Review of *Phil Sheridan and His Army* By Paul Andrew Hutton

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Probably most Americans would recognize General Philip Sheridan as a celebrated Civil
War commander. Less well documented is Sheridan’s subsequent two decades of frontier military service when he commanded the Division of the Missouri, encompassing the entire Plains and Rocky Mountain region. During the stormy years of westward expansion, he not only made policy which affected the outcome of the legendary Indian wars, but also presided over the mundane matters of military promotions, rotation of garrisons, supplying the far-flung military posts, and protecting federal lands throughout the West. He was the perfect embodiment of Gilded Age values which stressed pragmatism and elastic ethics as “he carried out the dictates of his government, ruthlessly quashing opponents, be they southern redeemers, northern workingmen, or western Indians” (p. xiv). In these ways and more, he was a fitting symbol for his age.

Paul Hutton, former associate editor of the Western Historical Quarterly and currently assistant professor of history at the University of New Mexico, has crafted a weighty book to trace Sheridan’s military career from his assignment as Reconstruction commander over the Fifth Military District of Texas and Louisiana through his 1884 promotion to commanding general of the army. Although the book logically focuses upon the “official Sheridan,” we do see glimpses of his private side, his family life, and his character flaws. Most frequently, Sheridan’s clashes with fellow officers developed out of his overly harsh stance against Indians and his tendency to punish the innocent along with the guilty. His unwarranted 1886 arrest of the loyal Apache scouts and subsequent confinement of them at Fort Marion, Florida, not only cost Sheridan his long-time friendship with General Crook, but also set him on a collision course with reform groups such as the Indian Rights Association.

On other occasions, Sheridan demonstrated a staunch loyalty to old friends, even when that loyalty temporarily tarnished his image. He stood behind President Grant and General Sherman during embarrassing investiga-