

Prologue to Lewis and Clark: The Mackay and Evans Expedition, by W. Raymond Wood. American Exploration and Travel Series 79. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003. xvii, 234 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Theodore J. Karamanski is professor of history at Loyola University Chicago. His many books and articles include *Fur Trade and Exploration: The Opening of the Far Northwest, 1821-1852* (1983).

The ability to tell a good story, to relate a tale of hardship and adventure, is as important to the reputation of an explorer as the ability to probe the features of an unknown land and return again to civilization. The history of North American exploration is replete with the examples of men who penetrated new lands, produced maps valuable to future commerce and settlement, yet whose glory has been confined to a scholar's footnote. James Mackay and John Thomas Evans were two such men. The fame of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, William Clark, and Meriwether Lewis rests almost as much on the continuing appeal of their narratives to succeeding generations as it does on their prodigious exploits themselves. Mackay and Evans may well have been the most significant explorers of North America during the years between Mackenzie's activities in the far Northwest (1789-1793) and Lewis and Clark's journey to the Pacific (1804-1806), but they produced little in the way of a written record, and their memories are not honored either in popular acclaim or in geographic place names.

Through the work of W. Raymond Wood, an archaeologist deeply experienced in the cartographic history of the early West, Mackay and Evans are restored to their significant, if somewhat eccentric, place in the history of Missouri River exploration. The heart of Wood's book is the story of Mackay and Evans's 1795-1797 journey of trade and discovery from St. Louis up the Missouri River to the Mandan villages in modern North Dakota. James Mackay was a Scot with experience as a fur trader gained in several years' service to the Northwest Company. John Thomas Evans was a dreamy Welshman drawn to the West to prove the legend of Prince Madoc, who in 1170 was supposed to have led a group of followers to the New World. According to Wood, Evans had an "almost religious dedication to locate the Madocs" (43), a blue-eyed race of Welsh Indians he expected to find on the upper Missouri River.

Wood is very strong in explaining the cartographic contribution of Mackay and Evans. He makes clear that it was Mackay's map of the Missouri River that guided Lewis and Clark for the first 1,550 miles of their epic journey and that Mackay's maps and journal are a crucial supplement to work of the Corps of Discovery. Perhaps because of

limited sources, Wood is less clear on the commercial aspirations of the Missouri Company, a Spanish "Syndic of commerce" (30) organized in 1794 to control the fur trade of the upper Missouri River. The company sent three expeditions up the river; the Mackay and Evans expedition was the third and by far the most successful.

Wood does an excellent job of placing the Mackay-Evans exploration in the context of the clash of empires between Great Britain and Spain on the Great Plains of the late eighteenth century. Iowa readers will be particularly interested in his discussion of the attempts by Spanish officials to stop British fur traders from using the Des Moines River to reach the Indians of the middle Missouri valley. By that route the British were able to secure the lion's share of the Missouri trade and frustrate Spanish merchants who labored up the Missouri River from St. Louis. In November 1795 Mackay built Fort Charles on the Nebraska side of the river with the specific intention of blocking the British traders coming across Iowa. Mackay abandoned that post in 1797, however, and, like the reputation of its founder, it was, in Wood's words, "left to molder" (133).

Wood has produced an interesting study of a pair of lesser known, yet significant, explorers whose experience and maps helped to prepare the way for Lewis and Clark. The value of Wood's book, however, lies as much in his account of the Mackay and Evans expedition's failures as in their cartographic contributions. Like Mackay and Evans, Lewis and Clark faced the economic blockades of tribes such as the Omaha and Sioux, endured the frustrations of trying to move a large group of men and supplies up the relentless current of the Missouri River, and aspired to the same goal, to reach the Pacific Ocean. That such competent explorers as Mackay and Evans failed to attain their goal only serves to highlight the remarkable accomplishments of the Corps of Discovery less than a decade later.

Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era, by Nicole Etcheson. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004. xiv, 370 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

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One reason Americans remain fascinated by the Civil War and its antecedents is the issue of the meaning of American liberty. The struggle over slavery extension in Kansas, Nicole Etcheson asserts, was the opening act of that drama, in which ideology, politics, violence, and

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