

Reader Views

Book reviews, for readers, by readers.

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Black River Crossing

By Gary Pisarski

Nightengale Press (2005)

Reviewed by Joanne Benhman for Reader Views (3/06)

This first novel by writer Gary Pisarski is set in the years immediately following the Civil War. Thirty-two men left Elkton, South Carolina to follow General Robert E. Lee into combat against the North. Only one man returned, a young soldier named Will Weatherby. He returns to find his entire family dead. His boyhood friend, Carol Ann Callahan, is the only survivor of her family. Keeping the promise he made to Carol Ann's dad to take care of her, Will persuades Carol Ann to pack up and head west, leaving behind their worthless sharecropper farm.

Stopping for wagon repairs on a lonely road in Texas, Carol Ann goes to a nearby creek to fill the water canteens. There she finds a man trapped in the water, held down by the weight of his dead horse. And there she also finds a whole new direction for her life.

As Carol Ann begins to embrace a new life, Will is driven away by the very man whose life he saved. Years later, Carol Ann and Will meet again as Carol Ann pleads with Will to save her husband and children, the same husband who had tried to kill him years before.

Mr. Pisarski has shared his knowledge of the Civil War era with his readers in this book. Through the use of flashbacks, we see the conflicts at Gettysburg and Fredericksburg, seeing the war through the eyes of a soldier, not really knowing why he was fighting, just doing as he was ordered.

I enjoyed the story, but I do feel the need to mention that the book requires editing before it goes into its next printing.