

ing. Despite the concentration on economic goals, the knowledge gained was beneficial to later explorers, such as Lewis and Clark, who paid far more attention to natural history, geology, meteorology, and ethnology.

Somewhat ironically, the Spanish ranged the farthest even though their nation was in decline and, by the end of the eighteenth century, on the verge of losing most of their holdings in North and South America. Despite their ultimate dominance in North America, the British appear the least adventurous, confining most of their continental exploration to the area around Hudson Bay and the lands east of the Appalachians until later in the eighteenth century. Unlike their Spanish rivals, they paid little attention to the search for gold and even less to the salvation of the native peoples. The French were arguably the most successful in their relations with Indians.

Those especially interested in the early European probing of what is now the upper Midwest of the United States will want to turn to chapters eleven ("French Exploration in North America," by W. J. Eccles) and thirteen ("British Exploration of the United States Interior," by Alan V. Briceland). The latter includes details of British exploration in and near present-day Iowa (then part of the Spanish domains) by Jonathan Carver, William Bruce, James Stanley Goddard, and James Tute, under the direction of Major Robert Rogers, 1766–1767. The principal objective was the elusive Northwest Passage. In the last decade of the century Scotsman James Mackay and Welshman John Evans, exploring for Spain, examined parts of what is now Iowa; Evans was especially eager to find the equally elusive "Welsh Indians."

The third and final volume of this grand undertaking will cover the nineteenth century. Students of North American exploration, scholars and laypersons alike, can await its appearance with the reasonable expectation that it will be as rewarding as the first two.

Thomas Jefferson and the Changing West: From Conquest to Conservation, edited by James P. Ronda. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press in cooperation with the Missouri Historical Society, 1997. xx, 224 pp. Maps, notes, index. \$29.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ANDREW CAYTON, MIAMI UNIVERSITY

This collection of engaging essays delivers far more than its title promises. Scholars have worked over Thomas Jefferson and the West so thoroughly that one might be forgiven for opening *Thomas Jeffer-*

son and the Changing West with a sense of trepidation: will it be a set of papers reveling in academic obscurity or a series of exposés of Jefferson as a hypocritical imperialist? Happily, it is neither. Most of the essays are thoughtful and provocative, not so much about Jefferson and the West as about the significance of place, the relationship between imagination and reality, and the overall complexity of western experiences.

The best articles seek neither to condemn nor to praise Jefferson but to discover what if anything is still of value in his life and writings. In "Thomas Jefferson, Indigenous American Storyteller," Robert A. Williams Jr. suggests that American Indians move beyond the now familiar tale of Jefferson as a Eurocentric imperialist to hear Jefferson as a model revolutionary, a man whose ideas about national liberation, popular sovereignty, and the importance of individual rights continue to have profound relevance in their lives. In other words, critics of Jefferson might consider his rhetoric and his example as they attack the political order (an egalitarian fraternity of European males) he helped to establish.

Similarly, Elliott West, in "Great Dreams, Great Plains: Jefferson, the Bents, and the West," urges us to abandon our tendencies to see the West in a familiar dichotomy between Jeffersonian notions of a pastoral yeoman paradise and a reality of deserts and cities. West's fascinating account of St. Louis-born Charles and William Bent, who built a Colorado-based commercial empire that elaborated on and transformed existing patterns of economic and social exchange, demonstrates the dangers of seeing western history exclusively from either a late eighteenth- or a late twentieth-century perspective. The extraordinary complexity of lives such as the Bents makes generalizations of both Jefferson and contemporary historians seem anachronistic.

The other essays range from the scholarly (Peter Onuf's characteristically thoughtful analysis of Jefferson's response to the Missouri Crisis and Anthony F. C. Wallace's probing examination of the limits of Jeffersonian benevolence toward Indians) to the personal (Mary Clearman Blew's reflections on the possibilities of new stories of the western experience and Robert Gottlieb's evocative insistence on seeing the West as a collection of diverse cities). All of the contributions have the value of raising as many questions as they answer. As Patricia Nelson Limerick stresses in her witty overview of the volume's contents, these essays are significant as parts of ongoing conversations about the ways Americans have contested the uses and meanings of landscapes, peoples, and stories. Limerick's observation is more than an academic one. Virtually all of the contributors see

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

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