# big chief tablet history

big chief tablet history traces the origins and evolution of one of the most iconic writing tablets used primarily by children and students in the United States. This article explores the development of the Big Chief tablet, its cultural significance, manufacturing background, and its role in education. Understanding the Big Chief tablet history provides insight into educational tools from the early 20th century and how such products influenced handwriting practices and classroom experiences. The tablet's distinctive design, durability, and affordability made it a staple for generations of learners. Additionally, this examination sheds light on the broader context of paper products and stationery in American school history. To guide readers through this comprehensive overview, a structured table of contents follows, outlining the key aspects of the Big Chief tablet history covered in this article.

- Origins and Development of the Big Chief Tablet
- Design and Features
- Manufacturing and Distribution
- Cultural and Educational Impact
- Evolution and Modern Usage

# Origins and Development of the Big Chief Tablet

The Big Chief tablet originated in the early 20th century as a response to the growing need for affordable and practical writing materials for schoolchildren. During this period, the American education system was expanding rapidly, and the demand for standardized supplies increased. The tablet was created by the Western Tablet and Stationery Company, which sought to produce a product that combined quality, accessibility, and ease of use. The name "Big Chief" was chosen to evoke a sense of strength and reliability, attributes desirable in school supplies.

# Early Educational Needs and Market Conditions

At the time of the Big Chief tablet's introduction, many schools lacked consistent access to suitable writing materials. Prior to the widespread use of tablets, students often wrote on slates or loose sheets of paper that were prone to damage and loss. The development of a bound tablet with ruled lines specifically designed for learning handwriting represented a significant

advancement. The tablet's introduction coincided with educational reforms emphasizing penmanship and literacy, making it a timely innovation.

#### Western Tablet and Stationery Company's Role

The Western Tablet and Stationery Company, based in St. Joseph, Missouri, played a pivotal role in the Big Chief tablet history. Founded in the late 19th century, the company specialized in paper products and quickly became a leader in the production of writing tablets. Its focus on mass production techniques allowed the Big Chief tablet to be sold at a low price point, facilitating widespread adoption across schools in the United States. The company's branding and marketing strategies positioned the Big Chief tablet as a trusted educational tool.

# **Design and Features**

The Big Chief tablet is distinguished by its unique design and user-friendly features, which contributed significantly to its popularity. Its large size, ruled pages, and durable construction made it ideal for young learners developing handwriting skills. The design was carefully crafted to meet the ergonomic and educational needs of children, making the tablet both functional and appealing.

# Page Layout and Ruling

The tablet's pages typically featured widely spaced lines with a red margin line, specifically tailored for beginner writers. The ruling was designed to help children practice proper letter formation and spacing. This layout provided clear guidance, which was essential for early education in penmanship. The size of the tablet allowed ample space for larger handwriting, which was easier for children to manage.

#### Material Quality and Durability

Constructed with heavy paper and a sturdy cardboard cover, the Big Chief tablet was built to withstand frequent handling by young students. The materials used ensured that the tablet could endure the rigors of daily classroom use without significant wear and tear. This durability was a key selling point and contributed to the product's longevity in the market.

#### Distinctive Branding and Cover Art

The Big Chief tablet was easily recognizable due to its vibrant red cover featuring an illustration of a Native American chief in full headdress. This

branding element was both eye-catching and memorable, reinforcing the tablet's identity. While modern perspectives have raised awareness about cultural sensitivity, this imagery was historically part of the product's marketing strategy to convey strength and reliability.

# Manufacturing and Distribution

The manufacturing process and distribution networks were critical components of the Big Chief tablet history. The Western Tablet and Stationery Company leveraged industrial advancements and logistical systems to produce and deliver the tablets efficiently across the nation. This section explores the manufacturing techniques and distribution strategies that made the Big Chief tablet widely available.

#### Mass Production Techniques

The introduction of mechanized paper cutting, binding, and printing technologies allowed the Western Tablet and Stationery Company to produce Big Chief tablets at scale. These industrial methods reduced costs and increased output, enabling the tablets to be priced affordably for schools and families. The standardization of size and ruling further streamlined production.

#### Distribution Channels and Market Reach

Distribution relied heavily on school supply vendors, wholesalers, and retail outlets. The company established partnerships with educational institutions and leveraged catalog sales to reach a broad customer base. The tablet's low price and utility made it a staple purchase for schools across urban and rural areas alike. Additionally, promotional efforts included advertisements in educational magazines and participation in trade shows.

