

Re-Collecting Black Hawk: Landscape, Memory, and Power in the American Midwest

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Book Reviews and Notices

Re-Collecting Black Hawk: Landscape, Memory, and Power in the American Midwest, by Nicholas A. Brown and Sarah E. Kanouse. Culture, Politics, and the Built Environment Series. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015. xi, 270 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Jane Simonsen is associate professor of history at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. She is the author of *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860–1919* (2006) and “Descendants of Black Hawk: Generations of Identity in Sauk Portraits” (*American Quarterly*, 2011).

The premise undergirding Nicholas A. Brown and Sarah E. Kanouse’s book-length photo essay is long overdue: how countless midwestern locales that use the name of the Sauk leader Black Hawk to invoke an aura of historical authenticity participate in an ongoing assertion of settler-colonialism. Commemoration—whether a roadside historical marker or a commercialized image—renders the route of the so-called Black Hawk War of 1832 as a landscape of nostalgia and “casual racism” (15). The book holds relatively prosaic photos of vernacular landscapes in tension with texts that jolt readers into recognizing the dissonance between the self-assurance of yet another “Blackhawk Avenue” and the present political vitality of indigenous nations.

Sections devoted to Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois are interspersed with interviews with tribal officers, including George Thurman of the Sac and Fox Tribe of Oklahoma; historic preservationists Johnathan Buffalo (Meskwaki) and Sandra Massey (Sauk); and former language preservation officer Yolanda Pushetonequa (Sauk). These interviews, alongside essays by Michif artist Dylan Miner and Dakota activist Waziyatawin, explore the ongoing significance of indigenous history and politics and powerfully negate the “narrative of disappearance” (15) recorded in the photographs. Both Buffalo and Massey expose the nomenclature of *war* as applied to Black Hawk’s struggle as a foundational myth that has, since 1832, allowed midwesterners to characterize Black Hawk as a dangerous but eventually cowed enemy and the Sauk and Meskwaki as conquered people. They describe the ongoing political and cultural work of these communities, including repatriation, protests against “Indian” mascots, and state and local projects to

ensure the vitality of tribal identities. Miner argues for the importance of undoing the work of the endless iterations of “Black Hawk” by listening—especially for the collective memories of indigenous nations.

The book includes some 170 black-and-white photographs, most taken by the authors. Their impact lies primarily in repetition. Black Hawk’s name and sometimes his countenance appear on retirement community signs, auto repair shops, schools, business centers, parks, engineering firms, and fitness centers. Seeming tributes become insistent evasions, and signs that encourage park visitors to “help Black Hawk recycle” (25) or to “take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints” (63) profoundly erase history. Sometimes the passages—excerpted from texts such as newspapers, pamphlets, history books, and visitors’ guides—clearly counter the photographs they accompany. A photograph of a streetside mural featuring a poorly rendered version of Black Hawk—with the insignias of various civic organizations pocking his torso like bullet holes—pairs with indigenous anthropologist Audra Simpson’s assertion that “there are still Indians. . . . This failure to kill, to disappear entirely, is Indigenous life, in the face of what was to be bodily and structural death” (173). The pattern of text as “presence” to the photograph’s “disappearance” doesn’t always hold true. In an excerpt from Cecil Eby’s 1973 history of the Black Hawk War, for example, Eby condemns the practice of “capitalizing” on Black Hawk’s name yet describes an annual Labor Day powwow as an occasion when “warriors and squaws” “shuffle and jump” in “inauthentic garb” (202)—thus passing judgment on the “authenticity” of a newer sort of presence.

Readers get little guidance in deciphering the dialogue between text and image. The authors’ introduction, which relies on somewhat inaccessible theoretical language, explains that the pairings, meant to unsettle, invite readers to ask questions about historic commemoration and contemporary politics and, ultimately, to ask, “What is to be done?” (6). While possible answers are embedded in some of the texts, they are not always easy to evaluate. To what extent have Wisconsin’s 2011 “Protocols on Working with Tribes” been successful? How can the Violence Against Women Act best address the needs of indigenous women? What do responsible commemorative practices look like?

These questions might be difficult for the beginning student of indigenous or public history to answer, but they are indeed worth asking. The book, not necessarily best read straight through, might work better outside the classroom in museum shops or even on coffee tables, where browsing readers might be provoked into questioning the way they apprehend the landscapes around them. Clearly about the Mid-

west, *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* has the potential to provoke similar revisionings in other American places. Part of the problem, indeed, is that Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa are not alone in their projects of forgetting, nor are the Sauk and Meskwaki alone in their continuing vitality. The book should prove foundational for re-assessing similar practices across the nation.

The Inspirationists, 1714–1932, edited by Peter A. Hoehnle. American Communal Societies Series. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2015. 3 volumes. xxxiv, 1,072 pages. Notes, bibliography, index. \$495.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Lanny Haldy is executive director of the Amana Heritage Society.

Throughout its history, Iowa has been an attractive place to settle for alternative religious and social groups. That such experiments do not play a larger role in our state's story is in part because most were relatively small, short-lived, and left few written records. The Inspirationists' communal settlement of Amana, however, is one of the largest and longest lived in the United States. Amana retains a place in Iowa life today. Furthermore, because of its communal structure and meticulous community record keeping, Amana is perhaps one of the best documented communities in the Midwest.

However, the historiography of Amana, from its religious origins as the Community of True Inspiration in eighteenth-century Germany to the present, but especially its communal period in Iowa (1855–1932), has had little development. (This is in contrast to the interpretation of the Inspirationists' German experience, which German scholars have placed squarely in the context of German radical pietism, a religious tradition also not well understood in America.) The obvious barrier to an American scholar interested in Amana history is that the sources are in the German language, compounded by the fact that manuscripts are in an archaic German script. Not only has this limited their use, but it has also obscured the richness and breadth of the resources held by the Amana Church and the Amana Heritage Society. Thus many historical accounts rely on the same old secondary sources, rounding up the usual suspects: Bertha Shambaugh, Charles Nordhof, and William Rufus Perkins and Barthinius Wick, to name a few. As a result, communal Amana is rarely interpreted in the context of Iowa history.

This extensive three-volume set lays the groundwork for correcting this oversight and deepening our understanding of the Amana experience. The editor knows the sources. Peter Hoehnle is well versed in the Inspirationist faith both as an elder of the Amana Church and as an accomplished scholar of its history. Here he has collected and as-