

Finding a New Midwestern History

William C. Barnett

North Central College, Naperville, Illinois

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Book Reviews and Notices

Finding a New Midwestern History, edited by Jon K. Lauck, Gleaves Whitney, and Joseph Hogan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. xxiii, 365 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, graphs, notes, index. \$55 hardcover.

Reviewer William C. Barnett is associate professor of history at North Central College, Naperville, Illinois. His teaching and research interests are interdisciplinary, revolving around questions of place, region, and changing human interactions with nature.

This engaging collection of essays examines midwestern history from a wide variety of perspectives, offering valuable insights into the region. The volume's opening message is that the Midwest has been neglected by scholars in recent decades, so these authors are examining the region more deeply to correct that oversight. The three editors—Jon Lauck, Gleaves Whitney, and Joseph Hogan—have played a significant role in reinvigorating midwestern history through their scholarship and work organizing an annual conference at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Midwestern History Association convened for the fifth time in 2019, but this volume's essays originated as presentations at the first Midwestern History Conference in 2015, and a sense of being at the start of a promising endeavor gives energy to the book.

The editors assembled 21 chapters by scholars trained in history, geography, English, and American studies in a collective effort to evaluate the state of midwestern history. Multiple essays express excitement that researchers have gathered to define the Midwest by identifying patterns from their areas of expertise. Many of these scholars are full professors and professors emeriti, and their impressive lists of publications show the group's considerable expertise. Numerous contributors identify as midwesterners, with quite a few mentioning their midwestern childhoods, and many have degrees from Big Ten universities. The volume offers overviews of an array of topics, including agriculture, cities, immigration, rivers, the Civil War, music, art, and sports. Particularly strong essays include Susan Gray's examination of Native Americans and their "discursive removal" (56) from the Midwest, Jeffrey Hegelson's study of African American migrations, and Jon Butler's analysis of the region's religious tensions.

The editors made efforts to provide breadth in assessing the region, but certain topics inevitably emerge as interests shared by multiple authors. As a group, these scholars are more concerned with small towns than with urban centers, although Chicago appears frequently. The main chronological emphasis is on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a sense that the region's importance declined after World War II. Intellectual history is a particular focus, as multiple contributors seek to understand the development of the idea of the Midwest as a self-conscious region. Investigations of significant American thinkers' views of the region go back to the Founding Fathers, with Gleaves Whitney's analysis of Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and John Adams and their visions for the Old Northwest. Similarly, Michael Steiner's chapter examines the influential roles of Frank Lloyd Wright, Hamlin Garland, and Frederick Jackson Turner in first presenting the Midwest to the nation as a distinct region. Readers interested in Sinclair Lewis, Grant Wood, and Garrison Keillor will also find rewarding insights into their expressions of midwestern identity.

The editors seek to "aid the process of giving voice to a forgotten region and of reconnecting to an earlier and once strong tradition of midwestern historical and literary regionalism" (xxii). This book advances those worthwhile goals in a characteristically midwestern manner, with a combination of modesty and booster spirit. While the promise of a new midwestern history is intriguing, the project is in its early stages and does not yet have the bold ideas of new western historians like Patricia Nelson Limerick, Richard White, and William Cronon. In the final chapter, J. L. Anderson analyzes the role of conformity and boosterism in the region since 1945, noting that although the region is increasingly diverse, "a mostly white, midwestern, middle-class identity" is presented to the world (330). The contrast between the Midwest's increasing racial and ethnic diversity and the homogeneity of a regional image shaped by white men creates some challenges for efforts to rein-vigorate midwestern history.

The editors say that this book is "designed to move us toward a new and more robust field of midwestern history" (xii), and it does provide valuable examinations of the Midwest's history and identity. However, future efforts will be strengthened if more women, people of color, and graduate students are part of the project. It would be exciting to see interpretation of writers like Jane Smiley, Toni Morrison, Marilynne Robinson, and Sandra Cisneros alongside the region's iconic male authors. Similarly, scholars might weave recent historical figures like Betty Friedan, Malcolm X, Oprah Winfrey, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and the Obamas, perhaps with links to Jane Addams and Ida B. Wells, into their

midwestern histories. Future works could help us understand the Midwest's post-1945 transformations due to deindustrialization, suburbanization, white flight, global immigration, and other forces. Susan Gray calls Native American history in the region a "map in motion" and broadens this idea, stating, "So, too, is the history of the Midwest as a region" (56). This volume's introduction and 21 essays demonstrate that the Midwest is a fascinating region in motion, both in its rich history and in its evolving identity, which provides a useful road map for future scholarship.

Capitalist Pigs: Pigs, Pork, and Power in America, by J. L. Anderson. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2019. xiii, 285 pp. Tables, maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$99.99 hardcover, \$34.99 paperback.

Reviewer Wilson J. Warren is professor and chair of the Department of History at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. His most recent book is *Meat Makes People Powerful: A Global History of the Modern Era* (2018).

The field of human-animal studies is a rapidly growing area of historical inquiry. *Capitalist Pigs* is an important contribution to this literature. J. L. Anderson's focus on pigs is especially salient in terms of the human-animal connection since Americans and many others around the globe have continuously reshaped the animal to suit their changing needs. Anderson argues that this changing relationship especially illuminates the dynamics of power in economics and human dominion over animals. Conveyed in clear prose enhanced by well-chosen tables, maps, illustrations, and an enticing title, the book is valuable for scholars and accessible to a broad audience.

Capitalist Pigs examines the entirety of American history with chapters that delve into production, consumption, marketing, and scientific and state intervention in the hog's transformation into food and other products. Although comprehensive in scope, the book focuses especially on pre-twentieth-century developments when free-range husbandry characterized hog production, especially in the South but also in northern rural and urban locations. Lard-type hogs were dominant early on because their meat could be readily processed and preserved and because lard was essential in American cooking practices. They were also relatively low-maintenance animals. Well into the nineteenth century, hogs foraged for food and then were rounded up in fall for either subsistence or marketing. Hogs also roamed American cities, especially through the mid-nineteenth century. Although no longer allowed to forage in cities during the twentieth century, pigs nevertheless served as convenient waste recyclers. Anderson points out, "By 1940