

practical advice as editors adapted stories to reflect local interest. Newspapers also included private letters. The book's publisher enhanced the text with three excellent maps and more than a dozen contemporary illustrations. This exceptional contribution to western and American history will expand the knowledge of specialists and fascinate general readers.

American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest, by Gregory H. Nobles. New York: Hill and Wang, 1997. ix, 286 pp. Maps, bibliographical essay, index. \$25.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PAULA M. NELSON, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PLATTEVILLE

Gregory Nobles is a brave and ambitious man. When his work on the "near frontier" of western Massachusetts acquainted him with the explosion of research generated by the rise of the "new western history" in the 1980s, he decided a fresh synthesis of the field was in order. His book, *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest*, is the result. In it he retells the story of westward expansion, beginning with early conflicts between native peoples and English colonists in the seventeenth century. He concludes his tale of cultural interactions and conquest in 1890 with the death of Sitting Bull and the tragedy at Wounded Knee. The theme throughout the book is the complexity of human relations throughout his four-centuries-long tale. "The point," according to Nobles, "is not to reduce the history of the frontier to a morality play about cultural monoliths, the 'civilized' Europeans and the 'savage' Indians (or, as some might just as easily argue, vice versa). Neither side was that simple" (12).

American Frontiers serves as an excellent introduction to a variety of issues related to the Euro-American conquest of North America. Nobles begins with the historiography of his subject, describing the impact of Frederick Jackson Turner in some detail. Specialists will find this material familiar, but students and general readers will welcome his straightforward explanation of the ongoing arguments in the field. Turner is a presence throughout the book; Nobles measures new research findings against Turner's work, generally to Turner's detriment, and occasionally applies particularly felicitous phrases from Turner's famous essay to appropriate events in the text. The use of Turner as a framework of sorts will aggravate scholars who wish the man would stay in his grave, but Nobles rightly resurrects Turner's work for a sweeping book of this sort. Nobles ultimately rejects

the Turnerian vision of our frontier past, but his respect for Turner as "an insightful, innovative historian" (13) is refreshing.

Obviously, to condense four hundred years of history into a book of fewer than three hundred pages, the author had to make hard choices about subject matter. Nobles devises a broad conceptual scheme for each chapter, which allows him to range quite widely. In his chapter titled "Forging a Frontier Policy in the New Nation," for example, he describes the negative image most elites held of frontier residents at the time of the Revolution and for several decades thereafter, the type of society frontier people developed, the importance of Thomas Jefferson to the frontier, the role of Tecumseh in Indian resistance, and Andrew Jackson as frontier soldier and president responsible for Indian removal. The chapter titled "Westward Expansion: Political Controversy and Popular Culture" manages to range clearly and intelligently over the fight at the Alamo, westward expansion and the extension of slavery, the artists of the frontier, James Fenimore Cooper, Davy Crockett, the California gold rush, the Mexican War, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The unifying theme in these chapters and throughout the book is the role of government and policymakers in the expansion of the United States and the legitimate resistance of Indian peoples to that expansion.

Scholars may quibble about Nobles's choice of topics or emphases, but his presentation and argumentation are exceptionally well done. Readers interested in American Indian history will be especially interested in his concise and sympathetic treatment of native cultures and experiences. While *American Frontiers* does not blaze new trails in frontier historiography, it does provide a valuable overview of the entire frontier experience in all of its complexity. This book will be especially useful for general readers who wish to acquaint themselves with current themes in the field, and for undergraduate classroom use in the American survey or courses on the frontier or the West.

Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1990, by Kerwin Lee Klein. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. xi, 377 pp. Notes, bibliographical note, index. \$45.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY KENT BLASER, WAYNE STATE COLLEGE

Kerwin Klein's *Frontiers of Historical Imagination* is a big, sprawling, intelligent, intimidating, and impressive work. For a first book, it is especially remarkable. (*Frontiers* began as a dissertation, but shows few

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