



Gloomy Terrors and Hidden Fires: The Mystery of John Colter and Yellowstone

Ronald M. Anglin, Larry E. Morris

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From 1810, when a newspaper published the first account of “Colter’s Run,” to 2012, when one hundred and fourscore participants in Montana’s annual John Colter Run charged up and down rugged trails—even across the waist-deep Gallatin River—interest in Colter, the alleged discoverer of Yellowstone Park, has never waned. Drawing on this endless fascination with an individual often called the first American mountain man, this book offers an innovative, comprehensive study of a unique figure in American history. Despite his prominent role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the early exploration of the West, Colter is distinctly different from Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Kit Carson, and the other legends of the era because they all left documents behind that allow access to the men themselves. Colter, by contrast, left nothing, not a single letter, diary, or reminiscence, so that second-, third-, or fourth-hand accounts of his adventures are all we have. Guiding readers through this labyrinth of hearsay, rumor, and myth, this is the first book to tell the whole story of Colter and his legend, examining everything that is known—or supposedly known—about Colter and showing how historians and history buffs alike have tried in vain to get back to Colter the man, know what he said and feel what he felt, but have ended up never seeing him clearly, finding instead an enigma they cannot unravel.

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