

North American Exploration. Volume 3, a Continent Comprehended

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North American Exploration. Volume 3, A Continent Comprehended, edited by John Logan Allen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. ix, 656 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$75.00 cloth.

MEL PREWITT, SCOTT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

This, the final of three volumes on the exploration of North America, examines the period from the Age of Jefferson until the early twentieth century. Eight noted scholars contributed the nine essays that illustrate the shift in purpose and priorities of exploration by the various national and economic interests that became the major players in the exploratory process. As the goals of the Enlightenment era declined in importance, British, Spanish, Russian, and American explorers and governments established new national interests and frontiers. At the same time, frontiers were being negotiated among the Hudson's Bay Company, the Northwest Company, and a host of lesser economic contenders. Those companies' profits and corporate futures were determined by their ability to discover and maintain territory and by the varying presence of fur-bearing animals and Native American loyalties.

The first two volumes of the series addressed the process of North American exploration from the first contact made by the Norsemen. Volume one, *A New World Described*, dealt primarily with the late fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, the time of the Spanish exploration of the Gulf and Pacific coasts, the earliest settlement of the Atlantic coast, and the continuing search for the elusive and tantalizing Northwest Passage. The second volume, *A Continent Defined*, continued from the mid-sixteenth century through the eighteenth century. As efforts turned from discovery to exploration, the French mapped the interior of eastern North America from New France as the Spanish expanded northward from New Spain. The English occupied most of the Atlantic coast, and many countries supported voyages along the Pacific coast. Still, much of the continent remained *terra incognita*.

It is this, volume three, that scholars of the North American West and far north will find most gratifying. The opening chapter, by James P. Ronda of the University of Tulsa, sets a no-nonsense but comfortable tone as he tells the story of the exploration and national expansion resulting from government expeditions of Lewis and Clark, Zebulon Pike, and others. Ronda's ability to use scholarly research to craft an essay of high adventure is a joy for readers and a surprise to those unaware of his work. Geographer John Logan Allen authors two essays that describe the contributions made by the fur trade explorers in filling the great void labeled *terra incognita* on North American maps. *A Continent Comprehended* is not limited to viewpoints of those south of the

forty-ninth parallel, as three of the eight contributors represent Canadian scholarship: Suzanne Zeller, William Weiser, and W. Gillies Ross. Each describes northern expeditions as discoveries became increasingly devoted to the inventory of information—facts that might support expansion of science, commerce, and empire. Other authorities whose scholarship is included in the collection include Richard Bartlett, William H. Goetzmann, and Vincent Ponko Jr., all of whom are historians whose essays chart the final exploration of the American West.

Many illustrations and twelve maps enhance the volume. The maps, which are particularly interesting, demonstrate the changing knowledge of the continent. Be sure to keep a magnifying glass handy to enjoy the detail of these cartographic gems. Notes for all chapters are located at the end of the book along with a fairly extensive bibliography.

These essays present a realistic yet colorful account of the final phase of North American exploration. The authors seem to have no fear of portraying these expeditions, whether heroic or tragic, as the adventure stories that they indeed are. These essays describe the transition from the Enlightenment's quest for knowledge to explorations designed to collect facts and promote national and economic growth. These explorations were useful activities for excess military officers. British veterans of the Napoleonic Wars and American veterans of the Civil War spent their days filling journals with facts for the benefit of harvesters of furs, minerals, and farm fields and grasslands.

Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America, edited by John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999. 322 pp. Bibliography, notes, index. \$30.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY NICOLE ETCHESON, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold have compiled a collection of essays that discuss the uses of violence by abolitionists—black and white—and slaves who used force to escape enslavement. The collection's major themes are the centrality of violence in the abolitionist movement and the way violence tied blacks and whites in the movement to each other. The introduction is a thorough review of the historical literature on these subjects. It is useful as a general introduction to the subject of violence and the antislavery movement as well as a preview of the volume's essays.

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