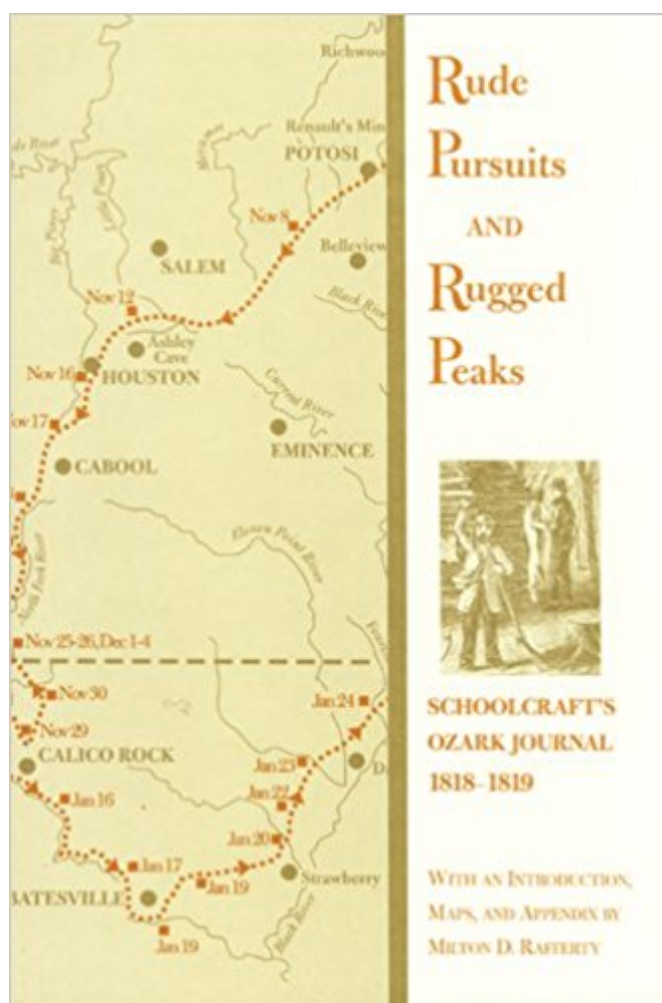


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Rude Pursuits And Rugged Peaks: Schoolcraft's Ozark Journal, 1818-1819 (Arkansas Classics)



Synopsis

In the winter of 1818, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft set out from Potosi, Missouri, to document lead mines in the interior of the Ozarks, then a wilderness of near-virgin forests, limestone cliffs, prairies, and oak savannahs. Intending only to make his fortune by publishing an account of the area's mineral resources, he became the first skilled observer to witness and record frontier life in the Ozarks. The journal kept by Schoolcraft as he traveled ninety days in the rugged terrain of southern Missouri and northern Arkansas was originally published in 1821 and has become an essential record of Ozark territorial society and natural history documenting some of the earliest American settlers in the region, the power and beauty of many lost portions of the White River, the majesty of the open prairies, and the wealth of wildlife once found in the Ozarks.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Finally the Christopher Columbus of the Ozarks has his masterpiece published in a form anyone can afford and enjoy. Many aspects make this the most important book ever written on the Ozarks."

--Sandy Primm, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Milton D. Rafferty is Professor Emeritus of Geography, Geology, and Planning at Southwest Missouri State University. He is the author or editor of nine other books and atlases, including *A Geography of World Tourism* (Prentice-Hall, 1993) and *Rude Pursuits and Rugged Peaks*

(Arkansas, 1996).

In late autumn of 1818, nearly 200 years ago, a young geologist named Henry Rowe Schoolcraft embarked on an adventure exploring the largely unknown region of the Ozarks southwest of Potosi. By foot, horseback and canoe, he and a companion crossed this new and unspoiled land, writing notes in a daily journal that survives today as the first written account of the region as well as great literature.....vividly informative, wryly witty, self-deprecatingly humble, unsparingly honest. Bushwhacking through scrubland, prairies and forest, exulting over panoramic views, bumbling through mistaken directions, stoically enduring hardship, frankly critical of wasteful white hunters and coarse early settlers, warned repeatedly about hostile Osage Native Americans, awe-struck by streams so clear he could examine a pebble 20 feet below surface.....the reader is captivated by Schoolcraft's marvelous journey. I could not help feeling sadness for the loss of the natural integrity of this beautiful land. I was especially awed by Schoolcraft's description of shooting the wild, rocky rapids of Bull Shoals on the White River, a natural wonder now tragically lost beneath the sprawling man-made lake. To regional historians, naturalists and natural science professionals, geologists, biologists, etc., Schoolcraft is a legend, his journal a frequently-referenced must-read. Schoolcraft's journal should be better known to Ozark hikers, floaters and residents, as it inspires awe and respect for this ruggedly beautiful region. I'd recommend it as "required reading" for Missouri and Arkansas students. They would never forget it. I know I never will.

Schoolcraft's journal describing his expedition into the Missouri/Arkansas border area in the dead of an Ozarks winter is an entertaining read! He describes with great dignity how he fell into the icy cold river -not just once, but twice! He talks about the wildlife that roamed the area, many species of which are long gone from here now. He also talks about how clean and clear the rivers were then - a shame its not true today. Schoolcraft used an expansive vocabulary to describe his surroundings, which is almost more entertaining than the facts he's trying to relate. A common misconception is that Schoolcraft was exploring country that had never before been seen by white settlers. Not true! There were several hunters' families in small, isolated settlements in the area long before Schoolcraft arrived, and he stayed overnight with some of them. He saw himself as a bit of a lad, which is evidenced by his writings regarding the "greasy" women in the settlements. He once made some of his imported tea for a hunter's wife, who was used to drinking only sassafras tea. She told him his tea was the most bitter thing she'd ever tasted; a mark of how uncivilized she was, in Schoolcraft's opinion. He ends his journal abruptly, with no philosophical revelations about how 90

days of stomping through the brush and ice and greasy women has changed his life, etc., which is a bit of a let down, but all in all it's a fun read. In the back of the book Rafferty has inserted a table that relates the landmarks Schoolcraft described to the way the landscape looks/is used today. There are also several excellent maps marked with the dates and locations of Schoolcraft's movements. Rafferty's research, comments, and detailed maps, coupled with Schoolcraft's descriptive tales, earn this book a well-deserved Five Stars.

Dr. Raferty has done a wonderful job bringing together Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's journals of his adventure into the eastern and central Ozarks Region before major settlement. Schoolcraft's journey begins at Potosi, Missouri on November 5, 1818 and proceeds southwest to the Arkansas border along the North Fork River. From there he travels northwest towards modern day Springfield and then back southeast into Arkansas along the White River to Batesville. From the Batesville area he proceeds northeast back towards Potosi arriving there on February 4, 1819. Schoolcraft's descriptions of the unsettled land and its native plants and animals are wonderful. Prof. Raferty has added an appendix which provides a day by day account of Schoolcraft's journey and the modern reference points with amazing accuracy. This is a great book for anyone with an interest in the history and geography of the Ozarks Region. Very well done!!

While not as famous as Lewis and Clark, Henry Schoolcraft conducted the first of his many expeditions with similar care and attention to detail. One needs to excuse some of the poetic descriptions. The book gives an excellent insight into the very early development of the region shortly after the Voyage of Discovery. The author has considerable personal research with Schoolcraft's travels as a college professor leading field trips on portions of the expedition. The most helpful is the author's appendix which keys the days of travel to current day locations. For anyone studying the Missouri and Arkansas Ozarks, this is a must-have. It provides the only contemporary vision of this part of the United States prior to the rapid development in the years prior to the Civil War.

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