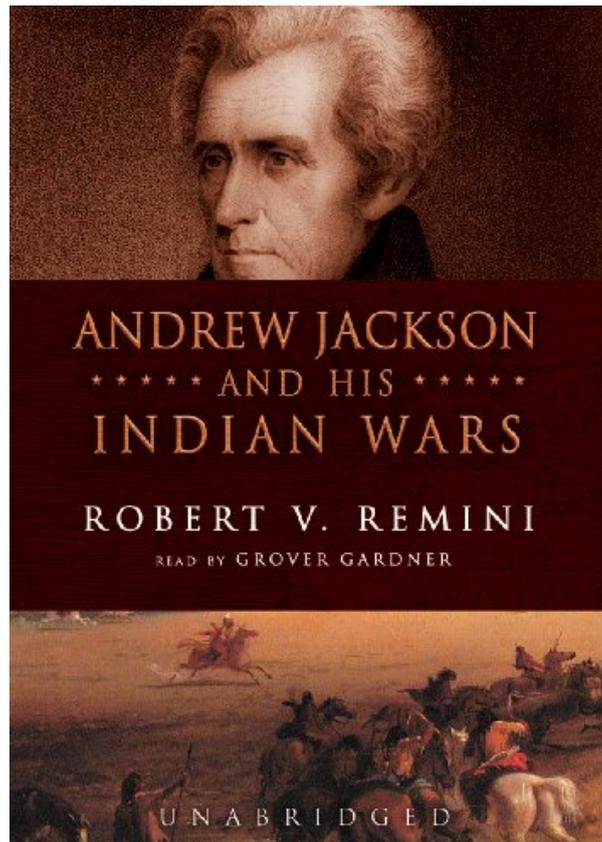
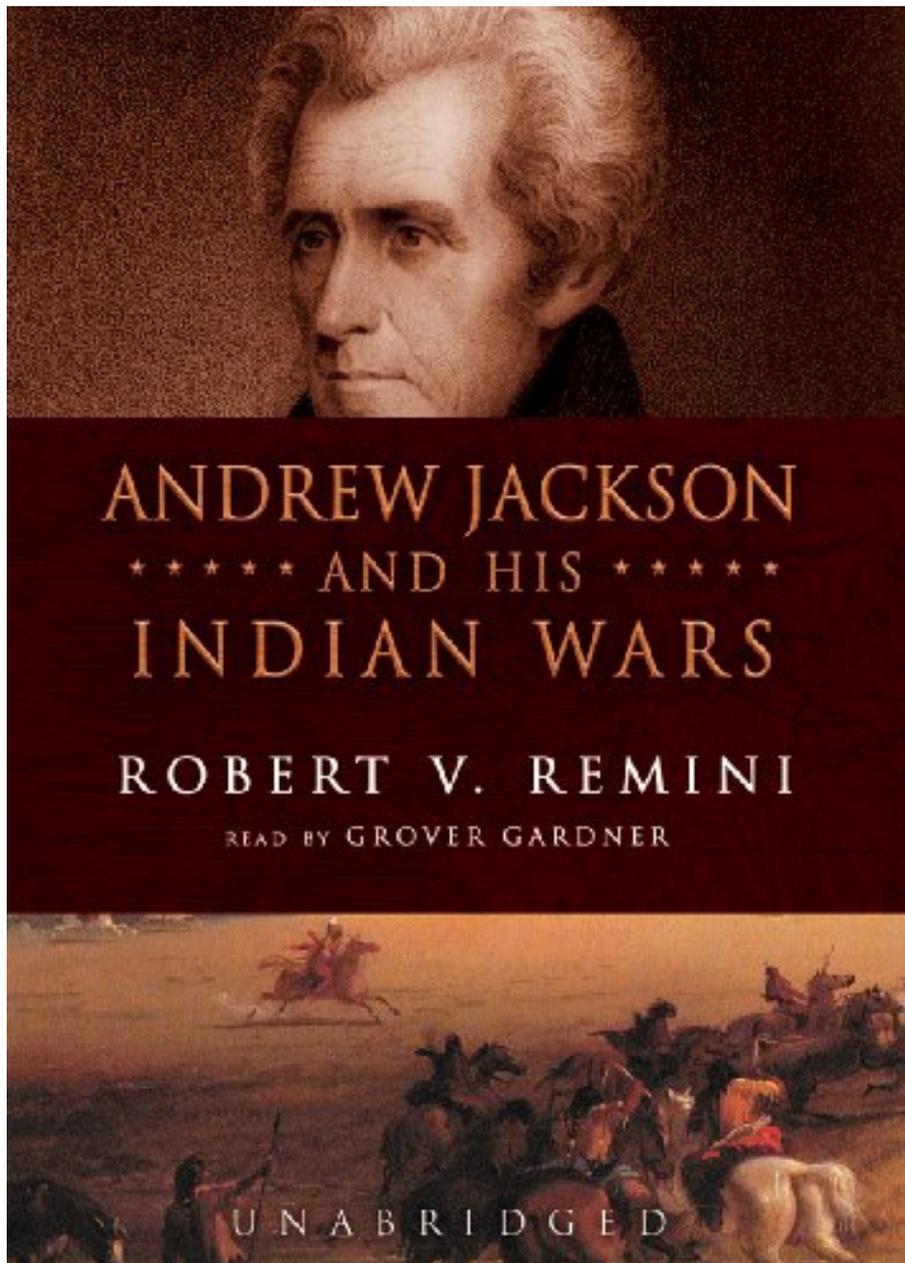


