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Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars

By Robert Vincent Remini



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"Vividly written and often harrowing . . . Remini recounts Jackson's exploits . . . with riveting narrative prose." (Michael Holt, *Chicago Tribune*)

"When it comes to Jackson . . . there are few who have such a masterly command of the sources as Mr. Remini [who] kept me up late at night reading and causing me to wonder why, with narrative history such as this, anyone bothers to read historical novels." (Roger D. McGrath, *The Wall Street Journal*)



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Like many of his Scots-Irish contemporaries on the western frontier of the early United States, Andrew Jackson grew up despising and fearing his Indian neighbors. He proved to be a formidable enemy, campaigning against the Cherokee, Creeks, Chickasaws, and other peoples, some of them former allies against England in the Revolution and the War of 1812. In doing so, he established precedents that his compatriots would follow for the rest of the 19th century.

Robert Remini, the National Book Award-winning biographer of Jackson, here turns his attention to Jackson's relations with the Indian nations of the American South. Those relations, he writes, were tempered by the racism of the day, but, as both general and president, Jackson was also unusual in enforcing rights guaranteed to those nations by treaty, even in instances when he disagreed with the terms. Despite his sense of justice, Jackson kept to his conviction that "Indians had to be shunted to one side or removed to make the land safe for white people to cultivate and settle," and during his tenure as president he pursued a policy of forced removal through which the Indian nations were relocated to the so-called Indian territories west of the Mississippi River, which in turn would be overrun only a few years later.

Though critical of Jackson's policies and actions, Remini suggests that removal saved many of the eastern Indian nations from almost certain annihilation. That view, while capably argued, is controversial, and some scholars of American Indian history are sure to take issue with it. Still, this is a valuable addition to the historical literature, one of interest to general readers as well as Remini's fellow historians. --*Gregory McNamee*

From Publishers Weekly

"I want to assure the reader that it is not my intention to excuse or exonerate Andrew Jackson for the role he played in the removal of Native Americans west of the Mississippi River. My purpose is simply to explain what happened and why": so writes Remini, who won the National Book Award for his three-volume biography of the seventh president. This provocative book is sure to create controversy for scholars, the Native American community and lay historians, among others. Jackson was the president who "removed" the five "civilized" tribes from the South and forced them westward across the Mississippi River. Existing studies portray Jackson as a villain. Not so, says Remini, who examines Jackson's life to show that he was a product of his age, nothing more, nothing less. Indian tribes sided with the British during the Revolution, then repeatedly confronted the first generation of settlers who moved into the western frontier Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi. Jackson vaulted to national prominence when he bloodily crushed the British-allied Creek tribe in 1814 during the War of 1812. Then, with or without presidential approval, Southern District Commander Jackson invaded Spanish-held Florida; acting as an "Indian commissioner," he proceeded to lever indigenous people off their ancestral lands in exchange for territory farther west. The idea, Remini says, was first espoused by Thomas Jefferson and was supported by the vast majority of frontier Americans. Despite or, indeed, because of its grave, catastrophic results, Jackson's policy deserves to be judged in light of early 19th-century America, argues Remini. He further contends that Jackson's removal policy may have actually saved the tribes from being exterminated. Expert reviewers, pundits and descendants may feel otherwise. Maps not seen by PW.

From Library Journal

Many Americans today tend to lay the sole blame for the Indian removals of the 1830s on the shoulders of Andrew Jackson. Award-winning historian and Jackson biographer Remini argues that this is a very simplistic view that betrays a lack of understanding of the circumstances surrounding removal. In this book he explains what happened and why, showing that national security interests protecting the southern border from English and Spanish machinations dominated Jackson's thinking throughout his life and that he firmly believed that separating Native Americans and whites was the only way to ensure the survival of tribal cultures. It is a story of negotiations, bribery, tribal politics, and war told in all its complexity and based on a lifetime of research and study. This well-written volume is accessible to students and general readers as well as scholars and specialists, and it belongs in most libraries. Stephen H. Peters, Northern Michigan Univ. Lib., Marquette

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Users Review

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