

## Illinois in the War of 1812

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textualize nearly all *habitants'* actions as a reflection of their resistance to settler colonialism or their distinctive Creole values overwhelms other subtler ways to understand the motives of actors in this story. In a similar vein, some may find certain depictions of the communitarian Creole world romanticized, lacking in complexity. Of course this is a quibble about emphasis, not about substance. *Great Lakes Creoles* is a wonderful book, the best study I have read about a community facing settler colonialism in the nineteenth-century Midwest.

*Illinois in the War of 1812*, by Gillum Ferguson. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012. xvi, 349 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 hardcover, \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Patrick J. Jung is a professor of history and anthropology at the Milwaukee School of Engineering. He is working on a book on the history of the War of 1812 in the upper Mississippi River valley, and his article on the military history of Fort Madison appears in this issue of the *Annals of Iowa*.

The recent bicentennial of the War of 1812 resulted in a spate of books, articles, and historical conferences dedicated to reexamining the legacy of that often forgotten conflict. The region including the western Great Lakes and the upper Mississippi River valley in particular remains probably the most overlooked theater of the war, which makes Gillum Ferguson's book a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarly literature. Nevertheless, this book is not without its defects, particularly its approach to the Indian side of the conflict.

Ferguson begins by examining Illinois Territory on the eve of the war and paints an excellent portrait of the various Anglo-American, French Canadian, and Indian communities in the territory. The early losses of Mackinac Island and Detroit to the British-Indian alliance made the region of southern Illinois, where the majority of the Anglo-Americans and French Canadians resided, vulnerable during the first year of the conflict. Even more significant was the assault by the Potawatomies against the garrison of Fort Dearborn as it attempted to make its way to Fort Wayne in August 1812. Ferguson handles this oft-told tale with great clarity and provides copious citations to the various primary sources, which present a variety of irreconcilable factual differences that must be considered. Equally strong are his assessments of the many secondary works that describe the battle. Indeed, Ferguson's book provides an outstanding bibliography of the Fort Dearborn saga that will be of great value to future scholars who research this topic.

Ferguson also asserts that the war effort in Illinois Territory suffered from a lack of soldiers and resources as well as poor coordination between federal and territorial officials. The failure of Governor Ninian Edwards's campaign in the autumn of 1812 to neutralize the military power of the Indians in the Illinois River valley was symptomatic of those defects. The next year, the construction of an American fortification at Peoria did much to stymie Indian war parties in the Illinois River valley, as did the American victories in other theaters, particularly William Henry Harrison's victory at the Battle of the Thames. The final year of the war demonstrated that neither the British nor the Indians considered themselves defeated as they thwarted several expeditions that sought to extend American military power into the upper Mississippi River valley. Indian attacks against isolated settlements resulted in retaliatory raids by Americans, often against Indian communities that had made peace with the United States. Even after the war ended, Indian communities in Illinois Territory and other parts of the Old Northwest perceived themselves to be undefeated despite the seeming capitulation of their British allies.

This book is well researched, and Ferguson writes with flourish and grace. However, his failure to examine the complex dynamics of the British-Indian alliance is a definite weakness. His statement that the British in Canada "tampered with Indian tribes in U.S. territory" (1) suggests that Ferguson believes the native communities were mere British pawns. He would have done well to absorb the works of Robert S. Allen, Colin G. Calloway, Robert S. Owens, Timothy D. Willig, and John Grenier that have refined our understanding of the British-Indian alliance in the Great Lakes region. The absence of those works in Ferguson's book stands as a significant shortcoming. Moreover, the tone of the book suggests that Ferguson is constantly cheering for the white settlers against their Indian adversaries. It is telling that Ferguson describes the Indian assault against the Fort Dearborn garrison as a "massacre" (61). The destruction of a Kickapoo village later that year by the Illinois territorial militia, on the other hand, is described merely as an "attack" (83) even though twice as many people were killed (many of whom were women and children). The closing paragraph of the book in particular will cause scholars of Indian-white relations in the Old Northwest to wince: "What happened to the Indians was tragic, to be sure, but it was also inevitable, and the heroism of the generation of pioneers that subdued them must not be overshadowed by the darker aspects of the story. . . . It is all too easy, two hundred years later, for those who enjoy the wealth and security of the state they made, to condemn them for doing what they had to do to make it" (207).

Ferguson's meticulous research makes this book useful for students of the War of 1812. In particular, he sheds light on lesser-known events and small battles that characterized this conflict in a region that has been largely ignored by scholars. However, readers will be well advised to supplement this work with those that present a more balanced examination of the Indians' participation in this conflict.

*A Settler's Year: Pioneer Life Through the Seasons*, by Kathleen Ernst; photographs by Loyd Heath. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2015. 191 pp. Illustrations (mostly color), notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Jeff Bremer is assistant professor of history at Iowa State University. He is the author of *A Store Almost in Sight: The Economic Transformation of Missouri from the Louisiana Purchase to the Civil War* (2014).

This wonderfully illustrated book brings to life nineteenth-century Wisconsin settlement. Organized around the seasons that dictated farm life, *A Settler's Year* does not provide a romanticized view of the life and work of farm families. It does detail the unceasing work, bitter winters, and other difficulties families faced. Enhanced with descriptive quotes from original sources, most of the book is dedicated to telling the story of pioneer life through pictures. It contains only about 25 pages of text, but has about 150 photos (mostly color) taken at Old World Wisconsin, a 500-acre living history museum with ten working farms and interpreters in period costume. This beautiful book will be of interest to anyone seeking a brief introduction to the frontier experience in the northern Midwest.

The text mostly focuses on the story of European immigrants to Wisconsin, who made up about a third of the population of the state before the Civil War. Germans, Poles, Norwegians, and English came by the thousands each year, pushed out of their homelands by high taxes, military service, religious oppression, or a lack of economic opportunity. Their experience in Wisconsin was much like that of new settlers across the northern United States. They found seemingly endless labor, isolation, and loneliness, made tolerable by rural bonds of cooperation that provided support for farm families.

Each season has a short narrative, describing the work and daily life of pioneers. In spring, families planted crops and everyone completed chores as the days grew longer. Women and girls cared for gardens, while children guarded fields. One girl remembered her father saying that kids were cheaper than fences. In summer, all helped to cut and store hay, suffering from mosquitos, as they battled birds