

Book Reviews

North American Exploration, Volume 2, A Continent Defined, edited by John Logan Allen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. xii, 472 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$75.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL J. BRODHEAD, NEVADA STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

Here is the sort of history we would like to see more of: sound scholarship, an emphasis on facts, and the total absence of present-day concerns. As editor John Logan Allen made clear in his introduction to the first volume of this work, he and the authors of the essays want readers to arrive at a greater understanding of European exploration of the New World, not to point fingers and instill guilt. Their concern is with the process of exploration, not its long-term consequences. Three of the six authors are geographers, the others historians. Four of them are Canadian, the remainder American. The scholarship and writing are of consistently high quality. The essays treat Spanish, French, Russian, British, and, to a lesser extent, Dutch land and sea reconnaissance of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Found here are the exploits of familiar figures, among them Samuel de Champlain, Fray Francisco Garcés, James Cook, George Vancouver, and Vitus Bering. Also given their due are scores of lesser known, sometimes anonymous, pathfinders and mapmakers. Each of the essays is solidly based on published primary and secondary sources, and each summarizes well the present state of knowledge of the subjects.

For most of the period covered, the European powers showed little interest in exploration for its own sake. Rather, they sought gold, the fur of the beaver and sea otter, souls to be saved, or advantages over rival empires. Throughout this era of discovery, one of the most enduring themes was the search for an all-water route through the continent. Here, too, the object was not so much the expansion of geographical knowledge but a quicker way to the riches of the Far East. Much time and treasure was spent looking for a Northwest Passage, the Straits of Anián, Rio San Buenaventura, Mer de l'Ouest, the Sea of Verrazzano, and other products of imagination and wishful think-

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-*

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