Clarion Review

Mystery

McCreedie
Stuart Michaels
AuthorHouse
978-1-4520-6810-7
Two Stars (out of Five)

Picture living in a world where progress is forbidden and technological stasis is the goal. The place and time: the American Wild West in 1870, Branigan County. This is the setting for much of *McCreedie*.

The novel follows the lives of several characters, but all have some tie to the mysterious and elusive Marshal Sam McCreedie. Branigan County is having issues with outlaws and corruption; McCreedie is believed to be the only hope for the county's survival.

Though Stuart Michaels' plot is interesting, its execution leaves much to be desired. Verb tense sometimes changes within paragraphs, and there are occasional typos and misspellings. In addition, Michaels too often chooses to tell rather than show. These issues pull the reader out of the action and disrupt the enjoyment of an otherwise interesting narrative.

One example of where action would serve better than expostion is found very early in the story when readers are introduced to the good and bad guys of the county: "Marshal Wesley 'is' the law in Branigan County, and all the (sic) stands between anarchy and peace. Stone believes that with Wesley out of the way the justification to defend himself by any means open to him is his God given right." The author's reliance on exposition deprives readers of the chance to develop an interest in and attachment to the cast. The result is flat characters who don't evoke much sympathy or emotion.

That said, the premise of the book is an interesting thought experiment. The idea of people living in a closed society and raising children with little knowledge of the outside world presents interesting scenarios and many opportunities for entertaining moments and dialogue.

In one scene, Thomas, a young man born and raised in Branigan County, speculates about modern transportation he has seen from inside the county: "He'd like to fly; look down from on high at God's creation … And he sure as hell would like to drive a pick up truck … it

can’t be harder than driving a wagon.”

Michaels sets up an intricate plot filled with mystery and conflict, and ultimately tells a story about human nature and character. Unfortunately, he fails to deliver the story in a compelling fashion as too many issues detract from the drama and intrigue. More attention to detail and less exposition would strengthen the narrative.

McCreedie does contain adult situations, language, and violence. Readers who enjoy historical fiction and mysteries may enjoy this novel.

Laura Munion