#### **Economic Factors Influencing Production**

During its peak production years, economic conditions such as the Great Depression influenced manufacturing decisions. The affordability of the Big Chief tablet made it particularly attractive during times of financial hardship, sustaining demand. The company adapted to fluctuations in raw material costs and labor availability to maintain production levels.

# **Cultural and Educational Impact**

The Big Chief tablet played a significant role in shaping educational practices and cultural perceptions of learning tools in the United States.

Its widespread use influenced handwriting instruction and became a nostalgic symbol for many generations. This section examines the tablet's impact beyond its physical attributes.

#### Role in Handwriting Education

Handwriting instruction was a fundamental part of the curriculum in American schools, and the Big Chief tablet was a central tool in this process. Its design supported the teaching of cursive and print writing by providing clear guidelines. The tablet facilitated consistent practice, which was essential for skill development, and many educators endorsed its use for this reason.

#### Nostalgia and Popular Culture

Over time, the Big Chief tablet has become a cultural icon, often evoking memories of childhood and schooling in mid-20th century America. It has been referenced in literature, art, and media as a symbol of traditional education. Collectors and enthusiasts continue to value vintage Big Chief tablets for their historical significance and distinctive design.

#### Cultural Sensitivity and Modern Perspectives

In recent decades, awareness of cultural appropriation has led to critical discussions about the tablet's branding, particularly its use of Native American imagery. Educational institutions and manufacturers have reconsidered such representations to promote respect and inclusivity. This reflects broader societal changes in attitudes toward cultural symbols.

# **Evolution and Modern Usage**

While the prominence of the Big Chief tablet has diminished with the advent of digital technology and new educational materials, it remains a noteworthy example of traditional school supplies. Its evolution demonstrates changing trends in education and stationery products.

#### **Changes in Educational Tools**

Modern classrooms increasingly rely on digital devices, interactive whiteboards, and other technology-driven tools for handwriting and literacy instruction. Despite this, physical tablets like the Big Chief tablet provided a foundation for learning that influenced subsequent educational resources. The tactile experience of writing on paper is still recognized as beneficial for cognitive development.

#### **Current Availability and Collectibility**

Today, the original Big Chief tablets are primarily found in vintage collections or specialty stationery stores. Some manufacturers have produced nostalgic reissues or similar products inspired by the classic design. Collectors seek out tablets with intact covers and pages for their historical value. The tablet's legacy continues through these efforts to preserve educational heritage.

#### Influence on Stationery Design

The Big Chief tablet history has informed the design principles of contemporary notebooks and writing pads, emphasizing usability and student-friendly features. Its success demonstrated the importance of tailored educational products, influencing the stationery industry to consider ergonomics and purpose in their offerings.

# Key Features of the Big Chief Tablet

- Large, wide-ruled pages ideal for beginner handwriting practice
- Durable cardboard cover with distinctive red color and Native American chief illustration
- Affordable pricing due to mass production techniques
- Standardized size facilitating ease of use and storage in school settings
- Widespread distribution ensuring accessibility in urban and rural schools

# Frequently Asked Questions

#### What is a Big Chief Tablet?

A Big Chief Tablet is a type of lined paper notebook originally designed for children to practice handwriting. It features widely spaced lines and a sturdy construction.

# When was the Big Chief Tablet first introduced?

The Big Chief Tablet was first introduced in the early 20th century, around

the 1910s, becoming popular in schools across the United States.

# Who manufactured the Big Chief Tablet?

The Big Chief Tablet was manufactured by the Western Tablet and Stationery Company, which later became part of Mead Corporation.

# Why is it called the Big Chief Tablet?

The name 'Big Chief' was chosen as a marketing strategy to appeal to children by evoking the image of Native American chiefs, which was a popular cultural reference at the time.

# How did the Big Chief Tablet influence education?

The Big Chief Tablet helped standardize early handwriting education by providing a consistent and easy-to-use format for young students learning penmanship.

#### Is the Big Chief Tablet still produced today?

Yes, the Big Chief Tablet is still produced today, though it has become more of a nostalgic or specialty item rather than a mainstream educational tool.

# What makes the Big Chief Tablet distinctive compared to other notebooks?

The Big Chief Tablet is distinctive for its large, widely spaced ruled lines and its durable construction, designed specifically to assist children in learning to write neatly.

