

the federal government has played a key role in this state that has prided itself on its embodiment of the yeoman farmer ideal, from the initial Louisiana Purchase to the removal of native peoples to the surveying and sale of land to more directly, especially in the twentieth century, supporting agriculture. Yet the relative homogeneity of Iowa's post-frontier population has softened overt racial or ethnic conflict compared to that in other parts of the West, and the social and environmental costs of an intensive agricultural economy tied to the world system also seem more muted — or perhaps deferred — than in other areas. Considering, then, this volume's main themes for the historical experience of the West, Iowa, especially that portion that is part of the Missouri River basin, has a clear claim to be considered a part of the West, or at least a borderland of the West.

All readers can be rewarded by delving into this book, since, as Martha S. Sandweiss put it, "Western history has long been a kind of participation sport" (671). The book does not resolve what constitutes the West, nor does it present even the outline of a complete picture of the West. Perhaps these will always remain elusive ends. Nevertheless, it is a magnificent volume. It effectively and compellingly presents the newly dominant historical perspectives on the American West. In addition, it provides a potentially stimulating context for understanding Iowa's history afresh.

On Turner's Trail: 100 Years of Writing Western History, by Wilbur R. Jacobs. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994. xviii, 342 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, appendixes, index. \$35.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY LEO E. OLIVA, FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY

Wilbur R. Jacobs, professor emeritus of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, probably knows more about Frederick Jackson Turner (1861–1932) and his influences on the writing and interpreting of the significance of the frontier in American history than any other living historian. He is also one of the finest writers of the professional craft. Jacobs has spent much of his academic career pursuing "Turner's trail," and this is the third volume in a trilogy, following *The Historical World of Frederick Jackson Turner* (1968) and *Frederick Jackson Turner's Legacy* (1977).

Turner's famous frontier thesis, stated in 1893, was probably most applicable to the Midwest. In time, however, it became the most compelling explanation for the development of America's unique democracy, individualism, and nationalism. Later, to the present day, American historians divided into pro- and anti-Turnerians, traditional-

ists and revisionists, old and new western scholars. Jacobs skillfully chronicles and evaluates these interpretive debates during the past century.

Jacobs explains Turner's early life in his native Wisconsin, his education, teaching career, publications, and the development of his viewpoints. Turner was a student of geography, biology, geology, and social Darwinism, as well as history, and he promoted comparative studies to comprehend the evolution of America's institutions. Turner's emphasis on agricultural history, treated in chapter six, is especially pertinent to Iowa. In his mature years, when the frontier which had served as a safety valve was gone, Turner became concerned about the population explosion, international conflicts, racism, and the class struggle.

As a scholar, Turner was devoted to accuracy and insight into the significance of his research. He also had shortcomings. His perspective was narrowly Anglo-Saxon, and he was a true believer in material progress. He glorified expansion and its concomitants: exploitation, violence, and greed. He ignored Indians, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and women. He misunderstood the theory of "multiple hypotheses," confusing it with "multiple causation." Even so, Turner offered an illumination of the American experience that was satisfying to many people. His frontier thesis could not be ignored.

Jacobs probes the conflicts that evolved after Turner's death: Frederick Merk versus Ray Allen Billington, Richard White versus the Turnerians, and current detractors (White, Patricia Limerick, Donald Worster, and William Cronon) versus defenders (Martin Ridge, Allan Bogue, Howard Lamar, and Jacobs himself). After deftly leading the reader through this maze, Jacobs declares that "the inescapable conclusion persists that after one hundred years Turner remains the most influential of American historians, among the brightest and the best we have produced" (247). Professional historians will find this volume most worthwhile, and discriminating general readers will be profoundly rewarded.

John Sutter and a Wider West, edited by Kenneth N. Owens. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. x, 138 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$22.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY J. THOMAS MURPHY, WACO, TEXAS

Arriving in California in 1839, John A. Sutter aspired to become "one of the wealthiest Citizens on the Pacific." But the discovery of gold, he lamented forty years later, "destroyed all my enterprises and plans

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.