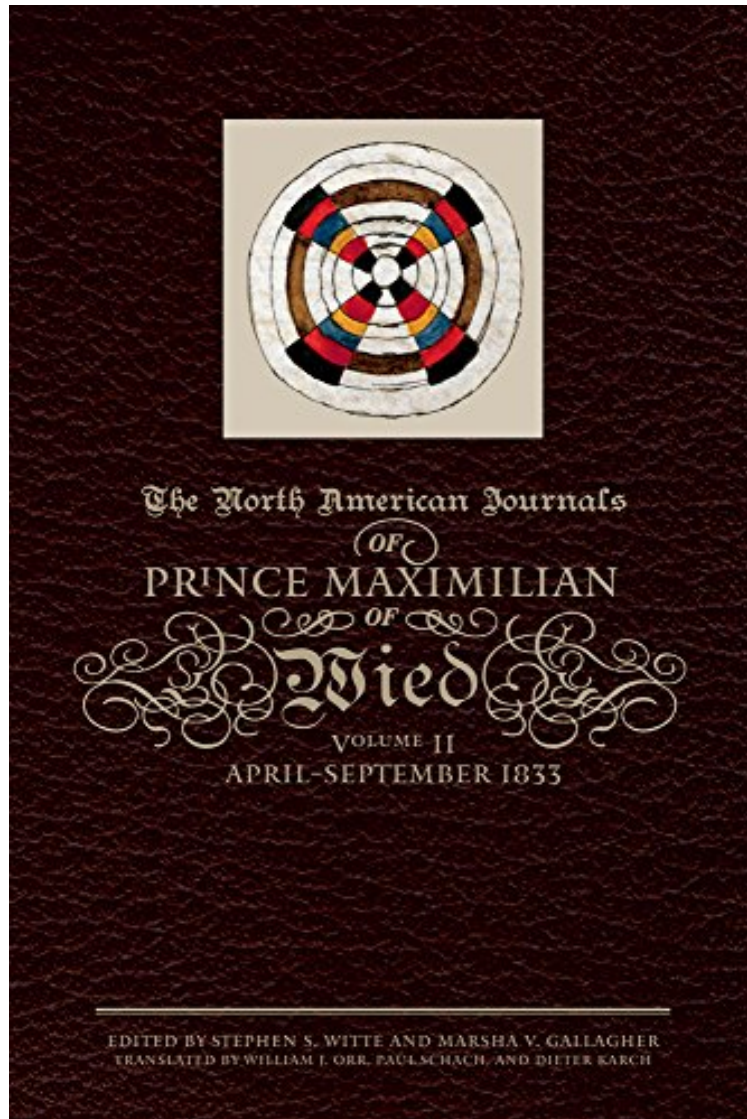


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Prince Alexander Philipp Maximilian of Wied
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Prince Alexander Philipp Maximilian of Wied : The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied: AprilSeptember 1833 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied: AprilSeptember 1833:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Natural History and Adventure with scholarly footnotesBy HatuxkaA German aristocrat, Maximilian von Wied, describes his journey with the Swiss artist Charles Bodmer up the