# **Additional Resources**

- 1. The Big Chief Tablet: An American Icon
  This book explores the history and cultural significance of the Big Chief
  Tablet, tracing its origins from the early 20th century. It delves into the
  tablet's role in American education and childhood, highlighting its impact on
  handwriting practice and school supplies. Richly illustrated, the book also
  examines how the Big Chief Tablet became a nostalgic symbol in American pop
  culture.
- 2. Writing on Tablets: The Story of the Big Chief Brand
  Focusing on the Big Chief brand, this book provides an in-depth look at the
  company behind the iconic tablet. It covers the manufacturing process,
  marketing strategies, and the evolution of the product line over the decades.
  The narrative is supported by archival materials, advertisements, and
  interviews with former employees.

- 3. From Pencils to Tablets: The Evolution of School Supplies in America This comprehensive history charts the development of educational tools, with a significant focus on the Big Chief Tablet. It discusses how these supplies influenced teaching methods and student learning experiences. Readers gain insight into the broader context of school supply innovation and consumer trends in the 20th century.
- 4. Childhood Memories on Big Chief Paper
  A collection of personal stories and essays, this book captures the nostalgia associated with the Big Chief Tablet. Contributors share their experiences using the tablet in classrooms across the United States. The book also examines the emotional and cultural connections that have kept the tablet relevant in collective memory.
- 5. The Art and Design of the Big Chief Tablet
  This volume analyzes the distinctive visual elements of the Big Chief Tablet,
  including its iconic cover art and page layout. It explores the design
  choices that made the tablet appealing to children and educators alike. The
  book includes a gallery of vintage covers and promotional materials.
- 6. Big Chief Tablet and Native American Imagery: A Historical Perspective This critical study investigates the use of Native American imagery in the branding of the Big Chief Tablet. It discusses the cultural implications and controversies surrounding such representations. The author provides context about the era's marketing practices and evolving perspectives on cultural sensitivity.
- 7. Handwriting and Education: The Role of Big Chief Tablets
  Focusing on educational pedagogy, this book examines how Big Chief Tablets
  were used to teach handwriting skills. It reviews curriculum standards,
  teaching techniques, and the tablet's effectiveness in improving penmanship.
  The book also compares the tablet to other educational tools used during the
  same period.
- 8. Manufacturing Memories: The Big Chief Tablet Factory Story
  This narrative recounts the history of the factory where Big Chief Tablets
  were produced, highlighting the workers' experiences and industrial
  processes. Through interviews and archival research, the book paints a vivid
  picture of mid-century American manufacturing. It also discusses the economic
  and social impact of the factory on its local community.
- 9. Big Chief Tablet Collectibles: A Guide for Enthusiasts
  Designed for collectors, this guide details the various editions and
  variations of the Big Chief Tablet produced over the years. It includes
  information on identifying rare items, valuation tips, and preservation
  methods. The book also features stories from collectors and insights into the
  tablet's place in vintage school supply markets.

# **Big Chief Tablet History**

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big chief tablet history: Famous Gamblers, Poker History, and Texas Stories Johnny Hughes, 2012-08 You have a great writing style, very credible, and entertaining. Those were dangerous times. Almost all of the guys are gone. A great book!... -Doyle Brunson, Poker Hall of Fame, author. He's as good a writer as he is a player. When it comes to poker tales...Johnny Hughes is your man.... -Anthony Holden, London, President of the International Federation of Poker, author ... a captivating raconteur and avid historian...brings them to life with a unique flair and panache...(He) paints word pictures with witty, lush brush strokes reminiscent of Tom Wolfe... -Paul Dr. Pauly McGuire, author ...the William Manchester of poker historians...a Hughes narrative is like lighting a lantern into the darkest recess of poker's subculture...provides the very best portrait of these unique real-life characters of anyone on record... -Nolan Dalla, Media Director. World Series of Poker, author. ...the true story...of the beginnings of the phenomenon that poker has become... -Crandell Addington, Poker Hall of Fame. Reading...is only paralleled by listening to him tell those stories in real time...like putting yourself in the same room as it all unfolded...when the mob ruled Las Vegas...the real stories... -Ryan Sayer, OnTilt Radio, C.O.O., and Host. www.JohnnyHughes.com

