

Farming across Borders: A Transnational History of the North American West

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have questioned, even repudiated, most elements of the “thesis.” Turner’s “safety valve,” associated here with Horace Greeley, suggested that “the pressures of unemployment and poverty building up in eastern cities” would be released once people migrated westward (195). But relocating can be prohibitive for poor people, a point Anschutz makes in his discussion of Benjamin “Pap” Singleton’s work to move black families to Kansas after the Civil War. To his credit, and unlike Turner, Anschutz includes women and people of color in describing individual success in the West. As he measures achievement, he considers not only what people gained by going west, but also what they contributed to the region. Father Junípero Serra established Franciscan missions in California that “underpinned European and American civilization in the West” (131); Abigail Scott Duniway traveled the Oregon Trail in 1852 to become an important voice for woman suffrage; and architect Mary Colter popularized the Pueblo Revival style of architecture. Anschutz’s affection for the West extends to his extensive art collection, the basis for Denver’s American Museum of Western Art, and he interlaces the book with examples. Not surprisingly, then, his discussions of George Catlin, Frederick Remington, and other well-known painters are quite good.

As in his first book, Anschutz often draws simplistic conclusions and is prone to overstatement, but his idea of what the West represents is embedded in American life. It is an image many readers probably share.

Farming across Borders: A Transnational History of the North American West, edited by Sterling Evans. Connecting the Greater West Series. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2017. xxv, 460 pp. Maps, illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$65.00 hardcover.

Reviewer R. Douglas Hurt is head of the Department of History at Purdue University. He is the author of many works, especially about the history of agriculture, the Great Plains, and the West, most recently *Food and Agriculture during the Civil War* (2016).

Historians have given considerable attention to specific areas of western agricultural history, particularly migrant labor, cattle ranching, and water. Scholarship dating to the 1930s has also focused on commodities. In this sense, *Farming across Borders* does not, despite the editor’s claim, break new ground for historical inquiry. It does, however, provide an important integration of selected subjects, the scholarship and story of which crosses international boundaries with Canada and Mexico. This context expands our knowledge of well-covered subjects, and, in most cases, the essays contribute new knowledge about farming in the North American West.

Sterling Evans has compiled a collection of 19 essays arranged in six parts. The essays are nearly equally apportioned to emphasize Canadian, Mexican, and American topics with as much cross-border integration and detail as the authors considered possible. Evans recognizes that political boundaries, in contrast to geography and the environment, often do not determine history. Political boundaries do matter, however, when historians consider issues of national importance such as settlement, land policy, and government regulations of farming activities. In this collection Evans has arranged the essays in sections titled (1) Agricultural Connections across North America, (2) Commodity Histories in the Borderlands, (3) A Sense of Place for Ranching and Farming in the North American Borderlands, (4) Agricultural Labor in the US-Mexico Borderlands, (5) Agricultural Labor in the US-Canada Borderlands, and (6) Agriculture and Transborder Water Issues.

No collection of essays can cover everything. A publisher's space limitations often limit what an author or editor can do, although critics often do not understand this. With this book, however, the Texas A&M University Press has been generous. The result is an important collection of essays, many of which are significant and create new knowledge; most are useful. Evans provides a helpful, brief introduction to each section, after which readers can find essays on grain production, cattle raising, flax, colonization, chili peppers, ranching, the tomato industry, braceros, hops, farm organizations, custom cutting, irrigation, and labor for pecan shelling, cotton picking, and sugar beet production. The authors attempted to provide comparative essays at least for U.S.-Canadian and U.S.-Mexican transnational relationships, but balanced comparatives evidently proved difficult. Alicia Dewey's excellent essay, "Ranching across Borders: The Making of a Transnational Cattle Industry in the Texas-Mexico Borderlands, 1749-1945," for example, is not matched with a similar or comparative essay dealing with the cattle ranching industry in the northern Great Plains or Canadian prairies. Yet an extensive literature exists that could have contributed to an essay providing the more balanced transnational inclusion that Evans sought. Transnational approaches also can omit significant national developments that cross borders, such as the matter of groundwater rights in the Great Plains, a topic that is not adequately addressed here but that is enormously important for agriculture in the region, including the U.S.-Mexican borderlands.

Five of the essays have been previously published. Almost all discuss western topics. Only a few essays deal with agriculture in the Midwest. These include Kristin Hoganson's "Meat in the Middle: Converging Borderlands in the US Midwest, 1865-1900," Joshua D.

MacFadyen's "Flax on the Northern Great Plains and Prairies, 1889–1930," Tisa M. Anders and Rosa Elia Cobos's "The *Beatabeleras* of Western Nebraska: Gender Labor, and the Beet Sugar Industry," Jason McCollom's, "'We Are Tied Together . . . in a Hundred Different Ways': Farmers and Farm Organizations across the Forty-Ninth Parallel, 1905–1915," Thomas D. Isern and Suzanne Kelley's "'Done for Another Year': The Resilience of Canadian Custom Harvesters on the North American Plains," along with a passing nod to the region in Sterling Evans's "Dependent Harvests: Grain Production on the American and Canadian Plains and the Double Dependency with Mexico, 1880–1950." The authors of the previously published essays apparently did not have the opportunity to update their secondary sources.

Overall, Evans has provided a useful collection of essays that deal with the agricultural history of the North American West in a transnational context. Scholars will find it a ready reference and a good introduction to specific topics. Most of the essays are synthesized based on secondary sources. Evans's call for primary research is justified for this expansive, new approach to the agricultural history of the North American West. Anyone interested in this field of historical inquiry will find Evans's essay collection a useful read and an important guide for future research.

The Perfect Fence: Untangling the Meanings of Barbed Wire, by Lyn Ellen Bennett and Scott Abbott. Connecting the Great West Series. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2017. xxiv, 269 pp. Illustrations, graph, notes, bibliography, index. \$42.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Wayne Franklin is professor of English, American Studies, and Environmental Studies at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. In addition to publishing several books on James Fenimore Cooper, he is the author of *A Rural Carpenter's World: The Craft in a Nineteenth-Century New York Township* (1990).

At the start of the 1962 film *Lonely Are the Brave*, modern cowboy Jack Burns encounters a barbed wire fence while riding his horse, Whiskey, across the New Mexico landscape. Dismounting, Burns (played by Kirk Douglas) snips the wire, opening the closed range and allowing him to proceed. The film, directed by David Miller from a script written by the once blacklisted Dalton Trumbo, was based on the second novel (*The Lonely Cowboy*, 1957) by a rising star of western literature, Edward Abbey. Here is how Abbey himself set up the fence-cutting episode: "[Burns] came eventually to a barbed-wire fence, gleaming new wire stretched with vibrant tautness between steel stakes driven into the