

appointed a lieutenant colonel of the local militia and also a judge at the Ste. Genevieve Court of Common Pleas, positions he employed in dispensing his own peculiar brand of justice and solidifying his various land claims. As a judge, he meted out justice with a rifle draped across his lap. After suffering a series of disappointments in Missouri, Smith T moved to Texas, where he fared no better: "the intrigue on the Southwestern frontier was complicated by shifting alliances, divided loyalties, conflicting policies, and uncontrollable policies" (131).

All in all, this is a well-documented work about an unscrupulous character on the early Missouri frontier. Steward has done an admirable job of separating the man from the legend, and he provides a fairly cogent narrative of the relationships Smith T developed with friend and foe on the Missouri frontier. Although the work satisfactorily portrays Smith T and his various roles in Missouri and other parts of the West, it would be stronger if Steward had availed himself of more of the secondary literature dealing with such topics as the land office business, and more recent scholarship dealing with the institution of slavery and its impact on the nascent capitalism of the trans-Mississippi West, especially since Smith T relied on slaves to provide the labor for his lead mines and related enterprises. Although it offers nothing new to our understanding of the trans-Mississippi West, Steward's biography of Smith T is nevertheless a welcome addition to the available biographical literature of the region.

The Wisconsin Frontier, by Mark Wyman. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998. History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier Series. vii, 336 pp. Maps, illustrations, essay on sources, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Paula M. Nelson is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. She is the author of *After the West Was Won: Homesteaders and Town-Builders in Western South Dakota, 1900-1917* and *The Prairie Winnows Out Its Own: The West River Country of South Dakota in the Years of Depression and Dust*.

Today, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, looks much like other American towns of 5,000 or so people. It has its strip of fast food restaurants and chain motels snaking along the major highway east of town, its faded downtown section a few blocks off the main drag, its signs saluting its high school sports teams and their championships over the years. But Prairie du Chien has something unique: its location near the mouth of the Wisconsin River, on the broad plain where the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers meet. Its location provides Prairie du Chien with a lovely geographic backdrop for its daily life and with a rich and di-

verse history that reaches back into the seventeenth century, with the arrival of the French explorers and traders. A local bank's billboard sums it up quite succinctly: "Rendezvous in Prairie du Chien, a center of trade for over 300 years."

Mark Wyman tells much of this history and that of other interesting Wisconsin places and peoples in his book, *The Wisconsin Frontier*. Wyman's book is part of the important History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier series, edited by Walter Nugent and Malcolm Rohrbough, and published by Indiana University Press. The goal of the series is to tell the story of "the First American West" in all its vigor and drama, to detail the complex relations between native peoples, Europeans, and Anglo-Americans in the region, and to document "the opening and closing of the settlement frontier" in each of the trans-Appalachian frontier states (xi, xiii). Mark Wyman meets these goals with grace and intelligence, telling the complicated story of crossroads Wisconsin clearly and sympathetically.

Wyman begins with the arrival of the French in the seventeenth century, their motivations and their explorations. He then casts back into geological, prehistoric, and "pre-European" times to explain what and who the French found when they set their canoes toward the south out of Canada to establish the first European frontier on Wisconsin soil. These first two chapters lay the critical foundation for all that comes after.

Wyman constructs his story as one would build a dense, rich, multilayered cake. The story of the fur trade, with its complex interactions between the French and the Indians comes next, followed by the details of the international sparring over the region and its impact on Indians and fur traders alike. The next layer contains the story of, first, U.S. involvements and the War of 1812, next, the arrival of the lead miners, and so forth, until agriculture, massive European immigration, and the logging frontier are clearly detailed. The flavor is bittersweet. Wyman never loses sight of the original inhabitants and the impact of events on their ways of life, or of the impact of events on the land itself and the changes, even destruction, that large-scale development brought to it. Wyman ends the story in 1900, when the passenger pigeon had become extinct and when logging declined sharply because the Big Woods was nearly gone.

By 1900, attitudes had changed as well. Wisconsin native Hamlin Garland, in several books, had cast an unforgiving eye on the struggles of settlers on the prairie frontiers of the West. The popularity of his grim realism indicated a new American willingness to reassess the frontier story in terms of destruction and loss. Another Wisconsin na-

tive, Frederick Jackson Turner, in 1893, wrote the valediction for the American frontier in his famous essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Growing up in Portage, Turner witnessed firsthand the panoply of nineteenth-century Wisconsin history. In saying his eloquent farewell to the frontier he also provided tools for historians to analyze and understand it. In *The Wisconsin Frontier*, Mark Wyman uses Turner's tools wisely and well, and demonstrates that Turner's bold schema still has utility, at least for the trans-Appalachian frontier.

In Prairie du Chien, every June, for just one weekend, it is possible to go back to the beginning of Wisconsin history. A huge rendezvous sprawls across the flats next to the Mississippi River, in the shadow of Villa Louis, a fur trader's mansion. Buckskins and tipis reappear and campfire smoke wafts across the breeze to the graves of the ancestors in the French cemetery nearby. *The Wisconsin Frontier* tells the story that rendezvous recalls and the stories of the generations who followed. Anyone interested in the history of Wisconsin, of the Great Lakes region, or of the trans-Appalachian frontier will learn much from this book.

Democracy and Slavery in Frontier Illinois: The Bottomland Republic, by James Simeone. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000. ix, 289 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$38.00 cloth.

Reviewer Gunja Sengupta is assistant professor of history at Brooklyn College, City University of New York, and the author of *For God and Mammon: Evangelicals and Entrepreneurs, Masters and Slaves in Territorial Kansas, 1854-1860* (1996).

Scholars have long debated the pungent paradox of slavery and freedom in American society. The historian Edmund Morgan argued persuasively that the advent of black bondage helped alleviate social conflict among whites and facilitated the grant of political concessions to propertyless males in colonial Virginia. Along a similar vein, many interpreters of the antebellum South have suggested that slave society represented a "herrenvolk democracy," defined as "democratic for the master race and tyrannical for the subordinate groups" (7). Now, in a provocative new work on frontier Illinois, political scientist James Simeone reconceptualizes the dynamic between class and race in shaping the politics of democracy and slavery in a "free" state. Focusing on a campaign by a group of state legislators in the early 1820s to amend the state constitution and introduce slavery into Illinois through popular sovereignty, Simeone contends that this convention movement (as it was called) represented a populist moment in the

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