big chief tablet history: History of Multicultural Education Volume 5 Carl A. Grant, Thandeka K. Chapman, 2013-10-23 This benchmark 6-volume set documents, analyzes, and critiques a comprehensive body of research on the history of multicultural education in the U.S. The volumes reflect the tenets of multicultural education, its history, its present, and individuals whose work has contributed significantly to equity and social justice for all citizens. By collecting and providing a framework for key publications spanning the last 30-40 years, this set provides a means of understanding and visualizing the development, implementation, and interpretation of multicultural education in American society. The volumes do not promote any one scholar's or group's vision of multicultural education, but include conflicting ideals that inform multiple interpretations. Each volume contains archival documents organized around a specific theme: Conceptual Frameworks and Curricular Content; Foundations and Stratifications; Instruction and Assessment; Policy and Governance; Students and Student Achievement; Teachers and Teacher Education. The historical time line within each volume illustrates the progression of research and theory on its theme and encourages readers to reflect on the changes in language and thinking concerning educational scholarship in that area.

big chief tablet history: Hardship and Hope Carla Waal, Barbara Oliver Korner, 1997

Provides the journal entries, diaries, memoirs, and letters of over twenty women living in Missouri from the years 1820 to 1920. Also includes a brief history and background of each woman and her work.

**big chief tablet history:** Swing to Bop: An Oral History of the Transition in Jazz in the 1940s Ira Gitler Jazz historian, 1985-11-07 This book willserve as the basic work on the rise and development of bop in jazz. Engendered by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, bebop, now known as bop, quickly became the most powerful musical force in modern jazz. Today it is still the main musical language of jazz musicians. Over a ten-year period, Ira Gitler interviewed more than 50 of the seminal figures in jazz history to preserve for posterity their recollections of how jazz moved from the big band era in the late '30s and '40s into the modern jazz period. The musicians interviewed recreate not only their own experiences but also evoke the legendary figures of bop who where so influential in its development but were never recorded, people like Clyde Hart and Freddie Webster. Swing to Bop shows how the music first established itself in jam sessions in Harlem and then spread to New York's famed 52nd Street and beyond. Separate chapters describe how young musicians in major cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago and Detroit became swept up in the movement. Along with the music and the personalities who made it, the book vividly recreates the atmosphere of the country in the '30s and '40s: traveling on the ballroom theather curcuit; racial attitudes and interaction; extra-musical pastimes; the relationship to World War II; and the influence of drugs. Thus Swing to Bop reveals not only how the music evolved but the environment in which it flourished and what effect in turn the music had on that environment and the music to follow. About the Author Ira Gitler is the author of Jazz Masters of the '40s and The Encyclopedia of Jazz in the Seventies. He was previously Professor of Jazz History at City College of New York and Associate Editor of Downbeat.

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big chief tablet history: Big Chief Solano Helen M. Roberts, 1948

big chief tablet history: A Song to Die For Mike Blakely, 2014-11-18 A rousing tale mixing love, music, and mystery from Spur Award-winning author Mike Blakely. It's 1975 and guitarist and singer/songwriter Creed Mason hopes to ride the new wave of Texas-style, Austin-based country music all the way back to the big time. A one-hit wonder whose Nashville career was cut short by a trip to Vietnam, Creed is desperate to get back into the business. His break arrives when a country legend, Luster Burnett, comes out of a fifteen-year retirement for one last album and tour in order to pay off a huge debt to the I.R.S. As Luster's new guitarist and band manager, Creed jumps at the chance of a lifetime. Rosa Martini, a beautiful young mob princess from Las Vegas, is found dead just outside of Austin. Texas Ranger Captain Hooley Johnson looks into the case, only to find a second young woman murdered—a friend of Rosa's. To complicate things, Rosa's adoptive brother, mob hit man Franco Martini, is spotted nosing around Austin in the wake of the murders. Soon it appears to Johnson, and to Creed, that the mob-related murders and the band are somehow connected. When the band wins an unexpected booking at the biggest casino in Vegas, Creed begins to wonder what kind of contract his band is being set up for—a major-label recording deal, or a mob hit?

