

Peoples of the Inland Sea: Native Americans and Newcomers in the Great Lakes Region, 1600-1870

Claiborne Skinner

Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy

ISSN 0003-4827

Copyright © 2019 State Historical Society of Iowa. This article is posted here for personal use, not for redistribution.

Recommended Citation

Skinner, Claiborne. "Peoples of the Inland Sea: Native Americans and Newcomers in the Great Lakes Region, 1600-1870." *The Annals of Iowa* 78 (2019), 299-300.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12593>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

spective biological similarities make the potential for organ transplants promising yet also ethically controversial. Anderson is hopeful about such developments, but the growing animal rights movement may create significant roadblocks. Nevertheless, this topic demonstrates, as do so many discussed in the book, not only pigs' importance in our food culture but also their central role in the evolution of the American economy.

Peoples of the Inland Sea: Native Americans and Newcomers in the Great Lakes Region, 1600–1870, by David Andrew Nichols. New Approaches to Midwestern Studies Series. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018. xiii, 271 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Claiborne Skinner is an instructor at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. He is the author of *The Upper Country: French Enterprise in the Colonial Great Lakes* (2008).

In Harpers Ferry, in the northeast corner of Iowa, stands Effigy Mounds National Monument: silent, mysterious designs of bears, birds, turtles, and panthers raised by the Ho Chunk and other nations some 1,400 years ago. Old as these mounds are, they are Johnny-Come-Latelies to Iowa, whose human history actually begins more than 10,000 years earlier in the Pleistocene Era. Few Iowans, or anyone else for that matter, have any conception of this story. It is said that “history is written by the victors,” but it is also written by those who can write. Early Europeans concluded, therefore, that the Indians were a people without a history, with all that that implied and still does.

David Andrew Nichols has produced a potent corrective to this misconception with his extraordinary *Peoples of the Inland Sea*. The periodization in the title is ambitious enough, but Nichols, an ethnohistorian, draws deeply on archeology, environmental science, and ethnology to push the dates back to the Ice Age. The Mastodon Hunters are here, the Copper Age, the Archaic agricultural revolution, and the Hopewell Mound Builders. Nichols fills the region with a history rarely seen in such a short survey. His coverage is as wide as it is deep: The Great Lakes “region” is stretched to include much of the Mississippi Valley. His treatment of the historic period is of a piece, with sharp analysis grounded in good sources. His choice of when to close his study is significant. Where many treatments conclude with a significant date in Euro-American history, Nichols ends with the execution of 38 Dakota warriors in 1862 and the return to Wisconsin of the Ho Chunk people, who had staked their claim to the country more than a thousand years before, thus bringing the story full circle. This might seem anticlimactic

given the scope of his study, but this is Indian history, with its own milestones, rather than those of the invading whites.

By the author's own admission, this is a work of synthesis rather than original research, but what a synthesis! Conventional history rubs elbows with "The Ceremonial Landscape of the Newark Earthworks and the Raccoon Creek Valley." The bibliography alone is worth the purchase price. If I had a complaint, which I really do not, it would be that perhaps Nichols has tried to do too much: events, nations, individuals, and numbers relentlessly confront the reader. I have an advanced degree in the subject and I often found myself having to come up for air. I offer this only as a warning to the casual reader. *Peoples of the Inland Sea* offers a comprehensive, succinct analysis of a vast and complex topic. Nichols has done a great service for teachers and students alike. This will be the standard short survey for many years to come.

Lincoln's Mercenaries: Economic Motivation among Union Soldiers during the Civil War, by William Marvel. *Conflicting Worlds: New Dimensions of the American Civil War Series*. Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 2018. xviii, 329 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$48 hardcover.

Reviewer Donald C. Elder III is professor of history at Eastern New Mexico University. He is the editor of *Love Amid the Turmoil: The Civil War Letters of William and Mary Vermilion* (2003) and *A Damned Iowa Greyhound: The Civil War Letters of William Henry Harrison Clayton* (1998).

After reading *Lincoln's Mercenaries*, students of the Civil War may have to reconsider their conclusions regarding the primary reason why individuals from Northern states decided to enlist in the military. Author William Marvel challenges the widely held notion that individuals who volunteered for service in the Union Army did so largely for patriotic reasons. He argues instead that economic considerations played a far larger role than historians have realized or acknowledged. His well-crafted monograph should cause anyone interested in the motivation of Union Civil War volunteers to reexamine long-held assumptions.

Marvel begins by examining the historiography relating to enlistment, noting that many authors discount evidence of volunteers enlisting military service for financial reasons; they choose instead to focus on other considerations, usually patriotism or mere wanderlust. Since these authors could only do rudimentary statistical computations based on the census of 1860 to inform their analyses, many of them discounted such evidence, instead using memoirs or regimental histories as the