ANDREW JACKSON AND HIS INDIAN WARS BY ROBERT VINCENT REMINI



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The expulsion of Native Americans from the eastern half of the continent to the Indian Territory beyond the Mississippi River remains one of the most notorious events in US history, and the man most responsible and most widely blamed for their removal is Andrew Jackson. Robert Remini, hailed by the New York Times as "our foremost Jacksonian scholar," now provides a thought-provoking analysis of this single most controversial aspect of Jackson's long career. Masterfully capturing Jackson's flaws and limitations as well as his heroism, Remini contends that, despite the injustice and atrocities that accompanied the removal, Jackson in fact ensured the tribes' survival.

This is at once an exuberant work of American history and a sobering reminder of the violence and darkness at the heart of that history.

- Sales Rank: #12713692 in Books
- Published on: 2004-05-01
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 8
- Dimensions: 1.26" h x 6.54" w x 9.64" l,
- Binding: Audio Cassette

Amazon.com Review

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Sharp Knife

By Robin Friedman

Although Americans are prone to refer to Jackson as "Old Hickory" or, in his day, as "the Hero", the Indian tribes of his day gave him the nickname of "Sharp Knife". This nickname was based upon Jackson's unrelenting warfare against the Creek Indians, particularly at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814. Professor Remini shows in his careful and thorough study of Jackson and the Indians that the sobriquet was indeed well deserved. The book is a thorough and careful exposition of the cruelties practiced on the Indians during the Jacksonian Era culminating in their removal from their homes and their relocation west of the Mississippi River during and subsequent to Jackson's Presidency.

Remini is a master of his materials. He has written a National Book Award winning biography of Jackson together with many other works on the Jacksonian Era of our history.

After a brief introductory chapter summarizing Jackson's early years, Remini plunges into the story of Jackson's Indian wars. Prior to his Presidency, Jackson conquered the Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws and Seminoles in fierce no-quarter fighting. Jackson was resolute in his wish to remove the Indians from the Southeastern United States.

In addition to his leadership on the battlefield, Jackson was a participant in many treaties with the Indians in which the ceded large portions of their ancestral domain in return for small tracts of land and small sums of money. Here too, Jackson was a domineering, seemingly irresistible figure intent on opening the Southeast to the onrush of white settlement, with little regard for the effect of his actions on the Indians.

As a national hero based upon his victory at the Battle of New Orleans and his conquests of the tribes, Jackson narrowly missed the Presidency in 1824 but was elected in 1828 and 1832. He was able to implement the policy of Indian removal he had conceived in his years as a general and a treaty negotiator. He secured legislation from Congress authorizing the removal of the "Five Civilized Tribes" -- the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Creeks, Choctaws, and Seminoles -- and implemented this policy at great cost and suffering to the Tribes. It is a story all too little known today.

