

phone technology, the boundaries separating Amish homes from the world beyond will be more difficult to find. As Umble observes, "For a minority, it [the phone] remains a symbol of dangerous compromise" (153).

Holding the Line offers an insightful blend of scholarly theory, uncompromising qualitative research methodologies, and a captivating historical narrative. The book's only notable weakness is that the author never fully explicates the biblical and theological foundations for the Amish way of life that are central to understanding their views of community, change, and technology. Nevertheless, the author is sufficiently sensitive, even sympathetic, to the Amish worldview to prevent this omission from undermining an otherwise superb work.

Holding the Line shows that the Amish struggle with the telephone and the cultural meanings it embodies was and is no mindless, Luddite, knee-jerk reaction against progressivism's technological idolatry. Rather, it was and is the soul-felt struggle of a thoughtful people to preserve its religious identity, its way of life, and its cultural values in its encounter with a communication technology that still has more potential to undermine community—Amish or otherwise—than to improve the human condition or save us from our sins.

A New Significance: Re-envisioning the History of the American West, edited by Clyde A. Milner II. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. xiii, 318 pp. Illustration, notes, index. \$49.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY CARROLL VAN WEST, MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

A New Significance is a challenging, thought-provoking volume of essays that emerged from two related sources in the early 1990s. First was a national symposium, held at Utah State University, in recognition of the centennial of Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." The second was a series of articles, based on selected symposium papers, that subsequently appeared in the *Western Historical Quarterly*. This book, however, does more than compile this earlier scholarship into a convenient volume. Authors had the opportunity to revise their lectures and their articles; other scholars provided commentaries on the lead essays; Quintard Taylor prepared a new essay on African-American history in the West; and editor Clyde A. Milner II added an introduction.

The lecturers at the symposium and the authors of the published articles aimed to do more than merely revisit the significance of

Turner's achievement in 1893. They wanted to "re-envision" the historical significance of the frontier, especially the American West, in light of the scholarship of the last generation. Although Allan G. Bogue was a tested veteran of the western history wars, the volume's other major contributors—William F. Deverell, David G. Gutierrez, Susan Rhoades Neel, Gail M. Nomura, Anne F. Hyde, David Rich Lewis, and Susan Lee Johnson—were comparatively new voices, representing new research interests and methodologies. As editor Clyde A. Milner II observes, "this project tried to capture the *spirit* of intellectual excitement that Turner's essay created" from the perspective of historians "a generation newer" than the currently acknowledged heavyweights of "new western territory" (xi). Yet to ensure that each generation has its say, Milner then asked many of those same heavyweights—Patricia Nelson Limerick, Dan Flores, Elliott West, Peter Iverson, and Albert L. Hurtado, among others—to prepare brief commentaries on the selected articles. The end result is a book of many voices and perspectives reflecting, in important ways, the diversity of scholarship and methodology that marks western history in our time.

Milner's achievement as editor is to bring some thematic continuity and clarity to what easily could have become a hodgepodge of perspectives. The debate that receives the most attention is place versus process—which most shaped the significance of the West? This focus on interpretive theory means that the book will have a limited audience among readers of popular western history; and readers of the *Annals of Iowa* will find nothing directly on the history of Iowa. Yet the book certainly will be useful in the classroom and for teachers of western history. Graduate seminars may use the lead essays as starting points to debate significant themes about the impact of Native Americans (Lewis), Asian Americans (Nomura), and Mexican Americans (Gutierrez) on the course of western history. The other set of essays looks beyond specific groups of people to reflect on the themes of gender (Johnson), environment (Neel), and cultural perception (Hyde). These latter essays were the more exciting contributions because their subject matter allowed the authors to cut across class, racial, and gender lines to bring all groups and time periods into sharper focus. Gender especially may be a very useful organizing theme because men and women looked at the West in sometimes similar, but often different, ways. Class, race, family origin, and time introduce additional variations at one time or another.

Process, in other words, is more important than place in understanding the West. Although a few of the authors fall into the rhe-

torical trap of "western exceptionalism" (as a southerner I well recognize the argument that "place" defines everything), a consensus seems to be emerging that process is the best way to tie the significance of the new western history to the major themes of American history in general. Indeed, William Deverell's essay, "Fighting Words: The Significance of the American West in the History of the United States," explores how the events, peoples, and places of the West document the role of "power," especially the power of the state, in shaping American history and American institutions. "We have a great deal to learn," he rightly concludes, "about the ways in which national power gets consolidated and extended, attracted and wooed, not to mention contested" (40). The West, like other regions once treated in a colonial fashion, has important information to be discovered. So too does this useful collection of scholarship and perspectives on the significance of the West one hundred years after Turner.

The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture as Colonization in the American West, by Frieda Knobloch. Studies in Rural Culture. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996. xi, 204 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY PHILIP J. NELSON, HAWKEYE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Frieda Knobloch's examination of the settlement and agriculture of the American West from 1862 to 1945 aptly demonstrates the inherent link between food production and environmental conditions. Thus aptly joining agricultural history and environmental history, Knobloch goes on to achieve a truly multidisciplinary study by incorporating aspects of political, social, and technological history. This makes for a rather unconventional history of agriculture, especially when it is tied to the metaphorical vehicle of colonization.

Knobloch argues that settlement took place by means of deliberate, calculated acts of aggression and exploitation, with no traces of inevitability about them, despite claims to the contrary by the historical agents themselves. Her purpose is not to bring to light new data on western agriculture, but to challenge the old myth of the inevitable march of progress. This critique of western agriculture and the social order that created it ultimately calls into question many of America's cultural core values.

Readers familiar with the "new western history" and its revisionist message will see much of that perspective in *The Culture of Wilderness*. Without mentioning them by name, Knobloch draws heavily on

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