

Dear Old Kit: The Historical Christopher Carson

Harvey Lewis Carter



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The Figure of Kit Carson strides through the literature of the American West in heroic size. Trader, trapper, scout, brigadier general of New Mexico Volunteers, and many other things besides, he has appealed to the public imagination as no other frontiersman has. Many biographies and who versions of his "autobiography" have been published. Yet much of the legend still remains to be separated from the facts, declares the author of this new biography.

"I am an admirer of Carson," says Mr. Carter, "and have no wish deliberately to debunk him, but I am interested in correcting the statements of uncritical hero worship many by many writers."

Kit is allowed to speak for himself, as far as possible, through an exact transcription of his dictated reminiscences made from the manuscript in the Newberry Library, Chicago. Persons and places are clearly identified, and Kit's slips of memory are corrected in the definitive annotation of his account. One hundred years of speculation about the identity of the man who transcribed Carson's story is ended. Mr. Carter has established positive identification, based on carefully assembled facts. A new assessment of Kit's character and reputation is included, as well as an annotated account of the last years of his life.

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