



Rain of Tears (Thunder Over the Ochoco)

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 IV covers the thirteen-year interval between 1866 and 1879 that would witness monumental changes in the Ochoco. With the surrender of Has No Horse's battered army, western Oregon had free rein to exploit the Ochoco as it saw fit. In a blind daze, the Shoshoni would witness frontier towns springing up where their lodges had once stood. As thousands upon thousands of bawling cattle and sheep trampled their ancestral hunting grounds to dust, the proud warriors of a by-gone year again rebelled. And, for a fleeting moment, shook the state of Oregon to its very foundations. Then it was over. Stripped even of reservation rights, the few survivors drifted between the four winds on their final journey into the bitter rain of tears.

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