



Vanished Arizona: Recollections of the Army Life of a New England Woman

Martha Summerhayes

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"Vanished Arizona: Recollections of My Army Life" is the story of Martha Summerhayes, a Nantucket woman who married a cavalry officer and moved with him to various Army forts in the late 19th century. It is a very personal story of Army life in Indian country, raising children under trying conditions, a travelogue and adventure all wrapped up into one. The tales of getting back and forth between Nantucket and Arizona are worth the reading alone. "Vanished Arizona: Recollections of My Army Life" is a collection of Martha's memories of life in various Army forts, and particularly in Arizona-which at that time was still considered a "dreaded and unknown land." Along the way, the reader meets a variety of characters such as a nearly-naked Indian cook and a "dentist" who accidentally extracts the wrong tooth. There is also the incident where Martha feels more in danger from her husband than the hostile Indians nearby. First printed in 1908, "Vanished Arizona: Recollections of My Army Life" was extremely well-received, becoming one of the essential primary records of the frontier-military West. Martha Summerhayes' narrative skill and her delight in life make her book a joy to read. Summerhayes offers not only a woman's perspective, but the views and memories of an army wife. The only comparable books are the trilogy of cavalry life by Libbie Custer, which were filtered by Libbie's desire to glorify her husband, General George Custer. Summerhayes' description of the Arizona landscape and conditions of Army life are memorable, adding much to the history of the Southwest. Justifiably considered a classic, "Vanished Arizona: Recollections of My Army Life" features guileless storytelling, unvarnished truth, and an honest appraisal of the rather brutal trials of an army wife in that era. Great reading for anyone interested in frontier America and the brave people who settled the land.

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