

vention in 1879. Bordin insists, however, that the election did not symbolize a fundamental change from a temperance praying society to an activist organization but rather stresses the continuity between the Wittenmyer and Willard years. She argues that they served together as national officers for five years prior to Willard's election and that the seeds of future activism germinated during that period. Under any circumstance, it was under Willard's leadership that the WCTU grew into what Bordin calls the "major vehicle through which women developed a changing role for themselves in American society."

The Union was the first mass movement of women in American history. Its membership included women of all classes, races, religions, and nationalities. It provided for a generation of American women the opportunity to develop the experience, confidence, and know-how that facilitated the larger efforts they would undertake in the new century. American women learned how to "get things done" in a manner that would benefit them and society as a whole. Ruth Bordin has provided an important addition to the shelves of those interested in women's history, the history of political action groups, reform movements, and related topics. Iowans will be particularly interested in the important role played by Annie Wittenmyer in the temperance and women's movements.

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American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in Native American History, edited by Christopher Vecsey and Robert W. Venables. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980. pp. xxv, 208. Photographs, map, table, index. \$9.95 paper, \$18.00 cloth.

Anthologies of Native American history have become endemic of late. This writer has reviewed three of them in as many months. Yet, if one were to choose just one collection to read this year that was both historically enlightening and directly relevant to contemporary issues, that one should be *American Indian Environments*.

The ten essays in this volume (seven of which were presented at a 1979 symposium sponsored by Hobart and William Smith Colleges and three from a history forum held that same year at Duquesne University) explore the relationship of Native Americans to their environments, their perception of the natural world, their dependence on it, and their historic struggle with other cultural groups over its possession and use. "Environments" in this context is taken to mean the non-human surroundings which might elsewhere be described as

"nature" or more recently the "ecosystem," i.e., the inhabitable biosphere of earth, air, and water. The underlying assumption of all of the articles, representing as they do a broad range of time, space, perspectives, and disciplines, is that a basic knowledge of Indian environments is fundamental to understanding both traditional tribal life and the history of Indian-white relations.

Within the Indian's sacred circle of creation, all life forms have equal status; a kind of universal sacredness not readily understood by the scientific Euro-Americans, who most often defined the environment in terms of exploitable natural resources. By pointing out the vast differences between Indian and non-Indian concepts of nature, subsistence, and sovereignty, the authors provide a better understanding of the white motivation for Indian removal, and the devastating effect of Euro-American ecological practices on the native population and landscape.

In their introduction, editors Vecsey and Venables set the stage by providing a brief summary of environmental relations in the pre-contact era. The first two chapters then explore connections between the physical and rational world in traditional tribal societies. In discussing environmental aspects of Native American religions, Christopher Vecsey, a history professor at Hobart and William Smith, shows the degree to which nature constitutes the paramount dimension of the Indian spiritual world. By focusing on the world view of Algonkian and Athabaskan tribes in subarctic Canada, Rutgers University historian Calvin Martin demonstrates how animals are perceived as human-like individuals who by nature of sharing the same essence and inherent spirituality as man are able to socially interact with tribal members.

Into the harmonious natural world of traditional Native American cultures the white man enters in chapter three. Wilbur Jacobs, a professor of history at the University of California at Santa Barbara, and a leading environmental scholar, provides a brilliant assessment of the effect of the exploitive attitudes and instincts of Euro-Americans on the American frontier; an impact which even in its primitive technological state is described as the "great despoliation."

Tribal dispossession and the alienation of Indians from their natural environment are two of the major themes of this collection of articles. In what is perhaps the best essay in a fine volume, William T. Hagan, a noted authority on Indian history, reviews the long history of Anglo-American contempt for Native American land tenure, and points out the bitter irony in the fact that whites have justified their destruction of native ecosystems and the displacement of large tribal

populations on the grounds that Indians did not make effective use of their lands and resources. To the extent that this rationale continues to dominate non-Indian attitudes, it remains a threat to American Indian environments. In a related essay, Robert Venables, a curator at New York's Museum of the American Indian, then discusses the environmental basis of Indian sovereignty, as typified by the Iroquois, and shows the degree to which native concepts conflict with the legal and philosophical precepts of American constitutional government.

Refugee status has been the lot of nearly every tribal group since the Anglo invasion of America. For a people whose spiritual world is so closely related to specific locales, relocation has been particularly devastating. As an example of the kind of disorientation that resulted from displacement, Laurence Hauptman, a historian at SUNY (New Paltz), describes the plight of the various uprooted bands who took refuge with the Iroquois Confederacy, but suffered cultural disintegration nonetheless. The tragic predicament of the Oneida and other New York tribes who after their removal to Wisconsin were forced to compete for meager resources with other victims of removal, is the subject of yet another essay by Robert Venables.

Bringing the issue of Indian environments into modern focus, Yale sociologist Kai Erikson and Christopher Vecsey reveal the poisoning social and environmental effects of white-owned paper mills on Grassy Narrows, a small Ojibwa community in southwestern Ontario. The imminent threat of white exploitation of Indian-controlled energy resources is what most worries Navajo Tribal Chairman Peter MacDonald, who writes about the dilemma modern tribal leaders face in trying to maintain traditional values and enjoy the economic benefits of controlled energy depletion, while at the same time accommodating the federal bureaucracy. Looking to the future, Onondaga Chief Owen Lyons expresses the view of many of today's tribal leaders: that the preservation of what remains of the Native American environment depends on the ability of Indian groups to assert and maintain their tribal sovereignty.

The importance of this collection of essays cannot be overstated. Simply put, *American Indian Environments* should be required reading for all who profess an interest in Indian history, and particularly those who deal with environmental issues relating to Indian lands and resources. This well produced volume would also make an excellent supplementary text for a variety of courses in the Native American Studies curriculum.

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