

## Unsettling the West: Violence and State Building in the Ohio Valley

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Yet “scientific knowledge didn’t immediately supplant faith, magic, and folklore” (160) among the general public. Many midwesterners, those whom Edmonds terms “ordinary” (151), retained mystical perceptions of birds, which he makes clear by including copious examples of naming practices and folk beliefs distinctive to different midwestern regions and cultural groups, including African Americans. In his last chapter, he engagingly wraps up his tour with an examination of late nineteenth-century commercial bird hunter accounts and the subsequent extermination of many birds, such as the passenger pigeon.

Anthropological methods inspire Edmonds’s approach, yet *Taking Flight* triumphs as a descriptive history. Its lengthy timeline also provides an opportunity to consider the cultural meaning of birds in America, a subject ripe for further academic study. In fact, not many scholars have actually written about the meaning of birds in America in general, nor have they presented a book-length cultural study of a specific bird, though some, like Jennifer Price and, more recently, Jeff Karnicky, have offered chapters or a case-study approach. Mark Barrow’s examination of the ornithological profession and Scott Weidensaul’s account of bird watchers are helpful, yet the paucity of study on this general subject is astonishing, particularly since other nature topics, such as trees, have attracted more interdisciplinary analyses. Aren’t cultural historians yet prepared to identify and tackle subjects like the cardinal in America? The raven? The starling? The sandhill crane? The common sparrow – or why not the eagle? These are subjects that chirp crisply for cultural scholarship. In the interim, Edmonds’s work provides a congenial overview, a gentle introduction for the nonspecialist, and preparation for those nature historians ready to take on the challenge of this yet novel subject of investigation.

*Unsettling the West: Violence and State Building in the Ohio Valley*, by Rob Harper. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. xvi, 250 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 hardcover.

Reviewer William H. Bergmann is associate professor of history at Slippery Rock University. He is author of *The American National State and the Early West* (2012).

Even though *Unsettling the West: Violence and State Building in the Ohio Valley* is a relatively short book (178 pages of text), Rob Harper offers his readers a masterfully researched, granular examination of how American expansionism played out in the Ohio valley from the end of the Seven Years’ War through the Treaty of Greenville in 1795. Building on the observation that the “escalation and de-escalation of hostilities correlates

closely with the ever-shifting influence of governments," he argues that "unstable and ineffectual governments exerted so much influence because Indians and colonists sought to use government resources for their own ends" (5). Over the period, spiraling "devastation deepened dependence on government patronage and bolstered the influence of leaders who could obtain it," contributing to the "emerging power of a colonial state" (6).

Harper divides his book into six chapters that capture tidal flows of violence. Beginning in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, he portrays a tenuous peace that took root as Indians and colonists contained hostilities. Despite settlers' treaty violations, a mix of informal agreements and trading relationships limited internecine violence. Colonists and Indians alike sought to cement and augment their influence by cultivating patronage among colonial and British imperial agents. Throughout the book, Harper's acute focus on personal relationships in the Ohio valley, in this instance the Seneca town of Two Creeks and the settler community on the Monongahela River tributary, Red Creek, makes his narrative and writing compelling. Moreover, Harper deepens and makes more intimate motives and threads of influence that shaped moments of peace and violence.

Violence escalated quickly after 1773 when Virginian governor John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, aggressively sought to secure the upper Ohio valley for his colony, funneling patronage opportunities, payment (real and promises of), and tools of war into the region, prompting Pennsylvania authorities to respond in kind. Local feuds centered in Pittsburgh erupted as coalitions formed along vying patronage lines, and Dunmore used his advantage to orchestrate a campaign against Indians, which fell apart after the Battle of Point Pleasant in 1774. An uncertain peace largely returned the following year as British authority waned and resources from the east dried up. Despite intermittent violence, opportunities for peace remained through the early years of the Revolutionary War because key Indian leaders as diverse as Guyasuta (Seneca), the Hardman (Shawnee), and White Eyes (Delaware) pursued avenues to peace and patronage even as governments bungled efforts to influence the region's people.

Not until the new state governments of Pennsylvania and Virginia, as well as the Confederation government and the British Empire, concentrated more of their attention and resources on the region in the 1780s did a "state-sponsored frontier war" of attrition emerge (122). The end of the revolution renewed a period of tenuous peace as resources of war again diminished and a new American federal government remained weak. Resolution of Pennsylvania and Virginia's borders

clarified lines of political authority, and “the flimsy frontier state began to gain traction” (157). Yet violence built through the 1780s as Virginia encouraged settlement in Kentucky and the Confederation Congress destabilized the region through policy and ineptitude. Harper concludes his study with the new government under the Constitution using its fiscal powers to fund military campaigns that seemed to certify its control of the region. Neglected in the final chapter is the influence of state building in Canada because Harper treats the “composite British empire” as having “collapsed” in 1776 rather than continuing to evolve (176).

To be clear, there is not much successful state building in this book. Many westerners sought “the backing of an effective state,” but efforts to extend the power of states led to outcomes that “escaped the control” of state officials as westerners of all stripes “twisted official policies to serve their own ends” (127, 141, 146). The most successful state-building efforts seemingly came both with institutional developments that are not a part of this study and only briefly summarized (156–57) and after ratification of the Constitution, which is given perfunctory treatment in the closing pages of the final chapter. In some respects, this fits with Harper’s exploration of state building from below, how governments “cast a long shadow” even when they might appear to be “failed state[s]” (146, 178). But it’s a bit unsatisfying because it falls short of bridging the gap between state-building failures and successes. Notwithstanding this critique, Harper’s study is an admirable contribution to the historiography of American expansionism and early state building in the Ohio valley.

*Creating the Land of Lincoln: The History and Constitutions of Illinois, 1778–1870*, by Frank Cicero Jr. Urbana and Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2018. xv, 270 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Todd E. Pettys holds the H. Blair and Joan V. White Chair in Civil Litigation at the University of Iowa College of Law. He is the author of *The Iowa State Constitution* (2018).

Casting about for a new writing project, Frank Cicero Jr.—a partner at the Kirkland & Ellis law firm in Chicago—stumbled across a sentence in a century-old book about the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The sentence noted that, when seeking admission to the Union in 1818, Illinois initially was slated to have a northern boundary falling far south of the future Chicago. With further investigation, Cicero learned that one man