

*The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861*, by Nicole Etcheson. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996. xvi, 205 pp. Notes, tables, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

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Two different streams of migrants, one from the upland South—Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee—the other from the Middle Atlantic area, originally settled the Old Northwest states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Each stream brought its own distinctive values, commitments, and stereotypes about the other to its new home. The persistent influence of one's origins is not unusual. It is a staple of contemporary historiography that we continue to be strongly affected by our origins even as we move on from them, both geographically and otherwise. But, Etcheson suggests, historians of the early Middle West have overemphasized the persistence of these differences and the power of the tensions that grew out of them. Emphasizing the influence of origins underestimates the growth of a new regional identity out of these disparate elements, a regional identity that, while retaining important echoes of different sectional perspectives and values, melded into something new and different in the Ohio Valley.

Etcheson focuses on the upland southerners and their political culture, tracing out how they defined themselves and looked at their neighbors, the world they created in their new homes, and the problems they had to resolve. She portrays a group that melded their distinctive political outlooks, values, and prejudices with those of their neighbors from the Northeast in new ways and in new combinations. For example, the emergence of a national two-party system, one that involved important policy differences between the parties, was an important cause of the breakdown of sectional culture and exclusiveness. Upland southerners sharply disagreed among themselves about the specific political issues of the day. Politically, they were no longer a distinct bloc, whatever the commonalities of their origins. Like their Middle Atlantic neighbors, they now divided along partisan, not sectional, lines. Some became Whigs, others joined the Democrats. At the same time, however, in the complex ways of this identity development, the upland southerners came to these new understandings through different routes than did their northern colleagues, accepting parties for different reasons, using a similar vocabulary that was rooted in different notions. In other words, amid the melding of a different sectional experience many residual traces of the origins remained. But the vestigial traces of their origins were not as im-

portant as the fact that "sectional antipathies" had been "muted for a generation" (1).

During the 1850s, however, as conflict between the North and South came to dominate national politics, old sectional commitments were reawakened among the upland southerners and grew stronger than they had been. But this, too, was more complicated than a simple replacement of one set of perspectives by another. There was a great deal of ambivalence about any resurgent southernism, and most midwesterners from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia struggled to find a middle ground between extremes of North and South (as did other midwesterners). Once the Civil War began, most retained their loyalty to the Union while strongly opposing any attempts to use the war as an excuse to change the nation's basic nature. They, like other midwesterners, still sought a middle ground.

Etcheson's study is limited in geographic scope, but her picture of how populations came together in these three states has relevance for students of other parts of the emerging Middle West. For example, Iowa, like its sister states to the east, was settled by people from both the upland South and the Northeast. There was a potential for clashes between different regional perspectives in the state, and ultimately the emergence of a different kind of situation than the settlers' origins would have predicted. Historians have suggested that there was more persistence of original norms, and more power to them, than Etcheson finds in the states to the east, but that notion deserves reexamination in the light of her findings.

*The Emerging Midwest* is a useful and intelligent recreation of the complicated political culture and outlook of a particular group of early midwesterners. The basic structure of the argument is well worked out and reasonable, the picture painted helpful, if sometimes presented in broader brush strokes than the evidence may sustain. The book is quite short, only 143 pages of text. Etcheson eschews the opportunity to texture and develop more fully the themes that she sketches. An extension might further clarify and sharpen some of the points made and provide more substantial underpinning to an argument that at time seems more sketchy and undeveloped than it needs to be. Still, what is present is a provocative and important contribution to the story of the development of the Ohio Valley before the Civil War.

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