

Skunk Hill: A Native Ceremonial Community in Wisconsin

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abstract, wavy bands of varying colors, a depiction of the region's geology: the sand itself. The upper segments regularly portray eagles and American flags, situating the artist and his subjects in the United States. Objects or locales are faithfully illustrated at the center of the bottles. Sucholeiki identifies a bottle depicting George Washington as Clemens's masterpiece and devotes a chapter to its development. The book closes with Sucholeiki's brief statement on Clemens as a "fully fledged professional artist" in contrast to his followers and other folk artists. Such distinctions may not be of great interest to most readers; what the book does well is document the possibility for creative, widely applauded creative expression in rural Iowa in the late nineteenth century.

Skunk Hill: A Native Ceremonial Community in Wisconsin, by Robert A. Birmingham. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2015. xii, 116 pp. Maps, illustrations, census chart, allotment chart, notes, bibliography, index. \$14.95 paperback.

Reviewer Eric Steven Zimmer is a research fellow at the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies (CAIRNS) on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. He is the author of "Settlement Sovereignty: The Meskwaki Fight for Self-Governance, 1856-1937" (*Annals of Iowa*, 2014).

In this fascinating and accessible contribution to midwestern history, archaeologist Robert A. Birmingham details the founding and decline of the village at Skunk Hill, a large community of Potawatomi people founded on the bluffs of central Wisconsin in 1905. The Skunk Hill community, he argues, "was the most prominent of several ceremonial communities in Wisconsin based around a cultural and spiritual revival movement known as the Dream Dance," often called the "Drum Dance," which "swept across the Midwest and eastern Great Plains in the late nineteenth century" (2). The U.S. government had forced these Potawatomes onto a reservation in Kansas decades earlier. They fled that place before securing dozens of land allotments around Skunk Hill on which they assembled a cohesive community of about 20 families. The Skunk Hill Potawatomes lived, worked, and worshiped on that land base for more than 20 years. They shared a communal cemetery and a space for harvesting maple sap, as well as areas for ceremonies and dances. Skunk Hill disbanded in the early 1930s after its founders, many of whom were spiritual leaders, died and most community members sold their land.

Birmingham deftly deploys archaeological and archival evidence to piece together the story of Skunk Hill. He also cultivated relation-

ships with many Skunk Hill descendants, whose oral histories molded Birmingham's reverent account of their people. At times, his book seems unshaped by some recent developments in the field of Native American history. This is reflected in the thin bibliography. But engaging in nuanced debates with specialists is not Birmingham's goal; nor is he writing exclusively for a scholarly audience. Quite the opposite—*Skunk Hill* aims squarely at general readers, and its purpose is to wrap that place in a broader historical context. Throughout, Birmingham ably weaves the processes of removal and cultural and spiritual assaults that indigenous peoples endured in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into his discussion of Skunk Hill. Accordingly, this book will give novice readers a good sense of the overarching trajectory of Indian policy—not to mention a stellar example of an indigenous survival strategy—during this period.

Driven by a good story and filled with maps, photographs, and two excellent charts of the Skunk Hill census and the many allotments that shaped this community, *Skunk Hill* is a fun, respectful, and relevant contribution to the history of Native peoples in Wisconsin and the Midwest. It will undoubtedly be cited by specialists, prized by Skunk Hill descendants, and enjoyed by regional history enthusiasts.

On a final note, *Skunk Hill* has opened a few leads that Iowa historians could pursue fruitfully. According to the Iowa General Assembly's legislative record from 1858, a cohort of Potawatomes secured permission that March to reside in Iowa. Unlike the Meskwaki Nation—which received a similar authorization in 1856 and still resides on its settlement near Tama—the Potawatomes do not seem to have stuck around the Hawkeye state. Who were these Iowa Potawatomes, and did they have any connection with those who founded Skunk Hill four decades later? Additionally, a religious movement called “the Drum Society” was active on the Meskwaki settlement in the middle of the twentieth century and was discussed at some length by the “Fox Project” anthropologists who spent time there in the 1940s and 1950s. Was this another sect of the Skunk Hill Drum Dance? If so, did it make its way to Iowa from Wisconsin, or vice versa?

Skunk Hill offers a great deal to historians of the Midwest. Perhaps best of all, however, between its cracks an essay on Iowa's Potawatomi history lies in wait.

A Rainbow Division Lieutenant in France: The World War I Diary of John H. Taber, edited by Stephen H. Taber. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2015. viii, 312 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95 paperback.