

## Book Reviews

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**Three Roads to Magdalena: Coming of Age in a Southwest Borderland, 1880–1990.** By David Wallace Adams. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016. xiii+437 pp., acknowledgments, preface, introduction, illustrations, map, afterword, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.)

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With this excellent book, historian David Wallace Adams invites us to join him on a journey to the “three roads”—one Navajo, one Hispanic, and one Anglo—that lead to the story of the small town of Magdalena in west-central New Mexico. Readers should accept his offer, for Adams proves to be an industrious, incisive, eloquent, and—of greatest importance—compassionate guide.

Indeed, in his rich, nuanced, and vivid descriptions of this place and its people—in particular, its young people—Adams succeeds in making us feel less like a mere visitor to this community, and, at times, almost as though we are a part of it. We are there, for example, as Cadelaria García helps Hispanic children study for their First Communions, teaching them that “some people do not have the capacity that you have . . . so help ’em” (311). And we cheer the 1968 high school basketball team as its culturally diverse players overcome prejudices while racking up victories. We also feel their despondency when they fall just short of a state title.

A solid work of ethnohistory, this book is well supported with the relevant contributions of both historians and anthropologists. It also draws on decades of Adams’s own associations with the town (going back to the

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1980s) as well as census data, newspapers, public documents, school records, and, most importantly, scores of interviews that he conducted with many members of each group. He has organized the book thematically, though it proceeds in roughly chronological fashion, and he has a historian's keen eye for the changes and continuities in the cultures over the hundred-year time span within its purview. Among the many worthwhile topics that are addressed are family, religion, work, play, and entertainment. Education is also, naturally, a subject of considerable attention, and, here, in terms of the Navajo experiences, Adams gets to draw on his other fine work on Indian boarding schools.

Of course, the three roads that make up Magdalena's story include a fair number of intersections and combinations. In addition to coming together for basketball, young people also interacted at school, at community dances, at rodeos, and—in perhaps the most profound form of cross-cultural relationships—intermarriages. All the while, Adams is careful to show us that the three roads were not monolithic. Some Navajos were more traditional whereas others were more Christian; some Hispanics supported bilingual schooling whereas others favored an English-only approach; and some Anglos were wealthy business owners whereas others were poor farmers. Adams also does not conceal the fact that the three cultures of Magdalena frequently clashed and crashed into one another, and he is adept at reporting on the influence of power (in particular, Anglo power) on the town's race relations. At the same time, he does an excellent job of revealing the moments when children of all races exhibited their own agency as they struggled to come of age on their own terms.

With its ambitious goals and its skillful execution, *Three Roads to Magdalena* makes a worthwhile contribution to the diverse ethnohistory of the American West as well as to the history of childhood. Adams may not have been able to hear all of Magdalena's many stories, as he humbly admits in his preface, but he certainly heard a lot of them. In that they are stories of people from different cultures struggling to live together, often failing to do so but also sometimes succeeding, they are stories that we need today as much as ever. My advice, then, is to get on the road with Adams. Go to Magdalena. It's worth the trip.