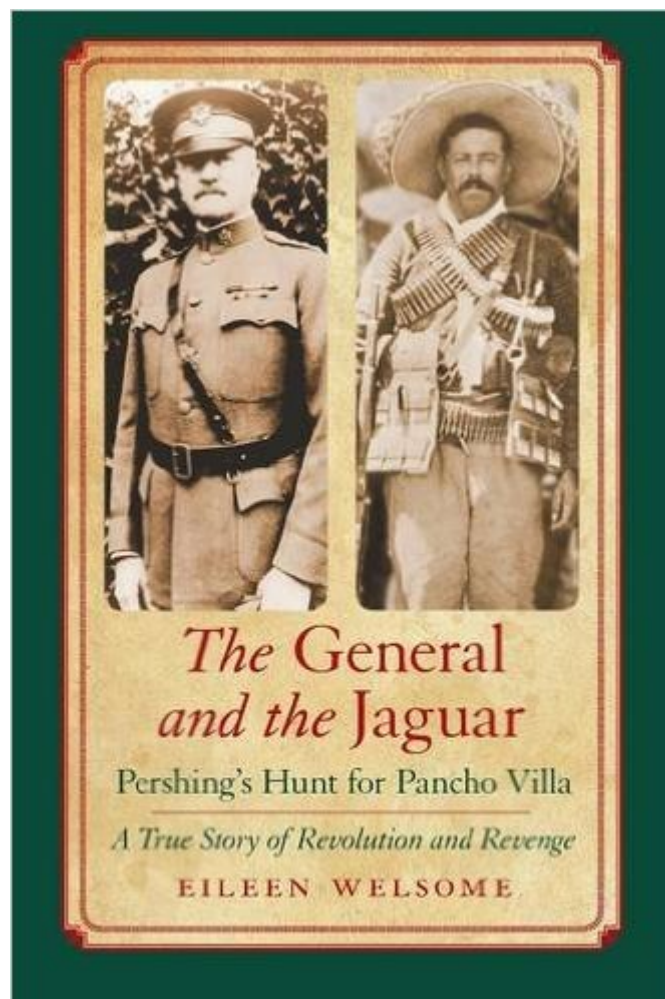


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The General And The Jaguar: Pershing's Hunt For Pancho Villa: A True Story Of Revolution And Revenge



Synopsis

On the cold, dark night of March 9, 1916, Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa "el jaguar" and his band of marauders crossed the border and raided the tiny town of Columbus, New Mexico. It was a vicious surprise attack, ending with corpses piled in the streets and psychological wounds that would last a lifetime. Suspects were rounded up, trials were held, and a virulent backlash against persons of Mexican origin erupted. General John "Black Jack" Pershing was told to assemble a small army, head into Mexico, and get Villa, dead or alive. The last hurrah for the U.S. cavalry, the "Punitive Expedition" marked America's first use of armored tanks, airplanes, and trucks against an enemy. One of the deputies Pershing would choose was a recent West Point graduate named George Patton. The expedition brought the United States and Mexico to the brink of war, but it also restored greatness to both prey and predator. More than a classic account of the war for control of the West, *The General and the Jaguar* is a brilliant chronicle of obsession and revenge and a dual portrait of John Pershing and Pancho Villa, two of the greatest military minds of all time.

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Customer Reviews

Those with an interest in borderlands history will enjoy this account of the confrontation between Pancho Villa, the 'Jaguar' of the title, and John Pershing, 'the General'. The connection of the two stems of course from Pancho Villa's 1916 raid on Columbus, New Mexico, and the ensuing "punitive expedition" lead by "Black Jack" Pershing, (his nickname derived from his early command of "buffalo soldiers"). Among the byproducts of this study is an examination of the impact of a military force's presence on a porous border, a topic relevant today. Those seeking a deeper understanding

of the reaction of Iraqis to the presence of foreign troops on their soil may find an instructive analogy in the reactions of Mexicans to the American punitive expedition. Students of history interested in attacks on American soil in the last one hundred years (Pearl Harbor and 9/11), have this incident for further context. Author Eileen Welsome's tale consists of several related stories, with two of them at the heart of the book. The first is Pancho Villa force's infamous assault on American territory, the raid on the sleepy border town of Columbus. To tell this story more fully, Welsome examines why Villa turned against his ally in the convulsions of the Mexican Revolution (1910-20), the Americans. The background includes numerous pithy character sketches of Mexican revolutionary figures, from Huerta to Madero to Obregon and Zapata, and others. Welsome, who won the 1994 Pulitzer Prize for reporting for the Albuquerque Tribune writes seamlessly and with verve. She deftly sorts out the conflicting and bewildering threads of the Mexican Revolution for the non-expert.

I was very impressed with this book, but the thing that most impressed me about **THE GENERAL AND THE JAGUAR: PERSHING'S HUNT FOR PONCHO VILLA: THE TRUE STORY OF REVOLUTION AND REVENGE**, was author Eileen Welsome's curtailment of pre-programming conclusions for the reader. Welsome simply portrays the very well researched facts, and presents them for your own discernment, avoiding casting her own thoughts to persuade readers to her viewpoints. In other words, she is portraying history as a true historian should, which is a rare treat. A date largely forgotten in American history books is March 9, 1916. This was the first time in the 20th century that America was attacked by a foreign enemy on its own soil. Poncho Villa and his army attacked Columbus, NM. The ensuing 'war', waged between Villa and American General John J. Pershing would last until the early days of 1917. The event was a carry over from the four year Mexican Revolution that finally spilled over across the U.S. southern border. America had supported Mexican President Carranza. Using the old "the friend of my enemy is my enemy" theory, Villa felt retaliation against the U.S. was justified. Welsome's book, however, goes far beyond the details of the hunt for Poncho Villa. Unknown characters are extremely well developed here. I did find it rather puzzling that Welsome would go to such depths, but would avoid engaging in many other more critical aspects of the whole affair. For example, it is completely omitted that American ineptness at capturing Villa would lead to a worldwide diminished view of American power, which would later encourage German U-boat attacks on American merchant ships.

In these days of American soldiers fighting in foreign lands, the story of how the United States of America became embroiled in the Mexican Revolution almost one hundred years ago is

timely. Fresh from victory in the Spanish American War, full of pride and new quasi-colonial possessions, America was now enjoying one of our isolationist periods when we would prefer to sit back and let the world solve its own problems. The world was gearing up for war in the first decade of the 1900s. The British had finally concluded their operations in South Africa; the Japanese had handed the Russians the most decisive naval defeat since Trafalgar; and our neighbor to the south was in open revolt against its latest cobbled-together government. With foreign companies and foreign entrepreneurs owning more of Mexico than the Mexicans, the stage was set for one of those personalities of the people to take advantage of the situation and use it to his benefit. Enter Francisco "Pancho" Villa. Villa could be described as the Osama Bin Laden of his day. He raided, murdered and brutalized northern Mexico, and on a fateful day in March of 1916, crossed the border and attacked Columbus, New Mexico. His raid murdered innocent men and women and sent the border states into panic. President Woodrow Wilson sent General John J. Pershing on a punitive expedition that quickly became so hamstrung with rules of engagement that it resembled our expedition fifty years later in Southeast Asia. *The General & The Jaguar* is an extensively researched and well-developed biography of not only Pershing and Villa but the supporting cast of characters on both sides that played at a game of chess in the Mexican state of Chihuahua for ten months.

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