

Book Reviews

Black Hawk's Autobiography, edited by Roger L. Nichols. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1999. xxxi, 106 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, chronology, bibliographical note, index. \$21.95 cloth.

Reviewer Thomas Burnell Colbert is professor of history at Marshalltown Community College. He is the author of articles on Populism, agricultural technology, and American Indians.

In 1833, after being released from incarceration at Fort Monroe, Virginia, Sauk war chief Black Hawk rejoined his people. The year before, he and his followers had been almost wiped out when they attempted to resettle in their former main village, Saukenuk, on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River. Defeated, Black Hawk was now instructed to keep the peace and to follow the dictates of Keokuk, his longtime tribal rival. In the face of this devastation, Black Hawk informed Antoine LeClaire, the official U.S. interpreter for the Sauk and Meskwaki tribes, that he wanted white Americans to hear his story. Consequently, Black Hawk related to LeClaire the events of his life, the ways of his culture, and how he understood the world around him. LeClaire took Black Hawk's account to newspaperman John B. Patterson, who published Black Hawk's autobiography in 1834. Four years later, the old chief was dead, but his autobiography grew to be a classic of American Indian and frontier literature.

Different editions of Black Hawk's autobiography have appeared over the years, as have several biographies of the Sauk leader, including *Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path* (1992), by Roger L. Nichols, the editor of this version of the famous autobiography. Nichols suggests that readers should look for the views and statements that might have been genuinely Black Hawk's. Toward that end, Nichols offers a succinct but valuable introductory essay providing an overview of Black Hawk's life, the basis of his autobiography, and current literary analysis of the work. Nichols wants readers to be able to perceive as much as possible the "authentic Indian voice" (xix), in order to understand Sauk practices and Black Hawk's true personal views.

Nichols's suggestion may challenge some readers. Through the years readers have profited from this work without seriously questioning the veracity of its contents, especially Black Hawk's viewpoints. They have read it for the story, even though they realized that Black Hawk did not personally write it. Today, however, critical read-

ers recognize that LeClaire and especially Patterson determined how this autobiography read. They included many remarks that Black Hawk probably did not make, for Patterson edited what LeClaire brought to him to make the life story of the then-famous Black Hawk appealing to white readers. Although Nichols wants readers to understand Black Hawk and Sauk life, he does not overwhelm us with an array of scholarly annotations. Rather, he provides enough to clarify particular individuals and places, but the bulk of the book is the text. He also supplies a short, solid bibliographical essay.

Although Nichols's concern for credibility is well placed, much of what is contained in this new edition of Black Hawk's autobiography is clearly either true or accurately reflects Black Hawk's thinking. For instance, Black Hawk's comments on his family history and life, his remarks on Sauk cultural ways, his rendering of his actions in the Black Hawk War, and his antipathy toward Keokuk all seem to honestly stem from Black Hawk.

Black Hawk may well be Iowa's most famous Indian, even though he lived in the area that became the state only during his last few years. His autobiography is well worth reading, and Roger Nichols and Iowa State University Press should be commended for bringing it to the public in a compact yet edifying format with the injunction that "modern readers using some care can indeed find much that was Sauk and that was Black Hawk in this account" (xxi).

Love and Valor: Intimate Civil War Letters between Captain Jacob and Emeline Ritner, edited by Charles F. Larimer. Western Spring, IL: Signourney Press, 2000. 453 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Kenneth L. Lyftogt is a lecturer in history at the University of Northern Iowa. He is the author of *From Blue Mills to Columbia: Cedar Falls and the Civil War* (1993) and editor of *Left for Dixie: The Civil War Diary of John Rath* (1993).

Students of the American Civil War have long been fortunate in the availability of research materials. There are national and state military and political records, as well as an abundance of memoirs and personal letters. *Love and Valor*, as an example of a collection of personal letters, edited and annotated into book form, deserves to take its place in the Civil War bibliography.

The book is the result of years of family research by Charles F. Larimer of Illinois. Larimer explains in the book's introduction how he became interested in the subject and how he was able to use the Internet to enhance what was originally a family collection of letters from Jacob

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