

From Furs to Farms: The Transformation of the Mississippi Valley, 1762-1825

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political geography. Stephen Aron's *American Confluence*, which considered the lands bordering the conjunction of the Missouri, Mississippi, and Ohio Rivers comes to mind as a successful example of such a study. The idea could be applied to a study of the Galena lead region and its impact on the surrounding areas of Iowa and Wisconsin, or to an analysis of the Quad Cities. It could provide a particularly valuable approach to a better understanding of Native American history. Krohe's book will be of interest to scholars as an example of lively writing and innovative regional history and to lay readers looking for a diverting and fascinating perspective on the Prairie State.

From Furs to Farms: The Transformation of the Mississippi Valley, 1762–1825, by John Reda. Early American Places Series. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. xiii, 201 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$38.00 hardcover.

Reviewer William E. Foley is professor of history emeritus at the University of Central Missouri. He is the author of *Wilderness Journey: The Life of William Clark* (2004) and *The Genesis of Missouri: From Wilderness Outpost to Statehood* (1989).

John Reda's carefully crafted account of the region once known as the Illinois Country details its transformation from a multiracial, multicultural borderland powered by a thriving fur trade to a place where agricultural cultivation by white American farmers was the driving force. Between 1762 and 1825 powerful indigenous nations competed with French, Spanish, English, and, eventually, American powers for control in the territory encompassing the present-day states of Illinois and Missouri, but Reda contends that imperial clashes mattered far less than economic forces in the quest to establish sovereignty over the region.

Notwithstanding the river barrier separating Illinois and Missouri, Reda makes a compelling case for viewing both as parts of a coherent society linked by common historical experiences. In the late eighteenth century the fur trade tied French settlers on both sides of the river to their indigenous neighbors. Following the Seven Years War, British officials staked a claim to land on the Mississippi's east bank while Spanish authorities sought to establish control on the west side, but their ambitious imperial designs fell short of the mark as long as native people remained a dominant force and the fur trade held sway.

Conditions began to change in the wake of an onslaught of agriculturally oriented Americans who settled on both sides of the Mississippi following the American Revolution and the Louisiana Purchase. Their arrival hastened a decline in the fur trade, intensified demands for the

appropriation of Indian lands, and paved the way for their incorporation within the American republic. The War of 1812 brought increased violence to the area and further complicated relationships among Native Americans, white traders, and white settlers. The agreement to conclude hostilities left many of the conflict's precipitating factors unresolved, but the war and its aftermath accelerated the fur trade's marginalization. Even as the economic transformation from furs to farms proceeded apace, inhabitants of the Illinois Country had not fully attached themselves to the American government. Inadequate federal support for the war effort left many white settlers alienated and unhappy with the territorial authorities. But that was about to change.

Assurances that the American regime would safeguard the white settlers' personal security, uphold their property rights, and maintain white supremacy won them over. After securing promises of loyalty from the settlers, the U.S. government successfully imposed its authority in a place where others had failed. The process was lengthy and complicated and came at the expense of the Native Americans and Métis forcibly removed from their lands and the enslaved Africans retained in bondage. Tragically, the subjugation of non-whites was an all-too-common element in America's story.

As Illinois and Missouri advanced toward statehood, societal fissures created new challenges for governing officials. The contentious slavery issue generated intense disagreements on both sides of the river. In Illinois the restrictions imposed on slavery by the Northwest Ordinance prompted the institution's proponents to call for *de facto* slavery in the form of long-term indentures. By contrast, in Missouri, where slavery had been legal from its earliest days, its citizens found unity in opposing federal attempts to place limitations on the well-entrenched institution as a condition for the territory's admission to the Union.

In the post-statehood era, debates over the future of slavery continued, demands for the forcible dispossession and removal of Native people intensified, and fur-trading operations moved farther west. Proslavery politicians in Illinois unsuccessfully sought to legalize slavery by amending the state's constitution, while in Missouri state officials turned a blind eye to congressional attempts to impose limits on the institution. Efforts by Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Clark to acquire additional Indian lands by negotiation rather than by violence found little support locally. Claims by his political opponents that he was an Indian lover contributed to his defeat in Missouri's 1820 gubernatorial election, but the treaties he negotiated resulted in the governmental confiscation of all remaining indigenous landholdings in both states, a result that completed the establishment of U.S. authority

in the former Illinois Country and the emergence of agriculture as the region's dominant economic activity.

The transformation from furs to farms is the book's organizing theme, but, as Reda skillfully demonstrates, the transition was neither direct nor easy. His story is multifaceted and complex, boasts a disparate cast of characters, is well documented, and reflects current scholarship. His emphasis on the local perspective offers a richness of detail absent from more generalized accounts. Among other things, he makes a compelling case for the importance of local and regional history. Readers with an interest in the history of the Midwest will find much to like in this well-written book.

Before Dred Scott: Slavery and Legal Culture in the American Confluence, 1787-1857, by Anne Twitty. Cambridge Historical Studies in American Law and Society. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xiii, 285 pp. Map, charts, tables, appendix, index. \$49.99 hardcover.

Reviewer Rebekah M. K. Mergenthal is associate professor of history at Pacific Lutheran University. Her research explores the accommodations and exclusions among the variety of racial and ethnic groups in the lower Missouri River valley during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Anne Twitty's *Before Dred Scott* is a legal history of the freedom suits filed in the St. Louis Circuit Court, where the particular legal culture enabled some slaves to bring suit. The most common grounds the 241 plaintiffs used were prior residence in a free territory or state, previous emancipation, or free at birth. Most did not ultimately gain their freedom (40.2 percent won freedom and 46.5 percent did not, with the rest unknown), and most slaves in the region did not file such suits. However, Twitty shows that careful reading of the cases can illuminate how regular people "made savvy use of the law," often for their own goals (21). These lawsuits were filed in St. Louis, but, because of the mobility of slaveholders and their slaves, they illuminate a broader region, one encompassing the convergences of the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri Rivers. Twitty does not explicitly discuss Iowa, although its eastern end is included on her map of the "American Confluence" region (4). Still, her ideas about the unclear boundary between slavery and freedom, and its legal ramifications, could certainly resonate with the study of antebellum Iowa.

In three chapters in the first section of *Before Dred Scott*, Twitty shows the "ambiguity" (56) between slavery and freedom in the region, the way some slaves learned "to use formal law to their own advantage" (94), and the limited antislavery perspectives of their lawyers.