

THEY SAW THE EARLY MIDWEST:
A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TRAVEL NARRATIVES,
1727-1850

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The following bibliography is the second in a series of three that list travel narratives, journals, and diaries, covering the period before 1850, published in Midwestern historical magazines. The first, "They Saw the Early Midwest: A Bibliography of Travel Narratives, 1722-1850," appeared in the Autumn, 1953, *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, pp. 283-9. The present article is devoted to the trans-Mississippi Midwest: the states of Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, and South and North Dakota.

Although many of the books of early Middle Western travel are comparatively well known, the accounts given below were not printed until long after the events described in them had taken place and, consequently, were unfamiliar to readers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Since most of these narratives were not written by professional authors or intended for publication, they obviously lack the literary merits of books by people like Dickens, Irving, Marryat, and Mrs. Trollope. Nevertheless, here and there is a well-written account, an episode told so interestingly that even a skilled author could scarcely have done better. The opening of the Midwestern frontier is a colossal chapter in the epic of America, and these diaries and journals reflect the atmosphere and spirit of this region at that period of its development. Granted that many of these writers would have been more successful had they exerted more pains and used some literary skill, their narratives remain indispensable for a true and complete picture of the time and section of the country they depict.

The bibliography given below has been compiled from eighteen historical magazines of the trans-Mississippi Midwest:

Missouri Historical Society Collections
Glimpses of the Past (St. Louis)
The Missouri Historical Review
The Iowa Historical Record

- Annals of Iowa*
The Palimpsest (Iowa City)
Iowa Journal of History and Politics (from 1949, *Iowa Journal of History*)
Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society
Minnesota History (sometimes called *Minnesota History Bulletin*)
Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society
The Kansas Historical Quarterly
Nebraska State Historical Society Transactions and Reports
Proceedings and Collections of Nebraska State Historical Society.
The Nebraska History Magazine
South Dakota Historical Collections
The South Dakota Historical Review
Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota
North Dakota History
The North Dakota Historical Quarterly

The issues included are those from the initial publication date to the present.

The compositions date from 1727, only five years later than do those of the Eastern Midwest; but a larger proportion of them are about the period from 1830 to 1850. As with the Eastern Midwest, the French, because they were the first to explore, were the first to describe the new lands. Numerous other nationalities — British, German, Dutch, and native American — were represented. River trips up the Missouri, Mississippi, Kaw, and Platte; exploring and hunting expeditions; and adventures and encounters with the Indians were the most common types of narratives. Although the travelers often endured almost unimaginable hardships, they were seldom adversely critical of the region's manners and mores as were the foreign novelists who bemoaned the lack of an American cultural heritage.

A study of the best of the accounts listed below would be valuable to a historian or to a writer of historical fiction. Since the authors of these narratives actually lived the incidents they described, they give a first-hand insight into the early Midwest such as no textbook can. The items have been arranged chronologically, and asterisks have been placed before those which are either well written or above the average in reader-appeal. Those covering more than one year have been grouped under the first date. Abbreviations in parentheses after the page numbers indicate the nationality of the author, the section of America of which he is a native, or an account of a particular type: Fr. = French; Br. = British; Ger. = German; Dut. = Dutch; EA = Eastern American; MWA = Midwestern Ameri-

can; and IC = Narrative of Indian Captivity. Letters have not been included unless they are distinctly narrative in form. If a work is a reprint, that fact and the publication from which it has been taken are given after it.

A forthcoming and concluding article in this series will list travel accounts in minor historical journals of the Eastern Midwest.

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