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The Captured: A True Story of Abduction by Indians on the Texas Frontier. By Scott Zesch (review)

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Book Reviews

JESÚS F. DE LA TEJA, *Editor*

The Captured: A True Story of Abduction by Indians on the Texas Frontier. By Scott Zesch. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004. Pp. 382. Prologue, map, plates, table, notes, bibliography, acknowledgments, index. ISBN 0-31231-787-5. \$26.95, cloth.)

What started out as a quiet walk through a small rural cemetery for author Scott Zesch turned into a quest to understand a long-forgotten relative. Adolph Korn, the author's great-great uncle, was just ten years old when he was captured by Apaches in 1870. His abductors took him to the Indian Territory, where they sold him to Quahada Comanches, with whom he lived for the next three years. In an effort to better understand the emotional and physical trauma his uncle must have endured, Zesch examines the stories of eight additional children captured by Indians between July 1865 and February 1871, the majority of them (like Adolph Korn) coming from German families only recently moved to the Texas Hill Country. The result is a wonderful mixture of dramatic eyewitness accounts, appropriate historical context, and balanced analysis—the latter two traits often missing from captivity narratives.

Using the investigation of his "Uncle Adolph" as a backdrop, Zesch's *The Captured* probes important issues that illuminate both the captives' perspective on their abduction and new life as "Indians," as well as the possible motivations of their Native American captors. The author also considers the desperate and frustrating experiences of the captives' parents and families who remain at home anxiously awaiting word of their missing children.

Many frontier families considered death at the hands of Indians akin to martyrdom, while they viewed captivity as degrading, a fate worse than death. But many Southern Plains tribes desired taking captives. From the Indian perspective, captive children, who usually ranged in age from seven to fourteen years, were legitimate spoils of war that could be traded, given as gifts, or ransomed. For captives "adopted" into the tribe, life was initially difficult to endure, but assimilation was often accomplished quickly for children with certain personality traits. Some abductees, in fact, found the relative freedom and excitement of Indian life more appealing than the long days laboring on their parents' farms, while others never lost hope of returning home.

For the parents of captives, the months (or years) of separation and not knowing their child's fate was a cross borne each day. Immediately following an abduction, local newspapers might provide written pleas for assistance, but few

children were ever rescued as a result of such notices. Military officials, for their part, promised to keep an eye out for abductees, but unless they knew the warriors' tribal identity and whereabouts, there was little they could do. When some frontier officials refused to pay ransoms, arguing that payments would only encourage additional abductions, the parents of missing children understandably howled in dismay.

The latter chapters of the book examine the difficulties facing assimilated captives who were "rescued" from the Indians. Some escaped and fled back to their Indian captors, while others struggled to reconnect with their biological families. Their experiences living with Native Americans, however, stayed with them for the rest of their lives. Basing his conclusions on interviews with the children and grandchildren of captives, Zesch relates how many former captives experienced difficulties settling down, holding jobs, and raising families. In some respects, their re-entry into "civilized" life represented yet another captivity that was perhaps even more difficult than their first.

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THOMAS A. BRITTEN

Karl Bodmer's North American Prints. Edited by Brandon K. Ruud, annotations by Marsha V. Gallagher, essays by Ron Tyler and Brandon K. Ruud. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. Pp. xvi+384. Foreword, acknowledgments, illustrations, color plates, appendices, notes. ISBN 0-8032-1326-3. \$150.00, cloth.)

In 1832, German Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied led an expedition across North America with the goal of making a scientific record of the native peoples, flora, and fauna of the northern Great Plains and the northern Rockies. The prince published his research in *Travels in the Interior of North America in the Years 1832 to 1834*, along with eighty-one aquatint engravings of original watercolors by the expedition's official artist, Swiss painter Karl Bodmer.

In this massive and beautifully illustrated volume, Ron Tyler and Brandon Ruud bring together insightful scholarly analysis of Bodmer's images and the story of the creation of the monumental travel atlas. Tyler's essay, "Karl Bodmer and the American West," discusses Bodmer's images as ethnographic documents and depictions of geographic sites as well as placing Maximilian's project in the context of the intellectual and scientific history of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Unfortunately, the prince was frustrated in his goal of reaching the Rockies due to well-founded fears for his party's safety after it found itself in a crossfire (almost literally) between warring Indian tribes at Fort McKenzie, in present-day Montana.

Once the party returned to Europe, another set of difficulties beset production of what Tyler describes as "one of the last great illustrated books of the Enlightenment" (p. 18). Maximilian's complete self-financing of the publication was an anomaly in an age when such ventures usually received at least some money from a government source and his correspondence with Bodmer during the course of the atlas's production (1837-1844) often concerned shortage of funds. But