Wild West History Association
Submit Your Book Reviews to the WWHA Journal

Guidelines for WWHA Journal Book Reviews

1. Style: The style manual we use is Chicago Style.

2. Length: Shoot for 500 words; consider the importance of the book if you need to go longer. The editor may need to shorten longer reviews.

3. Review header: Title in italics and bold type, author, publisher, year, pages, price. E.g., ***Rodeo Madness*** by Charles Malty (Remuda Press, 2008), 328 pp., soft cover, $27.00.

The review might be nothing more than a lucid summary of what the book is about. You might mention other titles on the subject, working around to where the book under review fits. Quoting an excerpt or two is often useful, especially if you wish to offer an example of the author's writing style or theme. Which leads me to: If the book presents a theme, makes an argument, or offers a revisionist point of view, explain it clearly, even if you disagree with it. If you wish to take issue, do so reasonably, which is to say, plausibly.

4. Smiled on: Fresh, lively writing. Frowned on: Excessive nit-picking, snarkiness, and cliches. Avoid cliches like the plague, as Churchill once said, such as: This book belongs on the shelf of every/This book is required reading for. The review should make your commendation clear without dinging the reader on the head. Also frowned on, qualifiers and superlatives such as fascinating, iconic, amazing, infamous, and so on. If you think the book is full of fascinating anecdotes, give the reader an example. Show don't tell, as the adage goes.

5. Advice from E.B. White: Omit needless words.

6. Smiled on: Fresh, lively writing.

7. Frowned on: Excessive nit-picking, snarkiness, and cliches. Cliches especially frowned on: This book belongs on the shelf of every/This book is required reading for. The review should make your commendation clear without dinging the reader on the head. Also frowned on, qualifiers and superlatives such as fascinating, iconic, amazing, infamous, and so on. If you think the book is full of fascinating anecdotes, give the reader an example. Show don't tell, as the adage goes.

8. Advice from E.B. White: Omit needless words.

9. Conflicts: If there's a potential conflict of interest, negative or positive, let me know so we can resolve it. For example, the author of the book you have been assigned had previously written a harsh review of your book; the author is a personal friend of yours. You should not review a book because you are acknowledged in it or wrote a blurb for it.

10. Inspiration: Check out reviews - especially the difficult art of the brief review - in the book section of *The New Yorker*, newyorker.com; *The Atlantic*, theatlantic.com; *Financial Times*, ft.com; and *Publishers Weekly*, publishersweekly.com

11. Finally, and most importantly, when you're finished writing the review, print it out and put it aside. A day or two later, read it over slowly. If it passes muster, send it on.

12. There are exceptions to every guideline, just make certain you have a good reason.

13. Please do not use your review as an opportunity to excessively recapitulate what you have written on the same topic.

P.S. You retain the copyright to your review, though we would appreciate it if you did not republish it elsewhere until three months after it appears in the WWHA Journal.

Make certain you contact the book review editor if you have a book in mind that you'd like to review. That way you can be certain he hasn't already assigned the review, and that the book falls within the subject matter of the Wild West History Association.

Email to Matthew Bernstein, book review editor, at **matt.bernsteinwwha@gmail.com**