

Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance, by Peter S. Onuf. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. xxiv, 197 pp. Maps, notes, index. \$27.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY CARL UBBELOHDE, CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

Centennials and bicentennials sometimes leave a legacy that allows us to understand the past in fuller, more satisfying ways than we did before. Such is the contribution of this book. Peter Onuf's earlier study, *The Origins of the Federal Republic: Jurisdictional Controversies in the United States, 1775-1787*, provided a solid grounding in the Northwest Ordinance's antecedents. This book's arguments are anchored in printed information: published documents, correspondence, newspaper commentary, and pamphlet literature. Its spatial concerns, of course, are the eastern parts of what is now generally defined as the Midwest. Its attention is focused on ideas about early state-making, particularly the Ohio experience. It also addresses some issues (particularly slavery) in Indiana and Illinois, and boundary issues in Michigan. There is very little attention to Wisconsin. As for Iowa or other nonordinance states of the Midwest, the applicable extension is one of assumptions and precedents, not actual developments or episodes.

Onuf carefully tells a story of change over time: how the visions of the ordinance's framers defined the document at birth; how the application of the provisions of the document exposed ambiguities in the actuality of creating states; how the document ceased to be a part of our constitutional law; how it became a regional symbol in the explication of a law "higher" than the Constitution. Onuf characterizes the origins of his story in unpromising ways: he writes that the "text of the Ordinance is, in fact, remarkably complex and incoherent, accurately reflecting the confusion and urgency facing Congress in 1787" (140). In the beginning, the major ingredients in the story are real estate (land law) and republican ideology. The area north of the Ohio River was to be the laboratory for testing land policies in the new federal republic. Onuf, with Cathy Matson (in an *American Quarterly* essay, "Toward a Republican Empire: Interest and Ideology in Revolutionary America"), earlier explained the assumptions blending republican society with pursuit of economic self-interest. Assumptions lead to other assumptions, such as the belief that settlers for the West might best be drawn from northern states. Then they would be enterprising, but not too much so; there would be speculation, but directed "toward the public good" (34).

From the beginning the ordinance acted as explanation for federal "colonial" policy—the role with which it is most often associated today. It set the general process by which territories might become

states, a process to be repeated across the breadth of the enlarging nation. The distinction between a territory, which Congress controlled, and the state that in time would succeed it was clear by 1787. Even so, in the act of applying that process (especially in the drawing of the boundaries for the future state of Michigan), the ordinance lost its constitutional power, as Congress insisted that its authority over territories was unlimited. If the Northwest Ordinance was not a part of our constitutional law, did that then mean that once states were carved from it and admitted to the union, they were free to disregard the guarantees of the document on matters such as trial procedures, education, and slavery? Onuf suggests a more complicated outcome: those residing in the region continued to see the document as embodying fundamental American principles and providing regional symbols of true significance.

Onuf's explanation of the ordinance's changing functions in American society is useful, credible, and welcome. He provides a clear, concise lesson about the history of American legal and political culture. He sketches what he calls "the developmental dynamic" model in which territory "suggested both 'colony'—the beginning point—and 'state'—the end. An American colony *became* a state while being administered as a territory" (72). He shows us how the document, no longer potent as constitutional law (the Supreme Court, in *Strader v. Graham* [1850] agreed with Congress) would come to be seen as embodying the truest principles of the region and the nation. Onuf explains why the ordinance came to be incorporated into the trinity of icons, along with the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, as "one of the title-deeds of American constitutional liberty" (from a speech by George F. Hoar, quoted on p. 133). People living in other regions may not understand this, but a midwesterner will find the resonance clear and unambiguous.

Mormons at the Missouri, 1846-1852: "And Should We Die . . .", by Richard E. Bennett. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987. xii, 347 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY SAMUEL C. PEARSON, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AT EDWARDSVILLE.

In *Mormons at the Missouri*, Richard Bennett examines in detail a crucial and often neglected period in the evolution of Mormon institutions and ideas. The book is a narrative account of the westward trek of those Mormons who followed Brigham Young from Illinois to Utah

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