



Silas Soule: A Short, Eventful Life of Moral Courage

Tom Bensing

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Silas Stillman Soule, who grew up in the decades just before the Civil War, created an unforgettable legacy in his tragically short life. This courageous young man transported slaves via the Underground Railroad, aided in the jailbreak of a doctor accused of aiding slaves, participated in an attempt to rescue John Brown's men after Harpers Ferry, and fought for the Union at the little-known but very important Battle of the Glorieta Pass. Most significantly, he refused to take part in the slaughter of Native American women and children during the Sand Creek Massacre, one of the blackest moments in U.S. history, and was the first to testify against the man who led the assault, Col. John Chivington.

Historian Tom Bensing chronicles for the first time a comprehensive look at Silas' life, combining historical fact with human elements. The result is a fascinating snapshot of U.S. history rich with intensely researched details. Born in 1838 to an ardent abolitionist father, Silas eventually moved to Coal Creek in the Kansas Territory. His family home became a well-used stop on the Underground Railroad in Kansas, which straddled the line between free and slave states. Silas, known for his wit and charm, also showed strength of character, becoming a true hero on the frontier. Time spent in the Union army in Colorado - when he took his stand against the brutal Indian massacre - only strengthened his resolve.

Those who only know Silas for his heroic stance at Sand Creek will be astonished at everything this Jayhawker/adventure-seeker/soldier accomplished in his 26 years. The Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes continue to honor Silas today, holding a peace run each Thanksgiving. The book also reveals, in never before published detail, the life and final fate of Charles Squier, the man who ended Silas' life in a shootout. Squier, a decorated veteran, ironically received a hero's burial himself four years later.

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