

Book Reviews

The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830, by R. Douglas Hurt. A History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier Series. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996. xv, 418 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliographical essay, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Frontier Indiana, by Andrew R. L. Cayton. A History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier Series. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996. xii, 340 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliographical essay, index. \$35.00 cloth.

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Ever since Frederick Jackson Turner published his groundbreaking essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in 1893, historians have been fascinated with the early settlement of the Old Northwest. The American public, and particularly the European-American pioneers to the region that eventually became the Midwest, were intrigued by the circumstances surrounding the foundations of their states even before Turner and the historians began to recognize the area's significance as a crucible of human cultural interaction and as the site of intense environmental manipulation.

Many of the early works, whether produced by professional historians or by people intent on preserving the stories and legacies of actual settlers, too often presented separate narratives for the Native American and the European and African-American characters who played such important roles in the transformation of the Old Northwest into the early modern Midwest. Walter Nugent and Malcolm Rohrbough, the general editors of a new series of books that present "A History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier," have expanded the historical treatment of the midwestern states by including books that integrate the stories of all the early participants. R. Douglas Hurt's *The Ohio Frontier* and Andrew R. L. Cayton's *Frontier Indiana* are extremely readable and exciting treatments of the region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The authors combine traditional historical sources and new methods of historical analysis with the information from earlier works to produce worthy additions to the literature about the Old Northwest. Actually, the two works are not about separate states of the union, except in their last

chapters. Modern political boundaries are largely the result of events in the early nineteenth century, so the frontier histories of Ohio and Indiana are about the same people: Pontiac, Sieur de Vincennes, William Johnson, David Zeisberger, George Rogers Clark, Anthony Wayne, Arthur St. Clair, William Henry Harrison, Little Turtle, Tenskwatawa, and Tecumseh all appear, along with a multitude of other folk, as important characters in each of the books. Both authors also pay particular attention to the interaction of various groups of people who moved into and out of the lands north of the Ohio River from 1700 to 1820; the French, the British, and the Anglo-Americans vied with one another while they also dealt with Native American groups—the Wyandot, the Shawnee, the Delaware, the Miami, the Chippewa, the Piankashaw, and the Wea—who were, in turn, also competing among themselves.

It is in their treatment of the Native Americans as predecessors of and partners with the Europeans that these works make their most important contributions to the history of the frontier Midwest. Hurt spends the first five chapters (nearly one-half) of his book on Ohio showing the intricacies of the Native American political, economic, and social world. He effectively illustrates the far-reaching consequences of the international fur trade upon which most of the Indian groups in the Ohio Valley had come to depend by the eighteenth century. He points out that developments within the world of international diplomacy had caused widespread migration into the region by peoples who had traditionally resided farther to the east and to the north. He also stresses that the Native Americans relocated because they saw more opportunity in doing so and that they were not merely passive participants in the increasingly capitalistic world of North American economic relationships. However, in Hurt's narrative the Native Americans are largely presented in their role as military allies or adversaries of the Europeans and the Anglo-Americans. We are given little information about the social and economic lives of the people after the end of the French and Indian War in 1763. And once large numbers of Anglo-Americans and African Americans began moving into the area after the Revolutionary War, the Native Americans appear mainly as annoyances to the new settlers.

In his book on Indiana's frontier period, Cayton also treats the Native Americans with a respect that was largely missing from earlier works on trans-Appalachia. He goes to great lengths throughout the narrative to integrate the lives of the Native Americans with those of the other settlers to the area. He points out that, particularly before the ascendancy of the United States in the late eighteenth

century, Native Americans and Europeans often intermarried and formed complex familial and social relationships with one another that lasted well into the nineteenth century. Cayton traces and follows many of these connections and shows how the people of early Indiana created a complex social web that was not easily dismantled or even understood by outsiders. His chapter on the society of the village of Vincennes from 1765 to 1777 is a wonderful example of social history in which peoples with various cultural backgrounds came together and created a unique community.

Cayton is able to pay more attention than Hurt to the lives of Native Americans throughout the frontier period because he has chosen a nontraditional approach to his presentation of Indiana's early history. In each of his ten chapters he focuses on the life of a person or a place during a decade-long period in order to illustrate the particularities of a specific time and place. For example, in his chapter, "The World of George Rogers Clark, 1778-1787," he not only gives readers an intimate familiarity with the famous Virginia hero of the American Revolutionary War, but also shows how the coming of the Anglo-Americans signaled the reshaping of the midwestern environment. The French and the British, he points out, were content to use the resources of the frontier by trading with the Native Americans, whereas the Anglo-Americans were intent on clearing the land of its native forests in order to plant corn and wheat for trade with the settled areas of the Atlantic seaboard. In another chapter, "The World of Anna Tuthill Symmes Harrison, 1795-1820," he uses the life of the wife of Indiana Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison to illustrate the changes that were occurring in the family lives of Indianans and, by extension, all Americans in the early nineteenth century. Cayton's technique sacrifices breadth for intimacy, but it effectively engages the reader's sense of curiosity about the lives of individuals.

Hurt takes a more traditional approach to Ohio's early history. He presents the political, military, and economic events of the era in chronological order and allows readers to draw conclusions about the consequences of such occurrences. Readers who are looking for such a straightforward, no-nonsense approach will appreciate his clarity. If one desires more analysis about the same period and the same historical actors, however, Cayton's work will be more satisfying. Taken together, these two books provide a comprehensive historical treatment of the Old Northwest.

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