

The Great Medicine Roas: Narratives of the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails, Part 3, 1850-1855

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sonian era influenced Wisconsin's constitution-writing process. The initial document the convention produced showcased broad social and political rights, including suffrage, homestead exemptions, and women's rights. Ranney supports his claim that the Midwest led the march toward equal rights, even though the convention did not ratify all of those rights at once.

The Midwest, and Wisconsin in particular, continued this march. Wisconsin made the bold move to challenge the federal Congress's authority by declaring the Fugitive Slave Act unconstitutional. After the abolition of slavery, Wisconsin enforced antisegregation laws. Throughout the Progressive Era, the Midwest produced leaders like Robert M. LaFollette, who led the Progressive movement.

Ranney also shows how conservative as well as liberal ideas display the midwestern influence on national legal culture. Wisconsin falls on the conservative side of the issue of school vouchers, but remains on the forefront of shaping legal history. Through his many examples throughout the book, Ranney illustrates that the politics of the issue matters less than the idea of individual freedom.

Ranney has made a valuable contribution to the historiography of American legal history. Throughout the book, he uses sound logic and strongly supports his claims. His research brings to light many state laws and cases that lift the ideas discussed in the book out of obscurity. Readers will come away with a new appreciation for state legal systems and their history. Historians usually show how legal trends stem from the U.S. Supreme Court and the federal Congress; Ranney flips this notion and shows how states, particularly those in the Midwest, have pushed legal trends.

I recommend this book to anyone who enjoys legal or state history. Ranney points to a variety of interesting cases and laws that stimulate thinking and offer a fresh look at legal trends. The book also stimulates pride in the Midwest. Normally we think of the coasts as driving trends, but here we see the Midwest at the forefront and having a lasting impact on the entire nation.

The Great Medicine Road: Narratives of the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails, Part 3, 1850–1855, edited by Michael L. Tate. American Trails Series 24. Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark Co., an imprint of the University of Oklahoma Press, 2017. 312 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 hardcover.

Reviewer J. T. Murphy is professor of history at Indiana University South Bend. His research and writing have focused on frontier settlement, the

Oregon Trail, and the military history of the nineteenth-century U.S. West, among other topics.

"The long looked for day arrived and a great many of our friends came to see us and help us yoke our oxen," 20-year-old John Lawrence Johnson noted in his diary on April 1, 1851. "There was much weeping at leave taking. I looked out and saw our friends from town passing, so with whip in hand I started" (70). Johnson's father, the Reverend Neill Johnson, had been asked to establish a Presbyterian church in Oregon's Willamette River valley, so the family of 12 gathered their belongings into three wagons and left Mount Pleasant, Iowa, for the journey west. As the younger Johnson walked past their locust tree, he put some seed pods into his pocket and planted them six months later at their new home. On the same day in 1852, Mary Jane Long's family crossed the Missouri River at Council Bluffs, vacating their Iowa farm to resettle in Oregon. They were among an estimated 70,000 migrants, the largest number that traveled on the overland trails.

Between 1850 and 1855, the period covered in this third of a four-volume series edited by Michael L. Tate (assisted by Kerin Tate, Will Bagley, and Richard Rieck), the increased traffic on the trail seemed endless to Indian observers. They soon called it the Great Medicine Road, and the letters, diaries, and reminiscences in this edition attest to that impression. In mid-May 1853 John H. B. Neill reported that 2,000 wagons were already ahead of their train, and on June 1 of that same year, Helen Marnie Stewart recorded in her diary, "We can see emigrants now as far as we can see" (180). As a consequence, crowded conditions made finding grass and firewood difficult, but well-worn trails were easy to follow, numerous cutoffs had been established, ferries and bridges aided river crossings, and a military presence offered some protection. But along with the daily tedium, emigrants continued to experience risk. Cholera took its toll in 1852 and again in 1855, leaving many graves in its wake. "We had to make a rough box from planks taken out of the wagons," remembered Long following the death of her uncle, "and we wrapped his body in bed clothes and buried him" (151). Within days, two of his children died as well. During the early trail years, Indians were rarely a threat, although emigrants imagined otherwise, but by 1855 natives along the road, particularly the Lakota, resented the trespassers and demanded tribute. The accounts here describe a range of negotiations and confrontations with Indians; in the telling, pioneers reminded themselves (and their readers) of what an adventure it was.

Once again, the editors have provided documents that will aid researchers and delight anyone interested in the lives of overland pioneers. This volume includes four detailed maps showing the many trails

and cutoffs, photographs and illustrations, a lengthy bibliography, and explanatory introductions and footnotes. It is an impressive effort and, like the earlier volumes produced in this series, an important addition to trail studies.

Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America, by Shari Rabin. North American Religions Series. New York: New York University Press, 2017. viii, 193 pp. Notes, index. \$37.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Hasia R. Diner is professor of history and of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University (NYU), and she directs NYU's Center for American Jewish History. Her books include *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (2006) and *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (2002).

In this compact but geographically far-ranging book Shari Rabin set out to accomplish three scholarly ends, all of which expand understanding of American and American Jewish history. *Jews on the Frontier*, a straightforward title, looks at the experiences of the Jews who immigrated to the United States in the nineteenth century, during the decades flanking the Civil War, and who spread out beyond the Appalachian Mountains, crossed the Mississippi River, and penetrated in all directions, going to nearly every state and territory in the lands that opened up for the United States during its continental conquest. Most arrived as young men who took up the occupation of on-the-road peddlers and then graduated from peddling to entrepreneurship. Most did reasonably well economically, while a few succeeded spectacularly. As white men, they encountered no legal obstacles as they scouted out the most attractive places for business in this vast terrain.

Rabin's goals grew out of this historical reality about Jewish migration and mobility. In the places they went, they found no laws limiting them and no pre-existing Jewish institutional infrastructure. They came to these places as the first Jews, and whatever they might want of a Jewish life they had to do for themselves.

As a book of religious history, *Jews on the Frontier* considers religion not as a normative matter. Rather it places it in the realm of lived experience. Religion, Rabin shows as she charts physical movement and its impact on European immigrant Jews in the five decades from the 1820s to the 1870s, functioned as something they lived with. They did so by choice and not because they had to. How they engaged with religion did not rest exclusively with the dictates of rabbis or with the inherited laws of the past. Not that clergy did not show up on the frontier or that