

Ghost Settlement on the Prairie: a Biography of Thurman, Kansas

ISSN 0003-4827

Copyright © 1996 State Historical Society of Iowa. This article is posted here for personal use, not for redistribution.

This work has been identified with a <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC/1.0/>>Rights Statement In Copyright.

Recommended Citation

"Ghost Settlement on the Prairie: a Biography of Thurman, Kansas." *The Annals of Iowa* 55 (1996), 60-61.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.9993>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

these crops expanded with the outside buyer system, warehouse auctions, and commission agents. Both tobacco and cotton expanded the state's infrastructure in the form of roads, rivers, and railroads.

Tennessee was a major producer of wheat and corn; grain sometimes replaced cotton as a crop when price levels fluctuated. In addition, Tennessee's livestock values ranked sixth in the nation in 1860. Farming was, therefore, reasonably diversified by the eve of the Civil War. The degree of diversified farming in the state, Winters argues, resulted in relatively low enslavement rates—25 percent of the state's population was enslaved. East Tennessee farmers, who mainly produced grains and raised livestock, had even lower enslavement rates, leading them to be even less enthusiastic in their defense of the Confederacy. Winters credits Tennessee farmers' willingness to embrace innovative technology for the state's economic sophistication.

In summary, Winters's treatment of Tennessee farming is well researched and written in an absorbing manner that will guarantee its niche as the definitive analysis of the state's agricultural heritage prior to the Civil War. Winters dramatically demonstrates the upland South's geographical demarcation from the lower South. Students of the Civil War will now better appreciate Tennessee's economic strengths as well as its wavering commitment to the Confederacy.

Ghost Settlement on the Prairie: A Biography of Thurman, Kansas, by Joseph V. Hickey. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995. xxii, 322 pages. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$27.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY SILVANO A. WUESCHNER, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Joseph Hickey's *Ghost Settlement on the Prairie* provides the reader with an anthropological view of community building and transformation in a frontier environment. Hickey examines the process of frontier settlement and Thurman's transition from small-scale farming and cattle raising to modern agribusiness. Like a host of authors before him, Hickey seeks to use this community study to offer generalizations concerning rural adaptation in the Central Plains, the West, and possibly other regions of the nation. While this work does not contain a bibliography, Hickey examined newspapers, census returns, church and school records, other public records, and, to a great extent, secondary sources to make his case. His emphasis on secondary sources may explain why the reader learns less about Thurman than its neighboring communities.

Hickey offers a well-written work, though one that is far less detailed in its analysis than Robert Dykstra's *Cattle Towns* or John Mack Faragher's *Sugar Creek*. Further, it provides few new insights into

the process of community development. Instead, it reinforces the conclusions reached in those earlier studies. Hickey's work reminds readers that Chase County settlements faced problems similar to those of numerous other communities across the West. For example, Thurman had to attract a railroad to ensure economic growth and development. Like other communities, Thurman was also confronted by massive population turnovers, and it was therefore left to families of long residence to bring stability to the community. Hickey notes the importance of the church and school to the community, and the instrumental role played by women in maintaining these institutions. Finally, he reiterates that if a community is to survive, it must adapt to external changes.

This work would have been far more effective had Hickey struck a balance between primary sources and secondary works to support his conclusions. His attempt to integrate existing scholarship on communities into this study is commendable, but his excessive reliance on those works to provide a "history in microcosm" (19) has the effect of suggesting that there is little if anything unique or significant about Thurman, Kansas. This impression is softened, however, by his discussion of the importance of the Flint Hills area to the cattle industry. Despite these limitations, *Ghost Settlement on the Prairie* is a good local study that will be of interest to students of Kansas and Great Plains history.

Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West, by William G. Robbins. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994. xvi, 255 pp. Notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DAVID A. WALKER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

The American West is undergoing dramatic, perhaps revolutionary change. This is true not only for the contemporary setting but also among historians studying the region's past. Many small communities and previously isolated rural areas are attracting new, often affluent residents who turn ranch land into housing developments. In addition, scholars are aggressively debating the significance of the western experience between the Turnerian perspective of orderly progress and triumphalism and the "legacy of conquest" interpreted by advocates of the new western history.

William G. Robbins has written a stimulating, thought-provoking analysis of the American West during the past 150 years. He argues that attention to the movement and dynamics of capitalism reveals more about the region than studies focusing on the clash of cultures, economic development, or the West's status as pacesetter for the rest of the country. The dynamic role of capitalism is the essential ingre-

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.