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Review of *In the Shadow of Wounded Knee: The Untold Final Story of the Indian Wars* By Roger L. Di Silvestro

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In the Shadow of Wounded Knee: The Untold Final Story of the Indian Wars. By Roger L. Di Silvestro. New York: Walker & Company, 2005. x + 253 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

The U.S. Army excused the killing of one of its officers, Lt. Edward W. Casey, by Plenty Horses, an Oglala Lakota, to maintain its official position that the “incident” at Wounded Knee was a battle, not a massacre. Roger Di Silvestro’s *In the Shadow of Wounded Knee* is the first full-dress history of this coda to the event at Wounded Knee during which between two hundred and three hundred and fifty Native peoples died, as well as forty-nine soldiers, many of whom were killed by friendly fire.

Casey, ironically, was himself something of an Indian rights defender. He recruited scouts,

and when some of them were accused of killing a white rancher, Casey paid their legal expenses personally because he thought the charges were “a put up plan of rich cattlemen to oust the Cheyennes from their Reservation.”

This book's title is overstated. Roughly its first half (six chapters) plows well-furrowed historical ground through the late years of the Plains Indian wars, focusing on the assassination of Sitting Bull and the massacre (or, as the U.S. Army still insists, “battle”) of Wounded Knee. Beginning at chapter 7, the narrative becomes more specific, focusing on the two trials of Plenty Horses, who was charged with the murder of Lt. Casey (the first trial ended in a hung jury). The trials during the spring of 1891 were covered profusely by Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, among other newspapers. The story was far from “untold.” It is also rather well-known among historians in our time.

The trials became something of a sensation in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where many hot-headed civilians speculated that Plenty Horses might hang in the type of event that could become a spectator sport appropriate for picnics and souvenir sales of the hanging rope cut into small strips. Some days demand for seats in the stifling courtroom was so brisk that tickets were issued. The trial was described at the time as the “center of the universe” in Sioux Falls. The Army (most notably General Nelson Miles) had other ideas, because, *sans* a state of war, a conviction of Plenty Horses of murder could have opened the troops at Wounded Knee, many of whom had been decorated with Medals of Honor, to similar charges.

Even though this story is no state secret, the depth and detail of Di Silvestro's account are new and noteworthy. His description of Plenty Horses' two trials is especially lucid, meticulous, and vivid.

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