



Thunder over the Ochoco Volume II Distant Thunder

Gale Ontko

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Thunder Over the Ochoco is literally the work of a lifetime. Its author spent 40 years combing historical records and interviewing dozens of descendants of pioneer settlers and Native Americans who shared oral traditions that have been passed down through generations.

What emerges is history as it has never been told before. A history of conquistadors and fur trappers, of merchants and missionaries. The history of an Indian war that was one of the longest and bloodiest conflicts ever fought on American soil, but which for political and economic reasons was covered up for decades. Above all, the history of “those first settlers of the Ochoco—men, woman, and children—who were left to wander and starve in a land they thought belonged to them through eternity, a people who in their final agony cried out: `Nimma ne-umpu!’—`We too are human!’

Gale Ontko tells this story with compassion and grace, in a style that combines the precision of the scholar with the vigor and drama of the novelist. The five volumes comprise nearly 2500 printed book pages and have been described by some as the most factual writing by any author on the history of the Shoshoni People.

Volume II covert the twenty-year period between 1840 and 1860 would see overland migration across the land known to the Shoshoni as the Ochoco—Land of the Red Willow. The Americans would call it eastern Oregon. Never on friendly terms with the white invaders, the Shoshoni tolerated passage across their ancestral hunting grounds only so long as the American homesteaders stayed strictly on the dusty thoroughfare called the Oregon Trail. When they transgressed, the distant thunder of gunfire reverberated across interior Oregon like the tolling of a death knell. Volume II narrates the suffering, heartache and death of those unfortunate souls who dared to venture into the Ochoco; and it covers the first brutal Indian wars fought west of the Mississippi River.

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