**big chief tablet history:** Twentieth-Century Roots of Rhetorical Studies Jim A. Kuypers, Andrew King, 2001-03-30 Kuypers, King, and their contributors explore the conception of rhetoric of

eleven key American rhetoricians through analyses of their life's work. Each chapter provides a sense of that scholar's conception of rhetoric, be it through criticism, theory, or teaching. The communication discipline often highlights the work of others outside the discipline; however, it rarely acclaims the work of its own critics, teachers, and theorists. In this collection, the essays explore the innate mode of perception that guided the rhetorical understanding of the early critics. In so doing, this work dispels the myth that the discipline of Speech Communication was spawned from a monolithic and rigid center that came to be called neo-Aristotelianism. Scholars and researchers involved with the history of rhetoric, rhetorical criticism and theory, and American public address uill find this title to be a necessary addition to their collection.

big chief tablet history: Voices from the Heartland Carolyn Anne Taylor, 2007 Honoring the contributions of women to the recent history of Oklahoma, a provocative compilation of essays records defining moments in women's lives, with contributions from Cherokee chief Wilma Mankiller, Oklahoma First Lady Kim Henry, novelist Billie Letts, prima ballerina Maria Tallchief, and others who share personal reflections on such issues as adultery, death, abuse, and disaster.

big chief tablet history: A Confederacy of Dunces John Kennedy Toole, 2004-09-01 Released by Louisiana State University Press in 1980, A Confederacy of Dunces is nothing short of a publishing phenomenon. Rejected by countless publishers and submitted by the author's mother years after his suicide, the book won the 1981 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Today there are almost two million copies in print worldwide in eighteen languages. Now, for the first time, John Kennedy Toole's comic masterpiece is available in a large print edition. Toole's lunatic and sage novel introduces one of the most memorable characters in American literature, Ignatius Reilly, whom Walker Percy dubs slob extraordinaire, a mad Oliver Hardy, a fat Don Quixote, a perverse Thomas Aguinas rolled into one. Set in New Orleans, A Confederacy of Dunces outswifts Swift, one of whose essays gives the book its title. As its characters burst into life, they leave the region and literature forever changed by their presence -- Ignatius and his mother; Miss Trixie, the octogenarian assistant accountant at Levi Pants; inept, wan Patrolman Mancuso; Darlene, the Bourbon Street stripper with a penchant for poultry; Jones the jivecat in spaceage dark glasses. Included here is the introduction that writer and New Orleans resident Andrei Codrescu composed for the book's twentieth anniversary. Set in oversized type for ease in reading, the large print edition will gratify both first-timers seeking to discover this modern-day classic and longtime afficionados wishing to reread a favorite novel.

big chief tablet history: The Antique Lover's Mysteries Deborah Morgan, 2022-10-27 Now available in one volume, the first three books of the Antique Lover's Mysteries! DEATH IS A CABARET Since Jeff Talbot left the FBI, he's been investigating yard sales as a professional antiques picker. From furniture to books, from old clothes to broken toys, nothing escapes his keen eye for appraisal. But there is one item that he always keeps his knowing eyes particularly peeled to find: a one-of-a-kind French cabaret set commissioned by Napoleon for his love, Josephine. It is an item any collector would kill for... So when it's about to be auctioned off — and rival collectors start turning up dead — there are plenty of suspects to choose from. Suddenly Jeff finds himself polishing up his old crime-solving skills as the search for a cabaret set becomes the search for a killer. But can he pick out the right clues before the killer adds him to the collection of dead bodies? THE WEEDLESS WIDOW Jeff Talbot is joining his fishing buddies for their annual trip. He is also trying to coordinate the listing and transportation of his latest haul of antiques. When he arrives at the Northwest Territory Bait and Tackle shop for supplies, he joins his fishing friend, the Judge. Together they find their friend and shop owner, Bill Rhodes murdered. Throughout the fishing trip weekend, Jeff finds himself assisting the local sheriff's department in the investigation. While helping the local law enforcement, Jeff forwards pertinent data to his home computer. When he returns home from his fishing trip, he finds Sheila, his agoraphobic wife, missing. Using former FBI resources, friends and Seattle's police, the search for Sheila Talbot begins. As Jeff searches, he finds her disappearance clearly linked to the murder. THE MARRIAGE CASKET Antiques picker and ex-FBI agent Jeff Talbot figured he was about to make a killing when Nathan Rose offered him all the antiques in his newly

deceased aunt's house dirt cheap. What Jeff hadn't bargained for, however, was the bloodstain beneath one of the old pack rat's priceless rugs, indicating that the death of Verena Rose was no accident. But unlike the police, Jeff doesn't think that nephew Nathan is the culprit. Convinced the answer lies somewhere in the old woman's cluttered house, Jeff starts rummaging and unearths an antique marriage casket crammed with old letters. Reading through these, he discovers the old woman had more than her share of secrets. But now Jeff must determine who hated or feared her enough to commit murder... before he winds up in a casket himself.

