

Book Reviews and Notices

Fresh Water Passages: The Trade and Travels of Peter Pond, by David Chapin. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. xiv, 367 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Claiborne A. Skinner is an instructor at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in Aurora, Illinois. He is the author of *The Upper Country: French Enterprise in the Colonial Great Lakes* (2008).

It is strange to think that 250 years ago Iowa was not so much the heartland of America as the edge of the known world. To be sure, French traders had pushed up the Missouri and the Arkansas Rivers, and some had reached as far as Sante Fe and Taos. In the north, Pierre Gaultier La Vérendrye had explored west to the upper Missouri River from Lake Winnipeg. But those efforts had not been sustained and, with the Conquest of New France, had halted completely. As the British assumed control of the continent, their grasp of its geography really ended at the west bank of the Mississippi, the Red River of the North, and Lake Winnipeg. The great push to the prairies and the Pacific would fall to a new generation of explorers, including the New Englander Peter Pond.

Born in Connecticut, Pond had served in the French and Indian War. Sizing up his prospects at its conclusion, he had gone west with the fur trade first out of Albany, New York, and then Montreal. Over the next 40 years, he would become a noted trader, explorer, and cartographer. David Chapin has done a remarkable job of bringing this important yet mysterious character to life. In the process, he illuminates the early years of the North West Company. He also does fascinating work tying Pond's famous maps to a global quest for knowledge. The man was not simply a fur trader with a talent for maps. He kept abreast of exploration in general and tried to tie his work to what was being learned about the contemporary Pacific.

For me, the most fascinating part of the book is how Pond dealt with the Revolutionary War. His relatives in Connecticut became staunch patriots while he hewed to the British side in his pursuit of the fur trade. After the war, he returned home but, concluding that the Confederation Congress was unlikely to fund his plans for western exploration, returned to Montreal in pursuit of backers. From the evidence presented, it does not appear that he held strong Loyalist sympathies; he was simply a man who followed the fur trade, and Canada and the British Empire

afforded him the best opportunity of doing so. Moreover, his family and old neighbors appear to have held no grudge against him for it. In perhaps the most touching episode in the book, Pond returns home to Connecticut dressed in the finery of a *bourgeois gentilhomme* of Montreal. He was thought odd by the sober Calvinist merchants of the town, but there was no hostility to him as a Loyalist. It would seem that by the late 1780s the passions of war had dissipated and the world had moved on.

Chapin is to be congratulated for the research that went into this book. He has gone back to the primary documents to address a number of controversial previously reported incidents in Pond's career and found that they probably never happened. He has also cleared up a number of details of where Pond was when. I suspect that this will be the definitive biography of the man for a long time to come. The impressive detail sometimes comes at a price, however. The author's quest to nail down the details of Pond's career sometimes makes for heavy going for lay readers. A more serious complaint relates to the book's maps. Most of Pond's career was in the far northwest, and his geographical insights were largely associated with that region. It is unfamiliar territory for most of us, and the maps reproduced or interpreted in the text are too small to provide much help to a reader seeking to keep track of Pond's vast travels.

Conflicted Mission: Faith, Disputes and Deception on the Dakota Frontier, by Linda M. Clemmons. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2014. 274 pp. Map, illustrations, graphs, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.95 paperback; \$15.99 e-book.

Reviewer Michael Knock is assistant professor of history at Clarke University. His Ph.D. dissertation (University of Notre Dame, 1996) was "'Alone with Sitting Bull's People': The Dakota Indian Mission of the Congregational Church, 1870-1937."

Conflict is at the heart of many cultural interactions, especially where religion is involved. That is not news. What is news are the conflicts that missionaries often have with one another, their spouses, and their parent organization. In some cases it is these conflicts that pose the greatest challenge to mission work. That is the idea behind Linda M. Clemmons's *Conflicted Mission: Faith, Disputes and Deception on the Dakota Frontier*. The book furthers our understanding of the sometimes turbulent relationships that characterized the work of missionaries who represented the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) on the Minnesota frontier in the decades prior to the Dakota War of 1862.