

active citizen engagement in disputes over political policies and community development as critical components of the Jeffersonian legacy.

Nothing in this book deals directly with the history of Iowa. But Iowans concerned with the contested nature of the American empire and future directions in western history will find much to interest them. The essays in *Thomas Jefferson and the Changing West* were originally presented at a 1994 conference at the Missouri Historical Society. Editor James P. Ronda observes in his preface that although "good conferences do not necessarily make good books . . . from the beginning it was clear that this gathering would be a memorable exception" (ix). He was right.

Many Wests: Place, Culture, and Regional Identity, edited by David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997. xii, 396 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$45.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY CARROLL VAN WEST, MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Of the many recent books, anthologies, and essays about western regionalism, *Many Wests* is the best of the lot. With essays from thirteen contributors, as well as an excellent introduction by the editors, the volume addresses the complex issue of the nature and scope of western regional identity through an insightful multidisciplinary perspective. The editors and contributors agree that a fuller and better understanding of western regional diversity offers a potential solution to the contemporary debate among historians about process versus place in shaping the American West. They also correctly observe that the West as a region, either as a sense of place or as a geographical area, is maddeningly difficult to define, much less to use as a category of analysis. Such scholarly humility is rare—but welcome—and promises to keep the current excursion into regionalism from slipping into the limited celebration of "folk" and "tradition" often found in earlier regionalist studies.

The editors define their West as beginning with the second tier of states west of the Mississippi River (thus eliminating Iowa from this study) and then extending to the West Coast, into British Columbia and northern Mexico, and on to Hawaii and Alaska. Shared themes rather than geography, however, shape the book's organization. Part one, titled Environment and Economy, includes John M. Findlay discussing the Pacific Northwest, Elizabeth Raymond exploring environmental limits in the Great Basin, Anne F. Hyde

analyzing the impact of mining on the sense of place in the Rocky Mountains, and James R. Shortridge identifying the emergence of a northern plains regionalism. Essays in parts two (Aesthetic Wests), three (Race and Identity), and four (Extended Wests) are more focused, both in area and topic. They include Peter Boag's study of literature from and about the Snake River region; Mary Murphy's evocative discussion of three Montana working women; the comparative reflections on race, culture, and identity in northern California by Glenna Matthews and in southern California by William Deverell; Richard M. Brown's search for regional identity in British Columbia; and Paula G. Allen's stories of magic and realism in the Southwest. These essays do more than raise important questions about the role of race, class, and gender in shaping western identities; they also demonstrate that the diverse meanings of region may be studied through oral tradition, theater, literature, and architecture.

The only false step in what is otherwise a thought-provoking, challenging collection is when the volume falls into the rhetoric of western exceptionalism. Contrary to the book's opening quotation from Wallace Stegner, there are as many Souths and as many Midwesterns as there are many Wests. For instance, Arnolde De Leon's essay on region and ethnicity in Texas could just as easily be included in a book on the "Many Souths." After reading this volume, one still may dispute its claim that "American regionalism may find its fullest expression" in the West (9). It would be difficult, however, to dispute that region is important, a force not only of reaction but also of renewal, for the past and for the present.

Sowing Modernity: America's First Agricultural Revolution, by Peter D. McClelland. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. xii, 348 pp. Illustrations, graphs, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MARK R. FINLAY, ARMSTRONG ATLANTIC STATE UNIVERSITY

Sowing Modernity had its origins in a historian's quest to understand what is "arguably the central problem of economic history" (ix): the extraordinary rise of western economic productivity in the past few centuries. For Peter McClelland, an economic historian at Cornell University best known for his works on demographic and methodological questions, the search for answers led to America's rural past. In particular, McClelland identifies developments in the agricultural technology of the colonial and early national periods as the basis for America's transformation from the premodern to the mod-

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