big chief tablet history: The Block Captain's Daughter Demetria Martínez, 2012-08-18 Guadalupe Anaya, a waitress, is pregnant. She is also the newly elected block captain of Sunflower Street, in charge of raising awareness of safety in her southeast Albuquerque neighborhood. Her campaign platform: God helps those who help themselves. While she waits for the baby, Lupe writes letters to her unborn child, whom she names Destiny. It is Lupe's dream that her daughter will be a writer, pushing a pen instead of a broom. In this highly imaginative work of fiction by the acclaimed author of Mother Tongue, Demetria Martínez weaves a portrait of six unforgettable characters, whose lives intertwine through their activism as they seek to create a better world and find meaning in their own lives. At the center of this circle of friends is Lupe, and her heartfelt letters to Destiny punctuate the narrative. Until she crossed the border alone and without papers, Lupe worked in a maquiladora in Mexico. Rescued by strangers, she has made a family for herself among the kindhearted friends, swept up in various causes, who will be her daughter's godparents. Deftly alternating between first-person and second-person narratives, conscious states and dream states, The Block Captain's Daughter is full of delightful surprises, even as it deals with universal themes of desire and risk, death and birth, and the powerful ties that bind us all together.

big chief tablet history: Nightingale Way Emily March, 2012-08-28 Eternity Springs is a magical place where hearts come to heal—with a little help. As Emily March's beloved series continues, a broken marriage finds new wings to fly. Dark, brooding Jack Davenport hides his secrets well, never telling his wife about the dangers of his job, never sharing his thoughts or worries . . . never sharing himself. After tragedy strikes, their marriage shatters. Now a threat to Catherine Blackburn's life brings her back into his—and gives them a second chance. A reporter whose most recent investigation has ignited a national controversy and put her in harm's way, Cat thinks she can handle herself. So when Jack grabs her off the street and sweeps her to his home above Eternity Springs, she's furious. In the warm sanctuary of the Eternity Springs community, Jack and Cat face the heartache that drove them apart. But can they find the courage to pick up the pieces of a shattered love? Includes a preview of Emily March's next Eternity Springs novel, Reflection Point Praise for the Eternity Springs series "For a wonderful read, don't miss a visit to Eternity Springs."—Lisa Kleypas "With passion, romance, and revealing moments that will touch your heart, [Emily March] takes readers on an unhurried journey where past mistakes are redeemed and a more beautiful future is forged—one miracle at a time."—USA Today

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rancher constantly adjusting to the inroads of modernity into his traditional way of life. Drawing on oral history, archival sources, and her personal association with Hulse and the Gila, she brings this unique westerner, and New Mexican, to life.

big chief tablet history: <u>Teaching Black</u> Ana-Maurine Lara, drea brown, 2021-12-14 Teaching Black: The Craft of Teaching on Black Life and Literature presents the experiences and voices of Black creative writers who are also teachers. The authors in this collection engage poetry, fiction, experimental literature, playwriting, and literary criticism. They provide historical and theoretical interventions and practical advice for teachers and students of literature and craft. Contributors work in high schools, colleges, and community settings and draw from these rich contexts in their essays. This book is an invaluable tool for teachers, practitioners, change agents, and presses. Teaching Black is for any and all who are interested in incorporating Black literature and conversations on Black literary craft into their own work.

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big chief tablet history: When We Were Wolves Jon Billman, 2009-07-01 If you could have been around a hundred and fifty years ago, and passed through the landscape as a beaver-trapping tough with Jim Bridger or Jedediah Smith, before coal barons, before soda ash and oil, before Mormons, before you could stand outside and watch satellites pass through the night sky or silhouettes kissing in warm apartment windows, when this history was wild and new, you could have just pointed and named something of permanence, a mountain, a river--at least a creek--after yourself. Or they would have named it for you, a permanent mark, just for being here. From a new talent that Annie Proulx has called an important emerging writer comes a surprising and expansive collection of stories, steeped in the lore of the frontier but unmistakably fresh and of our time. When We Were Wolves roams over a West we never knew existed--colonized by roques and tricksters, Custer impersonators, firefighters with a weakness for arson, and the other rootless folk who come to rest under the vast and forgiving desert sky. Jon Billman writes about accidental lives: people who are trapped in unsuitable marriages, impossible situations, but who handle them with the odd grace of those who are determined to live by their own strange code. He mingles the skewed humor of David Sedaris with the loping, rough-edged appeal of Tom McGuane. This is a beguiling new entry on the map of American fiction.

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