

How the West Was Drawn: Mapping, Indians, and the Construction of the Trans-Mississippi West

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Mergenthal, Rebekah M. K.. "How the West Was Drawn: Mapping, Indians, and the Construction of the Trans-Mississippi West." *The Annals of Iowa* 78 (2019), 396-398.

Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/annals-of-iowa/vol78/iss4/7>

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French people arrived in this world in the late 1600s, but they hardly transformed it to any “imperial” purpose. Cross-cultural conversions happened in both directions, but most of the power continued to rest in long-standing indigenous kinship networks, particularly outside of tiny European beachheads like Kaskaskia. As Lee shows in another one of the book’s impressively innovative chapters, French ambitions to mediate between the Chickasaw, Illinois, and Miami — let alone to project imperial power outright — failed. Except in certain individual and short-term cases, French officials remained outside of these indigenous networks, which limited their power. When British officials and merchants tried to establish a foothold in the region, as did the Philadelphia-based merchant George Morgan, who arrived in the Illinois Country in the 1760s, they, too, largely failed to gain access to social networks that controlled trade in the midcontinent. More successful, as Lee shows in a chapter that might be of the most interest to readers of early Iowa history, were the kinship networks established by Osages and ethnically French families like the Chouteaus in Spanish-controlled upper Louisiana. In the final chapter, Lee narrates how American empire worked in what had become the region’s familiar patterns, gaining crucial control over riverways by extending kinship networks between prominent Anglo elites and Francophone upper Louisiana families, who now used their influence to help dispossess the indigenous peoples with whom they had previously built their power.

This book takes its place among the best recent works in a recent outpouring of scholarship on early midwestern history. Lee’s original argument is backed by superb research, and his narrative style is engaging. Those interested in the indigenous and colonial history of the Mississippi Valley will find this book indispensable.

How the West Was Drawn: Mapping, Indians, and the Construction of the Trans-Mississippi West, by David Bernstein. Borderlands and Transcultural Studies Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. xvii, 303 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$65 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.

In *How the West Was Drawn*, David Bernstein argues that “Indians were central to the cartographic creation of the trans-Mississippi United States” during the nineteenth century and thus must be put “squarely into stories of American state building” (3, 11). Building on insights from previous works of the “new Indian history,” including those of Kathleen DuVal,

Brian DeLay, and John Bowes, Bernstein adds an emphasis on maps, including the power and negotiations involved in their creation. He urges readers to focus on the motivations of actors at the time, including the Iowa, the Lakota, and especially the Pawnee, so that we can understand a broader “collective history” (3). Bernstein is aware of the critique that maps were a tool and exemplar of the violence of colonization, but he wants to show how U.S. expansion was “negotiated” (5). Because Natives were involved in mapping projects, they were also, Bernstein asserts, involved in shaping how the expansion of the United States happened, and thus their role needs to be understood. For some readers, Bernstein’s book might put too much emphasis on “stories of negotiation and cooperation” and too little on the elements of “coercion and contestation” (19), but Bernstein presents his book as a corrective within a broader conversation that he says often overemphasizes the latter.

Readers of the *Annals of Iowa* might be particularly interested in Bernstein’s first chapter, as it explores Iowa Indian Notchininga’s 1837 map and its role in securing at least some land for the Iowas even during a period of “massive encroachment from Indians and Euro-Americans alike” (29). That chapter, along with the next two, which largely focus on the Pawnees, make up the first section of the book, titled “Living in Indian Country.” Bernstein uses it to establish that Indian concepts of place were not incompatible with Euro-American constructs (even though they have often been described as such, even by some current scholars). Shifting from the on-the-ground perspectives highlighted in the first section, Bernstein’s second section, “The Rise and Fall of ‘Indian Country,’” investigates the Euro-American cultural and political designations of the land directly west of the Missouri River (roughly the current states of Kansas and Nebraska). Bernstein focuses on how John C. Frémont and other Euro-Americans used distinctions between “savagery” and “civilization” to minimize Natives’ roles in cartographic practices. In the briefer third section, Bernstein considers the shifting power of naming as a way to indicate a richer story of expansion than might first be accessible on most maps. He develops a close reading of Gouverneur Kemble Warren’s 1857 map that was “created . . . to find the best transcontinental railroad route” but at the same time “strongly inscribed Indian presence” (198). Thus, Bernstein seeks to move beyond a tale of the inevitability of U.S. expansion to one that can convey “contestation and negotiation” (227).

As one would expect in a book that focuses on cartography, Bernstein’s is filled with numerous maps (nearly 50 overall). Unfortunately, the reproductions are often on a small scale, and in gray scale, so the details can be difficult for readers to discern. Yet Bernstein provides

important tools for thinking about maps in complex ways. He carefully draws attention to the multifaceted processes and power involved in their construction, which, in turn, opens up many avenues for understanding how and why U.S. expansion developed as it did. By showing that maps were “syncretic creations” (199), Bernstein also shows how the nation that was being mapped was one as well.

Fire, Pestilence, and Death: St. Louis, 1849, by Christopher Alan Gordon. St. Louis: Missouri History Museum Press, 2018. 280 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Jeffrey S. Adler is professor of history at the University of Florida. He is the author of *Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Urban West: The Rise and Fall of Antebellum St. Louis* (1991) and *First in Violence, Deepest in Dirt: Homicide in Chicago, 1875–1920* (2006).

A dizzying, jarring series of crises shaped daily life in St. Louis during 1849. Perhaps faster than any other urban center in the United States in that era, the city’s economy boomed and population soared. Thousands of ambitious easterners and European immigrants settled in St. Louis, while tens of thousands of trans-Mississippi migrants and California-bound gold prospectors passed through the city in 1849. But St. Louis also endured horrific natural disasters during that fateful year, including a cholera outbreak that claimed at least 10 percent of the local population and a huge fire that consumed part of the levee and downtown area. In an engaging and accessible book, one lavishly illustrated with mid-century photographs and lithographs, Christopher Alan Gordon describes these scourges and depicts life in St. Louis in 1849.

The director of library and collections for the Missouri Historical Society, Gordon pitches his narrative to informed general readers rather than to professional historians. He is more interested in recounting the flavor of mid-century St. Louis and the vigor of its residents than in engaging scholarly debates about the city or the region. “Although demographic breakdowns and statistics provide perspectives on the seriousness of St. Louis’s cholera,” Gordon explains, “individuals’ personal stories give us the truest insight into this tragedy” (41). Nor does his examination of the city’s massive 1849 fire compare the local disaster with comparable conflagrations in Pittsburgh in 1845 or in other cities.

After offering interesting snapshots of St. Louisans’ challenges from pestilence and fire, Gordon moves beyond themes relating to death and destruction to include chapters on race relations, law enforcement, and crime, all of which provide fascinating, informative perspectives on the fabric of daily life in the city in 1849. Gordon does not calculate crime