Jackson was a man of determination, strength, and will. He was also, in Remini's account, an American patriot. Shocking as was his treatment of the Indians, Jackson was moved by considerations of American Nationalism. In particular, he wished to protect the coastal areas of the United States from intrigue and invasion by England and France. The European powers tended to use the Indians as a means to threaten the United States.

Although he is properly critical of Jackson's cruelty, arrogance, and deceit towards the tribes, and of the horrors they underwent during the removal, Remini argues that there was no good alternative to the removal policy. If the tribes had not been removed they would have been overwhelmed by onrushing white settlement and lost entirely their tribal identity, as was the case with many northeastern tribes. Paradoxically, Jackson proved right in that the removal policy saved the southeast tribes from extinction. Of course, none of this excuses the cruelty with which the process was implemented; and Remini is far from trying to excuse it.

I came to Remini's book after reading an earlier study of Jackson and the Indians: Michael Paul Rogin's book "Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian." I wasn't entirely happy with the Rogin because of its hypercritical tone and because of its psychologizing. Remini's book constitutes a more thorough, thoughtful, and balanced consideration of this sad period in our history. This is a good book for those who wish to try to understand Indian policy and its role in our country's development.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Biography at its best

By Candace Scott

This is a magnificent look at Andrew Jackson's war with the Native Americans. So many biographers bury their subject and forget that most readers want to know who their subject *was*, not merely what they *did*. Remini doesn't fall into this trap. He gives the reader a well-grounded and detailed look at Andrew Jackson as a man: his foibles, passions and prejudices, as well as his extreme ambition and vacillating brilliance.

Remini strikes a beautiful balance when examining Jackson's private life and military/political life. His examination of the Trail of Tears is absolutely riveting, and he weaves Jackson in and out of the narrative with rare poise and skill. The reader can actually picture Jackson in the midst of this conflict, feel his emotions and understand the decisions he made. When a biographer can paint such a vivid picture, the reader will always be rewarded.

This is an excellent book for the entire spectrum of people interested in Jackson. Whether you are a neophyte or an established Jacksonian historian, there is much to enjoy, as well as new material. The footnotes and bibliography are excellent resources and lead to additional sources for the reader. The minute I finished this, I bought the second volume, "Andrew Jackson: The Course of American Freedom, 1822-1832," also available here. This volume is truly an outstanding book

34 of 44 people found the following review helpful.

Disappointing, especially from such a renowned scholar

By Geoff Pietsch

Let me start with a disclaimer: Prof. Remini was both my instructor in a history course and my Master's seminar advisor when he was a visiting professor at Columbia in 1959-'60. He approved my Master's Essay; I received my M.A. that year.

While his book is, as one would expect from Prof. Remini, clearly written and well-documented, it has a fundamental flaw which leads to my low rating. Not only is Remini unpersuasive in justifying Jackson's relentless efforts to remove the Indians, but he is also internally inconsistent. He argues: "There was no way the American people would continue to allow the presence of the tribes..." yet immediately before this assertion Remini had acknowledged that removal had barely passed Congress. Why was Congress so divided? Because - according to Remini himself - the American people had pressured Congress to protect the Indians' rights.

Not only does Remini have nothing to say to shoot down his own evidence showing wide popular support for the Indians, but he also fails to even discuss why the President who was ready, even eager, to use military force to compel obedience from a rebellious South Carolina at the time of the tariff/nullification controversy would be cowed by supposed popular opposition to the Indians removal.

I've long felt that Jackson had a generally very impressive administration but that his brutality towards the Indians was his greatest flaw as President. (His support for slavery was very wrong, of course, but it was not an issue in which he played a decisive role - as he did regarding the Southeastern tribes.) I wanted to read Remini's book because I thought that he, as the pre-eminent Jacksonian scholar, might at least provide a reasoned explanation for Jackson's actions. As I've made clear, he completely failed to do so.

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