, the fringe of illegal miners who steadfastly avoided contact with the soldiers yet appreciated the security of their proximity, and an unusually interesting assortment of colorful characters including Valentine McGillycuddy, "Calamity Jane" Canary, and "California Joe" Milner. Indians never threatened the expedition, but Dodge fully appreciated the burden of Indian treaty obligations and the surging miners' tide. As for gold in the Black Hills, both Jenney and Dodge confirmed its widespread presence in paying quantities.

Editor Wayne Kime has faithfully transcribed Dodge's 1875 journals, which are held today by the Newberry Library in Chicago. No small challenge, this, since the six journals are mere pocket books measuring barely 3-by-4 inches, with nearly all entries in pencil. To Dodge's text Kime adds insightful annotations that illuminate the saga and its characters. In turn, the University of Oklahoma Press will make countless friends by having placed the notes at the foot of individual pages instead of at the book's end. In all, this is delightful reading as well as a highly significant contribution to Black Hills human and environmental history and the dramatic underpinnings of the Great Sioux War.

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