

## Book Reviews

*American Frontier and Western Issues: A Historiographical Review*, edited by Roger L. Nichols. Contributions in American History 118. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986. ix, 303 pp. Notes, index. \$35.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MALCOLM J. ROHRBOUGH, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

This volume of fourteen essays by fourteen authors under the able editorship of Roger L. Nichols brings together the latest strands of scholarship in the fields of the American frontier *and* the American West. The distinction is an important one. For more than a generation now, professionals have increasingly confused the two. The clear sense this book conveys of both fields gives this study a decidedly forward-looking vision in comparison to the recently published series of essays edited by Michael Malone (1985).

Nichols opens the volume with an insightful introduction in which he lays out the distinction between the two overlapping fields. He places considerable emphasis on the uncertain past of the American frontier/West, especially in the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, when studies and scholarly articles showed the field's methodological confusion and declining status in colleges and universities. He notes of this period that scholars seemed to feel "as if they were at the fringes of the profession" (1), and goes on to say that such negative feelings seem to have been largely overcome in the last decade and a half through the infusion of a new group of enterprising scholars and the emergence of a range of new subjects for analysis. The fields seem resurgent, and in his view, this series of essays is a bench mark of where we have come from and where we are going. His comments make good sense, especially since they are backed up by several insightful presentations that do much to support his arguments on behalf of new scholars and new topics of scholarly interest.

Of the essays that follow, those on the environment (John Opie), social history (Anne M. Butler), frontier urbanization (Lawrence H. Larsen), frontier women (Glenda Riley), and the frontier army (Paul A. Hutton) reflect some of the new directions. Ethnic groups (Carlton C. Qualey), foreign affairs and expansion (Robert D. Schulzinger), economic development in the American West (John D. Haeger), and

transportation (H. Roger Grant) are traditional topics that receive a thorough discussion while the essays on agriculture and livestock production (James W. Whitaker), mining frontiers (Mark Wyman), American Indians (Roger L. Nichols), and territorial government (Jo Tice Bloom) show that some subjects that have been around for two generations are still the beneficiaries of some excellent work in the last dozen years. Of course, these distinctions are a bit artificial. Aspects of social history and foreign affairs have been around for a generation; social history and frontier women and ethnic groups overlap (to cite only three examples). So the change in direction is part emphasis and part new definitions. Still, the results are sometimes impressive and always useful.

What the volume lacks is a concluding essay that summarizes the present state of these fields and offers an agenda for the future. The presence of the separate fields is exciting but also unsettling. Will the study of the American West become more determinedly regional? Will the field of the American frontier survive? Perhaps we will have to wait until 1993 to find out the definitive answers.

*Prehistoric Life on the Mississippi Floodplain: Stone Tool Use, Settlement Organization, and Subsistence Practices at the Labras Lake Site, Illinois*, by Richard W. Yerkes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. xiv, 279 pp. Figures, tables, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth, \$10.00 paper.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT L. REEDER, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

In this revision of his dissertation, Richard Yerkes examines prehistoric settlement and subsistence practices and chipped stone tool technology and use at the Labras Lake site in the American Bottom area of the Mississippi River valley. Excavated in the late 1970s as part of the FAI-270 archeological mitigation project, the site included Late Archaic, Late Woodland, and Mississippian components. Data from a microwear analysis of chipped stone artifacts using the Keeley high magnification approach, the study's main focus, are coupled with those from detailed geoarcheological, faunal, floral, feature, and distributional analyses.

Yerkes addresses a variety of topics. The impressive microwear study illustrates how functional interpretations from use-wear analyses can differ considerably from those derived from morphology-based approaches, underscoring the advantage of this kind of approach. Yerkes suggests that in spite of a dynamic environmental setting, similar plant and animal resources were available throughout

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