

The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old North-west

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prairie to vibrant condition. The author's discussions of habitat fragmentation—how birds use various prairie types, and how habitat availability can shape the genetic diversity of prairie-chicken subpopulations—is compelling because it links the prairie's past to its future. Small populations of birds use remaining prairie patches scattered over the landscape, exchanging (one hopes) heritable traits as part of a larger metapopulation.

Undeniably, prairie-chickens are “birds of working lands” (100). Midwestern farmers used to foster six or more crops, but simplifying the landscape negatively affected bird populations. Although the prairie ecosystem has been driven to functional extinction, the author argues that “there is room on the prairie landscape for many species of grassland birds,” given better habitat management and enough grass (10). Conservation can work successfully with grazing and haying at the township level, while patches of 320 acres scattered over the larger landscape (along with some larger core areas) would encourage various grassland birds. Government agencies, non-profit organizations, and citizens all have roles to play, but ultimately the “true fate of all these species lies in the hands of farmers, ranchers, and rural landowners” (107).

Hoch is not only a competent biologist but also a thorough researcher and a worthy author as well, drawing readers into a fascinating world of birds, biology, and history. Successfully integrating passages from historical accounts and natural history, the narrative provides reflective moments and additional insight into human interactions with wildlife. This account is a thoughtful and well-executed blend of wildlife science, history, and poetic thought.

Readers should accept Hoch's invitation to see for themselves the prairie-chickens during their courting season on the lek, when the males call with haunting voices and show off their colorful feathers while the females choose mates, shaping evolution. It is an experience promising inspiration, uplift, and a sense of renewal in witnessing prairie-chickens “booming from the mists of nowhere” (108).

The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest, by Bethel Saler. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. iv, 382 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$45.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Catherine J. Denial is the Bright Professor of American History at Knox College in Illinois. She is the author of *Making Marriage: Husbands, Wives, and the American State in Dakota and Ojibwe Country* (2013).

In *The Settlers' Empire*, Bethel Saler sets out to counter the widely held belief of many historians that there was no nation-state in place in the

United States before the Civil War. Saler argues that it was in governing its western empire that the central government of the United States gained in power and strength after the Revolution. By focusing on the Old Northwest, Saler invites us to watch the ascendancy of the United States, a process captured in treaties, policy documents, laws, court cases, literature, newspaper accounts, and the personal papers of settlers.

Saler ably proves her central point—the scaffolding of nation-making is apparent in each encounter she describes. The close attention she pays to treaty-related documents is particularly welcome; she analyzes not only the treaties themselves but also reports from Indian agents, members of the military, and treaty commissioners, demonstrating, step by step, how those representatives of the United States understood themselves to be engaged in the process of building a nation.

Saler makes her point early and often: we should look west to see the complicated workings of the new nation's statecraft. The duties of the first U.S. regiment authorized by Congress after the revolution demonstrate as much. In Saler's words, "This First Regiment also distinguished it[self] as part of a post-colonial settler regime where domestic, international, civil, and military matters blurred in the imperial spaces of the American public domain" (48).

Saler also thoughtfully presents other key agents of the United States' plans, such as the judges who sought to remake "custom of the country" marriages between Euro-Americans and Native peoples into marriages governed by American law. If left untouched, "custom" marriages, Saler argues, muddled the distinctions between whiteness and non-whiteness that were of central importance to representatives of the encroaching state. Marriage was a tool of assimilation and a means by which white male authority could be inscribed upon the domestic realm. From such well-ordered households would come well-ordered American towns and cities.

There is much to commend in Saler's book, but the author does make narrative and analytical choices that leave much unexplored. The very nomenclature of the book tells us, as readers, where to place ourselves in our imaginations: on the eastern seaboard of the United States, looking toward a place which, to similarly situated individuals, is the Northwest. The region was not Northwest to the many Native communities who lived there, Native communities whose voices are muffled in this text. We are not invited to stand beside them and look east, or to recast the region in the terms they understood and lived. Resistance to the United States' plans is also under-investigated, and early chapters fail to provide any real perspective from Native people themselves. That gives rise to an interpretive framework that wreathes U.S. actions with

a certain inevitability. For example, in concluding a section on the 1825 treaty of Prairie du Chien, Saler writes that “the conclusion of this treaty in mid-August 1825 suggested the degree to which Wisconsin Indian bands met federal authorities on unequal ground, conforming to Euro-American notions of territoriality and of their (Indian) subject nationhood” (107). Indian nations are, in this interpretation, already on a losing footing. This sits oddly with the fact that a large number of Native nations completely ignored the boundaries set by the treaty after it was signed. Happily, much greater Native agency can be found in Saler’s chapter on mission work in the region, where the author details the missionaries’ generally losing efforts to convert Native people to the Christian faith.

The Settlers’ Empire is an engaging text that paints a vibrant picture of the Midwest’s past as many settler-colonist Americans understood it. I recommend it for enthusiasts of federal policy and those with an interest in midwestern history and for purchase by university libraries.

The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuits of William Clark, by Jo Ann Trogdon. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2015. xxii, 469 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$36.95 hardcover.

Reviewer W. Raymond Wood is professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Missouri, Columbia. His most recent book (with Robert M. Lindholm) is *Karl Bodmer’s America Revisited: Landscape Views Across Time* (2013).

William Clark’s role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Meriwether Lewis renders him one of the iconic figures of nineteenth-century America. The bicentennial of that expedition resulted in a number of books detailing his life and his accomplishments in government service. But documents continue to turn up that illuminate his life; one of the most important is the journal that he kept (1798–1801) on a flatboat journey from his home in Louisville, Kentucky, to New Orleans. The journal also contained a map showing many details of features along the Mississippi. The document, housed in the State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia, was virtually overlooked after it arrived there in 1928 until Jo Ann Trogdon discovered it in 1992.

Clark left Louisville on March 9, 1798, his two flatboats containing cargoes of tobacco, furs, and salted pork. Having left the army, and hoping to begin a profitable business, he would sell the cargoes in New Orleans, which was then in Spanish Louisiana. Trogdon poses several interesting questions about Clark’s activities at his destination. Those questions revolve around whether he was somehow involved with what became known as the Spanish Conspiracy. The term refers to efforts by Spanish