Missouri River in the Spring of 1833 and his return trip to St. Louis in early 1834, observing, recording and commenting on the natural world of the native people living along the Missouri River and their lifeways as they existed at the last instance before white settlement began in earnest. Vol. 2 is the spring journey upriver from St. Louis until the arrival back at Ft Union at the confluence of the Missouri and the Yellowstone on the return trip from near present Great Falls, Montana. This is a great read. The diversity and abundance of flora and fauna everywhere at that time is fascinating to read. The volume of detail is marvelous. The Indian tribes he saw and described in his notes are too numerous to list here. The well-managed (by the Indians) wildness of the entire region as to the availability of game is noted every day throughout the length of the river itineraries, at all seasons. The native employment of burning to renew the ecological productivity of the riparian zone is noted often by Maximilian during the spring trip upriver. The constancy of Indian utilization of resources associated with the river, aside from the frequent sighting of groups of Indians or villages along the banks, is evident from Maximilian's almost daily observation of previously used hunting lodges, shelters and signs of village sites throughout the length of the upstream and return trips. In contrast, the wanton slaughter of wildlife by the traveling party of U. S. Americans, French trappers or engagés and the aristocrat and his staff is documented by Maximilian throughout the journey. Scores of times the party would disembark from their boat during delays caused by snags, low water or sand bars and fan out to shoot everything in sight. Maximilian comments on the wastefulness of such forays only once, in passing. Thus, conservation in any degree was not an alien concept, maybe only a concern among the most highly educated or aristocratic of the whites. In multitudes of instances, buffalo especially, are killed and not used or shot and left to die. Individual animals are killed for only the liver or tongue. Maximilian's acute descriptions of the individual Indians he encounters are a highlight of the diary/travelogue. The mannerisms, appearance of notable and common persons of each Indian tribe encountered are meticulously described. The uniqueness of the personal style or adornments is very often rendered with appreciation and to the finest detail. Maximilian described a prevalence of robust health, high level of personal hygiene and physical attractiveness among the Indians he met. He is rarely condescending when describing what he saw as general tendencies of Indians such as their seeking after whisky and that they were in the main happy when drunk, once concluding that they are child-like in their fascination with bright colors. There are observations he makes about offers of the providing sexual favors of others for liquor, made without any expression of shock or revulsion. What this may say about any similar conditions in his own country is left to the reader. Concerning flora and fauna diversity, predominant species and overall composition of riparian plant communities is rendered in interesting detail at each stage of the voyage. It was interesting to me for many reasons that the predominant understory species in upper Missouri riparian forests was rose, as it is no longer. Also, descriptions of wild vegetables that the Indians used, which in many cases he was able to taste was also fascinating. Maximilian catalogued every species of bird seen and noted geological features hour upon hour of each day. How useful any of this is or was ever seen to be to science is left unaddressed by the great volume of footnotes. This is one possible shortcoming, given voluminous footnoting that corrects species names and how plausible or accurate Maximilian's sightings of certain species or geological features is likely to be based on current knowledge. Another shortcoming is the paucity of footnoting of Maximilian's observations on native ethnography, with the reader being referred to volumes of the Smithsonian handbooks of American Indians. During the long hours of travel on the voyage with intermediate stops and delays such as for wood-cutting or searching for a navigable river channel Maximilian compiled anecdotes and personal histories concerning many individuals, both white and Indian. This reaches the level of the personal and family situation of individuals such as an Indian he met and perhaps asked about, who had embarked to travel upriver and whose family was crying at his departure. The highest level of adventure of the entire trip is reached during the interval between Ft Union and Ft. McKenzie, reaching a peak during the several-week stay there, the farthest point of the expedition. Maximilian described the deadly skirmishes and raids that occur just outside the fort among the various tribes who came to trade at Ft. McKenzie that resulted in several days of high alert by the Fur Company proprietors of the fort. He understates the likely threat they faced. His descriptions of the various Indian chiefs he met, their bearing, individual appearance and personalities receives the most depth of description there but is a steady feature throughout the trip. The return trip downriver to Ft Union again in the late summer is described almost lyrically by Maximilian in passages that were reassembled by the editors from an extended footnote to the diary entries. Reference to works by others on the magnificent artwork by Bodmer as a companion to this volume would enrich the enjoyment of this diary.

Few historical chronicles are as informative and eloquent as the journal written by Prince Maximilian of Wied as a record of his journey into the North American interior in 1833, following the route Lewis and Clark had taken almost thirty years earlier. Maximilian's memorable descriptions of topography, Native peoples, and natural history were further brought to life through the now-familiar watercolors and sketches of Karl Bodmer, the young Swiss artist who accompanied him. The first of the three volumes of the *North American Journals* recounts the prince's journey from Europe to St. Louis then the edge of the frontier. Volume II vividly narrates his experiences on the upper Missouri and offers an unparalleled view of the region and the peoples native to it. In these pages, we accompany Maximilian as he travels far up the Missouri River to Fort McKenzie, a trading post some 2,500 river miles from St. Louis near what is

now Fort Benton, Montana. The handsome, oversize volume not only reproduces this historic document but also features every one of Maximilian's illustrations more than 200 in all, including nearly 50 in color from the original journal now housed at Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska. Maximilian recorded detailed observations of flora, fauna, geology, and climate. From his unique, scientifically trained perspective, he also undertook a serious field study of the cultures and languages of the central and northern Great Plains Indians he encountered. His journal contains important, firsthand descriptions of tribal social customs, religious rituals, material culture, and art, as well as an account of Native interactions with Euro-Americans engaged in the then-burgeoning fur trade. This book is published with the assistance of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

About the Author Stephen S. Witte is Editor for the Maximilian Journals Project of the Margre H. Durham Center for Western Studies, Joslyn Art Museum.