

## Book Reviews

*Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path*, by Roger L. Nichols. Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1992. xi, 173 pp. Illustrations, map, index, bibliographical essay.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL D. GREEN, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

With this book, Roger Nichols joins a list of authors interested in Black Hawk and the Black Hawk War that began in 1833 with Black Hawk's own dictated *Autobiography*. Over the next 160 years journalists, participant observers, novelists, and scholars have portrayed Black Hawk as fiend or patriot, the war as tragic blunder or glorious event, and the Indian and frontier policies that comprehended both as misguided or divinely inspired Manifest Destiny. As one should expect of a seasoned, accomplished scholar such as Nichols, this volume charts a course marked by careful research, critical analysis, and judicious interpretation. Black Hawk is the subject of this biography, not its hero or villain.

Nichols follows a chronological organization that begins with a discussion of Sauk culture and early history. An Algonkin-speaking tribe, the Sauks had a mixed hunting and farming economy that tended to locate them on streams where agriculture, travel, and trade were easy. They migrated west to the Illinois country in the seventeenth century to escape the Iroquois wars. In opposition to French economic and military domination, early in the eighteenth century the Sauks associated with their cultural cousins, the Mesquakies, and together they occupied the upper Mississippi valley in the regions of present Illinois and Iowa. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Sauks were part of the growing British trade network that sought to link the western tribes to the economic and political interests of Canada. The Sauks concentrated at Saukenuk, a large village on the north bank of the Rock River near its confluence with the Mississippi. There, in 1767, Black Hawk was born.

Nichols is forced to depend on Black Hawk's *Autobiography* for the early history of his subject. As with most young Sauk males, Black Hawk's ambition was to become a skilled warrior and respected war leader. In both he succeeded, mainly at the expense of the Osages. Because Sauk political organization distinguished

between military and civil leadership, Black Hawk's military role excluded him from diplomatic affairs and thus kept his name out of the documentary record. But by the time of the War of 1812, he had emerged as a major figure, had gained the notice of British agents, and was recruited to lead a contingent of Indian allies in that war against the United States. From this point on Nichols can balance the *Autobiography* with other sources and present a more multidimensional individual.

The period between the War of 1812 and the outbreak of the Black Hawk War was characterized by tense involvement with the United States. Diplomatic relations, trade, and increasing encroachment on Sauk lands by American miners and farmers meant that the Sauks were continually confronted with unwelcome change. The Treaty of 1804, which the United States claimed severed Sauk ownership of their land, underlay everything by justifying U.S. policy toward the Sauks. Only Sauk acceptance of the cession and willing removal to the west side of the Mississippi could ensure a peaceful resolution. Black Hawk was adamant in his denial that such a cession had ever taken place. In resisting the abandonment of the Sauk homeland, Black Hawk took on the role of defender of Sauk traditional values.

This militant conservatism underlies one of the best-known episodes in Sauk history, the rivalry between Black Hawk and Keokuk. Keokuk believed that resistance to U.S. demands that the Sauks relocate across the Mississippi was hopeless, and the best policy was to accede to American demands. Black Hawk thought Keokuk was an irresponsible, self-serving coward. Nichols argues that Keokuk's accommodationism was influenced, at least in part, by trips to Washington that had impressed upon him the size and strength of the United States. Nichols goes on to suggest that if Black Hawk had ever accompanied one of the many Sauk delegations he probably would have reached the same conclusion.

Despite that, Nichols shows that Black Hawk did not intend to start a war when he and perhaps two thousand followers crossed the Mississippi into Illinois in 1832. Naively misled by advisers who were either equally naive or ill disposed, Black Hawk claimed that his band was simply headed up the Rock River to live in the town of the Winnebago prophet White Cloud. On the way, a series of failed communications, mistaken identities, and foolish actions by untrained Illinois militiamen turned a quest for farmland and food into war. That is Black Hawk's explanation, and Nichols finds it generally persuasive. The war, of course, ended in disaster for the Sauks and the capture and imprisonment of Black Hawk.

Nichols sees Black Hawk as a traditionalist caught up in a world that was changing too much too fast. Short-tempered and impatient, he was easily manipulated by those who told him what he wanted to hear. Unschooled in politics, he was naive, gullible, and prone to action rather than contemplation. The Black Hawk Nichols describes is an unsophisticated conservative with his vision firmly fixed on the past. Black Hawk should not have crossed the Mississippi, but Nichols does not blame him for the war's outbreak. That was the fault of ignorant, sloppy, self-serving whites who over-reacted, refused to listen, and fired too quickly.

Nichols has produced a solid, well-researched and well-written book. It should interest the general reading public as well as teachers looking for a good brief volume for their students. As the number and quality of Native American biographies continues to grow, we gain a clearer understanding and appreciation of the humanity of those Indian people who have shaped the histories of their tribes and influenced American history as well.

*Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Urban West: The Rise and Fall of Antebellum St. Louis*, by Jeffrey S. Adler. *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Modern History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. viii, 274 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$42.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY KAREN SAWISLAK, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

What makes a city grow? What leads to its economic decline? How do regional rivalries contribute to the shaping of a national "urban system"? In his study of antebellum St. Louis, Jeffrey S. Adler offers some compelling revisions to what have been long-standing verities in the study of the urbanization of what was then the West—the battle to establish the dominant entrepôts of the region we now describe as the Midwest. Other scholars (most notably and most recently William Cronon, in *Nature's Metropolis*) have detailed the processes by which cities spring out of a complex set of interdependencies with their rural hinterlands. What the land provides is essential to the creation of these constructed forms. But as Adler demonstrates, midwestern entrepôts needed to rely on more than their shrewd locations, easy access to natural resources industries, or their booster's sense of "destiny": to be the central city of the Midwest (and the United States), urbanites had to look East. "Yankees"—merchants and financial professionals with ties to the well-developed capital markets of the East Coast and Europe—had the deep pockets to underwrite the large-scale ventures (such as

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