

Fryxell's monograph achieved more than just a snapshot of Hayden's early career. It also presented a much larger picture of American science in the 1850s. Its narrative and analysis of the relationships and ambitions of naturalists in the Midwest was perhaps its most valuable contribution to the history of American science. Hayden's writings, and Fryxell's brief analysis, brilliantly addressed the processes and challenges that these naturalists faced throughout the Midwest. The monograph is an excellent source for historians of western and mid-western history because it exemplifies the challenges and ambitions of these early naturalists as they attempted to impose their professional ambitions on the unstudied regions of places like Iowa, South Dakota, and Missouri.

Steamboats West: The 1859 American Fur Company Missouri River Expedition, by Lawrence H. Larsen and Barbara J. Cottrell. Western Lands and Waters Series. Norman, Oklahoma: The Arthur H. Clark Company, an imprint of the University of Oklahoma Press, 2010. 256 pp. Illustrations, map, table, index. \$34.95 cloth.

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Well-written accounts of exploration generally make for compelling reading, and *Steamboats West* is no exception. Lawrence H. Larsen and Barbara J. Cottrell have written a narrative history of an expedition by steamboat to the country bordering the Missouri River undertaken by the American Fur Company in 1859. At the core of their narrative are extended, well-chosen entries from the journals of Charles Henry Weber, one of the passengers on the expedition, and Elias Marsh, its medical officer. The Missouri River's economic and political significance in 1859 extended about 1,000 miles above its junction with the Mississippi. A major reason for the American Fur Company's expedition that year was to move that point upriver and to demonstrate the possibilities that lay along the river's upper reaches.

In a 44-page introduction, Larsen and Cottrell describe the topography of the land along the Missouri River, steamboat navigation on the river, and the American Fur Company's interests along the Missouri and how it prepared for its ambitious expedition. The introduction concludes with a page-long explanation of how "from start to finish [the book's narrative] unfolds chronologically, with the journal entries [of Weber and Marsh] interspersed throughout the text" (44). Excerpts

from letters and diaries of earlier travelers augment the narrative and journal entries by Weber and Marsh.

Although the book has little in it for readers interested specifically in Iowa history, it will nevertheless increase their understanding of the Missouri River's important role in the state's development, particularly of its western section, including Council Bluffs. Omaha, just across the river, receives more attention from both those on the expedition and Larsen and Cottrell, probably because it was already the bigger place in 1859.

That year, the impending Civil War was far from most people's thoughts. Instead, much of the country, particularly Americans living in the Mississippi River valley and along the lower reaches of the Missouri River, watched with enthusiasm as advances in the means of transportation, especially railroads and steamboats, opened up ever more territory for settlement. That enthusiasm greeted the launching of the 1859 expedition and hailed its successful conclusion.

Crew and passengers boarded the expedition's two steamboats, the 356-ton *Chippewa* and the far larger *Spread Eagle*, which, at 556 tons, would have made it one of the largest boats on the Mississippi River, where most of the nation's largest steamboats were to be found. Their voyage from St. Louis to Fort Benton, in what is now Montana, and back totaled some 6,200 miles and took more than four months. Apart from surviving river hazards, mishaps, and disease and making valuable observations on the weather, fauna, flora, and people encountered, all recorded in journals and diaries, perhaps the explorers' greatest achievement was their demonstration that steamboat travel on the middle and upper stretches of the Missouri River was practical. That accomplishment had the ultimately unrealized potential to open the lands along the river to settlement and commercial development.

Larsen and Cottrell rightly point out that steam navigation was the vanguard of settlement and development, or, as the *Scientific American* asserted on March 9, 1850, "Where the steamboat goes, there the wilderness disappears." But the authors also note that the founding of towns along the upper reaches of the Missouri "remained limited until the arrival of railroads" after the Civil War (81). In the end, the railroad eclipsed the steamboat on the Missouri, just as it did along the Ohio and Mississippi.

Steamboats West is a useful addition to a large and growing body of literature on inland steam navigation in the United States. The narrative is engaging, and well-selected drawings, a table, and a map depicting the sights along the course of the expedition nicely complement the text.