

Lincoln and the West, this volume is a great place to start and to discover that there really was a lot happening west of the Mississippi River during and even before the Civil War.

Hinterland Dreams: The Political Economy of a Midwestern City, by Eric J. Morser. American Business, Politics, and Society Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. xvi, 264 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$55.00 cloth.

Reviewer Kathleen A. Brosnan is associate professor of history and associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Houston. She is the author of *Uniting Mountain and Plain: Urbanization, Law, and Environmental Change in the Denver Region, 1858–1903* (2002).

In *Hinterland Dreams*, Eric Morser relates the origins and development of La Crosse, Wisconsin, as a means to understand urbanization in the larger Midwest. He challenges the frontier narrative of independent white pioneers offered by Wisconsin's native son, Frederick Jackson Turner, and the revisionist versions of later scholars who emphasize geography, entrepreneurs, and market revolutions to explain the success of metropolises like Chicago. Understudied hinterland communities, Morser argues, played crucial roles in the region's commercial growth while government — at local, state, and federal levels — created an environment that allowed such communities to emerge and thrive. "La Crosse's history," he writes, "was a tale of economic choices conditioned by the American state" (xv).

In the first section of the book, Morser explains how government initiatives facilitated the founding and maturation of La Crosse's businesses. By establishing forts and launching explorations that revealed resources ripe for exploitation, the federal government maintained a presence and gave white Americans confidence in the region's economic possibilities. Treaties placed Indians in a dependent status that allowed early traders to prosper, and subsequent policies ensured Indians' removal as the white population became more numerous. While federal land policies often favored speculators, new preemption laws in the 1840s gave less wealthy migrants access to real property. "A legal culture . . . provided entrepreneurs with powerful rights and protections that bolstered risk taking in southwestern Wisconsin and elsewhere. State and federal policy, as much as personal genius or dedicated work, helped La Crosse lumbermen become wealthy and powerful" (72).

In part two, Morser explains how government policies, particularly at the state and municipal levels, empowered La Crosse residents

to finance and police private businesses, sometimes by circumventing the letter of the law. Aware that neighboring states' investments in railroads resulted in crippling indebtedness, Wisconsin lawmakers prohibited funding for such improvements in the state constitution. As the need for rail connections became critical to developing towns in the 1850s, however, legislators transformed another constitutional provision — their power to regulate municipal taxation, assessment, and borrowing — to grant cities such as La Crosse the authority to sell bonds or otherwise invest public money in private companies. "Local aldermen, much like their fellows in Boston and many large metropolises, embraced a political economy of public works based on assertive municipal power bridling private economic energy in the civic interest and remaking La Crosse into a thriving modern community at century's end" (130).

In part three, Morser contends that the American state provided an arena for new actors (specifically workers and women) to reshape political discourse. While the pro-labor mayor was unable to use municipal power to achieve concrete gains, such as workplace safety or shorter hours, a growing working-class consciousness challenged the accepted wisdom that business elites were best able to govern the city's economy and forced mainstream politicians to heed workers' needs. In the later nineteenth century, courts and legislators chipped away at coverture, but it was the denial of the vote, Morser argues, that somehow empowered women. They challenged accepted gender norms by channeling energies into extrapolitical activities.

Hinterland Dreams is rich in primary sources, and Morser masters a diverse historiography; endnotes cover 65 pages. This book is essential reading for those interested in the Midwest's political economy — the relation between government and commerce. The focus on a smaller city expands our understanding of urbanization in the region and reminds us that local actors used a variety of tools to foster economic opportunities within a broader political context. The policies that shaped La Crosse affected development across the Midwest, although it is unclear whether these were part of a coherent state enterprise or a haphazard collection of actions.

This book is part of a larger effort to bring the state back into American historical debates. Morser does this most effectively in the first two sections, where he shows how La Crosse entrepreneurs and officials used government initiatives to recruit settlers, clear pine forests, and forge railroad links, although he overstates the impact of municipal police powers. Officials regulated some safety issues within the city, but could not affect ticket prices, freight rates, or timetables. De-

spite local protests, the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway chose to build a bridge over the Mississippi outside the city. However, this does not mean the state was absent. Government worked in partnership with railroads, too. Similar questions might arise regarding the chapters on workers and women. Legal traditions and the political structure perhaps did not provide the sort of opportunities Morser suggests, but they did create a framework that forced these actors to find alternatives for political expression.

Readers would benefit from a clear regional map earlier in the book and a bibliographical note identifying archives and abbreviations from the notes, but these are minor issues in a cogent, well-crafted study that appropriately places government at the center of the western narrative.

For Labor, Race, and Liberty: George Edwin Taylor, His Historic Run for the White House, and the Making of Independent Black Politics, by Bruce L. Mouser. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011. xxi, 253 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewer David Brodnax Sr. is associate professor of history at Trinity Christian College. His biographical article on Judge George Grover Wright appeared in the *Yale Biographical Dictionary of American Law* in 2009.

Decades before Shirley Chisholm, Jesse Jackson, or Barack Obama ran for president, an Iowan became perhaps the first African American to do so. The life of George E. Taylor has been largely forgotten in the century since then, however, in part because he was an outsider during his lifetime. Bruce L. Mouser's biography seeks to restore Taylor as an important figure in midwestern politics, a bridge between populism and civil rights, and an example of the alternative political paths explored by the black community.

Mouser has made extensive use of newspapers to write this biography, but other sources about Taylor still prove elusive; for instance, although the politician was married three times, the fate of his first two wives is unknown. Perhaps to compensate for this lack of evidence, Mouser also explores Taylor from a psychological perspective: his sense of being an outsider, his chronic feelings of betrayal, and his willingness to take risks through new locations, jobs, and organizations.

The story begins during the Civil War in La Crosse, Wisconsin, where Taylor was raised by a black foster family and became a pro-labor journalist and political activist in Democratic and third-party organizations. He largely ignored racial issues, though, until he moved in 1891 to Oskaloosa, Iowa, whose black population was 24 times as large as La Crosse's. There, Mouser argues, Taylor "narrowed his focus