

Cher Oncle, Cher Papa: The Letters of Francois and Berenice Chouteau, by Dorothy Brandt Marra, translated by Marie-Laure Dionne Pal, edited by David Boutros. Kansas City: Western Historical Manuscript Collection, 2001. xiii, 304 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa is a doctoral student at Michigan State University. His dissertation is a study of federal Indian policy reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Cher Oncle, Cher Papa is the result of painstaking recovery, translation, and transcription work conducted throughout the 1990s by David Boutros, Dorothy Marra, and Marie-Laure Pal. Although the process of recovering and translating this previously unpublished correspondence was arduous, the author notes that "the marvel is that the message . . . is still available" (4). This narrative-driven account of the fur trade along the Missouri and Kansas rivers ties together 78 letters penned by Francois Chouteau, a member of the historically significant St. Louis Chouteau family, and his wife, Berenice, to her father-in-law and Francois' business partner Pierre Menard of Kaskaskia, Illinois. That Chouteau addressed Menard with the endearing "Cher Oncle" is significant because it demonstrates how critical the French familial relationships were for the fur trade in the early nineteenth-century Midwest. Overall, these letters, 72 of which came from Francois and 6 from his wife, address a number of topics, including fur trade business matters, traders' relationships with indigenous peoples, and frontier family concerns.

The Chouteau-Menard correspondence demonstrates the tenuous nature of the midwestern fur trade in the French period. Men such as Francois had to continually build and maintain partnerships by extending credit and other "kindnesses" to various native groups, many of which, as part of the federal government's removal policies, were recent arrivals to the Kansas and Missouri region. More significantly, though, Chouteau's letters also demonstrate the ways native peoples shaped French understandings of trade relations. Despite the influx of new traders, particularly Anglo-American traders whose entrepreneurial spirit encouraged increasingly competitive and often corrupt trade practices, Marra asserts that Chouteau continued to envision "a business world based on patronage, family ties, and favors given and received" (33). Later she writes that "the Anglo-American approach to business . . . annoyed and possibly offended Francois" (49).

Berenice, whom the author describes glowingly, was both strong and courageous. During one ill-fated riverboat journey, she wrested a gun from her enraged father-in-law, Pierre Chouteau Sr., and "held it

fast," thus ensuring the safety of the inept boatman and consequently the lives of her unborn child (she was pregnant at the time) and her two young sons (30). Her upbringing on the Illinois frontier also prepared Berenice for wilderness life. Her letters, while few in number, reveal the ways she strove to maintain or strengthen family relationships as well as her fears and anxieties about the hardships frontier families faced on a regular basis.

Cher Oncle, Cher Papa will be of particular interest to scholars who study westward expansion, the fur trade, and the Midwest in general. Although occasionally repetitious, the letters and narrative are interesting, and the appendixes, including a lengthy glossary of "people, places, and things," contain a wealth of material. Perhaps the book's most important contribution, though, is that it gives readers a sample of the rich materials available at state and regional historical societies in Illinois and Missouri, and for that it should be commended.

Seduced by the West: Jefferson's America and the Lure of the Land Beyond the Mississippi, by Laurie Winn Carlson. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003. xii, 236 pp. Notes, index. \$26.00 cloth.

Reviewer Roger L. Nichols is professor of history at the University of Arizona. He is the author of many books and articles on exploration and American Indians on the frontier.

With the opening of the Lewis and Clark Expedition bicentennial in 2003, local chambers of commerce, historical societies, and publishers have all hurried to offer the public something related to that historic undertaking. This book is one of those ventures. The author presents the explorers' impressive trek as a direct outgrowth of President Thomas Jefferson's desperate efforts to lure Spain into war. Her argument posits the expedition as bait the president held out, hoping that Spanish forces would attack Lewis and Clark and thereby give him an excuse to declare war on Spain. Such a conflict would gain Florida and parts of present Texas and the Southwest for the United States.

Before rejecting this scenario out of hand, one should remember how chaotic the situation was in the trans-Appalachian region after national independence. Pioneer farmers in Kentucky and Tennessee depended on the Mississippi River to get their crops to market, and Spain refused to let them navigate that stream to New Orleans. The new U.S. government lacked the power or the will to secure the use of the river, so hundreds of pioneers at least considered either joining the Spanish or creating a new nation beyond the mountains.

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