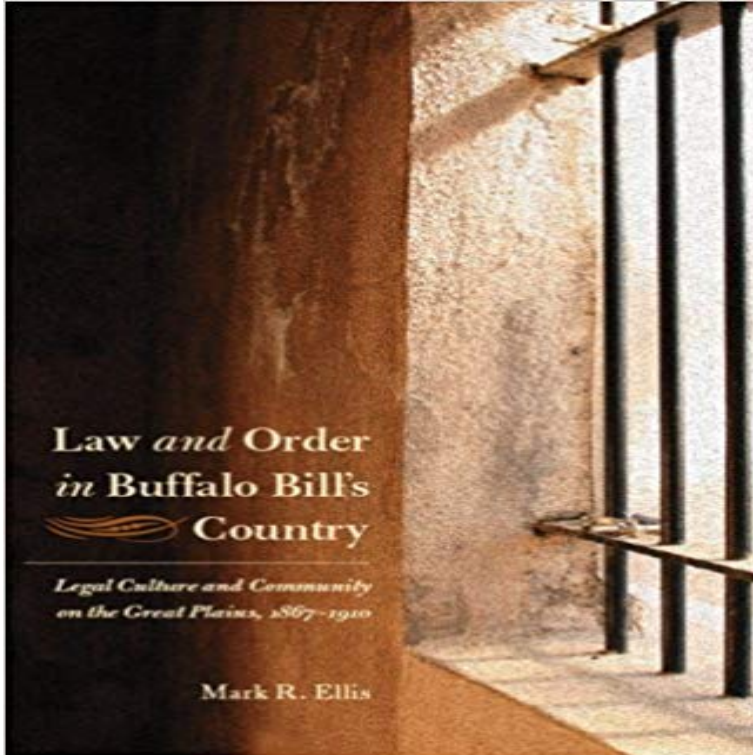


Law and Order in Buffalo Bills Country: Legal Culture and Community on the Great Plains, 1867-1910 (Law in the American West)



Celebrated accounts of lawless towns that relied on the extra-legal justice of armed citizens and hired gunmen are part of the enduring cultural legacy of the American West. This image of the frontier has been fueled for more than a century by historians both amateur and academic and by various popular images. In the twenty-first century, Great Plains communities continue to perpetuate this image with tourist attractions and events that pay homage to their lawless past. But these romanticized depictions of the violent frontier do not accurately portray the legal culture of most early Great Plains communities. Law and Order in Buffalo Bills Country is a case study of law and legal culture in Lincoln County, Nebraska, during the nineteenth century. Mark R. Ellis argues that nascent nineteenth-century Great Plains communities shared an understanding of the law that allowed for the immediate implementation of legal institutions such as courts, jails, and law enforcement. A common legal culture, imported from New England and the Midwest, influenced frontier communities to uphold traditions of law and order even in the wild and woolly frontier community of North Platte, Nebraska. This study is one of the first to examine legal institutions on the Great Plains. By setting aside the issue of a violent frontier West and focusing instead on community building and legal institutions, this study presents a very different image of the frontier-era Great Plains.

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