
R E V I E W S

Emigrants on the Overland Trail: The Wagon Trains of 1848

by Michael E. LaSalle

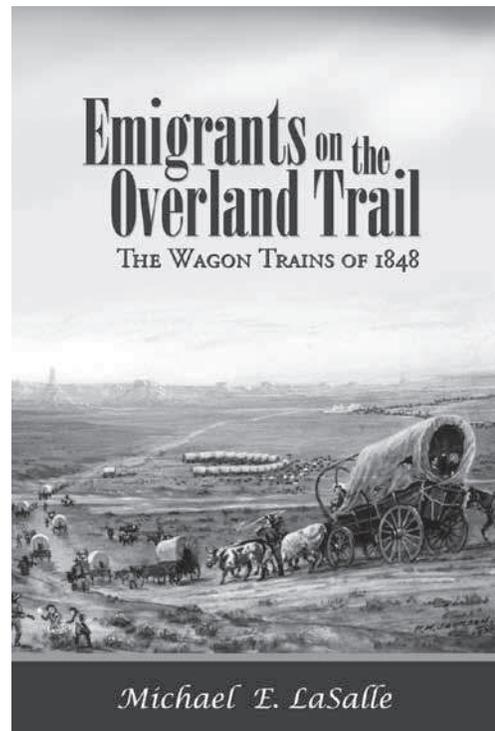
vii + 516 pages, illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index.

Kirkville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2011, paper \$40.00.

Michael LaSalle, an independent scholar and retired lawyer, investigates what historians often have regarded as the “lost” year of 1848. Until very recently, only a few primary sources were known to exist written by the Overland Trail emigrants of 1848, the last to travel over the open plains, rough mountains, and raging rivers of the American West before the onset of “gold-fever.” The discovery of seven new primary source records from this year, however, spurred the author to write what he describes as the first book-length survey of its kind. Additional motivation came from a letter La Salle found by his great-great-great-uncle Thomas Corcoran, who made the trip west in 1848. According to La Salle, most emigrants on the Overland Trail were motivated by selfish impulses, not by Manifest Destiny or patriotism. Some were adventurers and thrill seekers, and others went west for their health, but all proved capable of raising the enormous funds needed to outfit the five-month journey. The author dispels the long-held notion that the trip was mostly made by the landless poor in search of free land.

LaSalle utilizes varied accounts to bring 1848 alive in exciting ways. He weaves together diaries written after the fact, daily journals kept on the trip, and secondary sources, producing a fluid and chronologically tight narrative. Beginning in April 1848 at the various “jumping-off” towns, the author introduces a wide array of characters as they embark on the voyage. As the migrants form groups and elect wagon leaders, the reader comes to understand the democratic sense of law and order that bonded the various companies together. Still, the group dynamic was not always harmonious, and some people found themselves left behind or ousted because of illness or perceived misbehavior. Providing the fullest agency possible to the travelers, La Salle uses the sources to demonstrate that the epic journey, at its core, was a risky experience filled with joys and misfortune. La Salle traces the voyage of eighteen wagon companies “traveling like knots in a long rope that stretched over three hundred miles from front to back” (p. xiii).

One of the more interesting diarists we encounter is Keturah Belknap. This twenty-eight-year-old expectant mother from Iowa wore many hats during the trip, including wife, mother of a three-year-old, and nurse to overworked draft animals. Belknap describes the many duties that women and children performed along the trip, and she also reveals the fear and homesickness women felt along the way. Keturah’s trip was



marked by the birth of her second child while camped at Fort Boise on August 10, 1848. Although her diary goes silent for a period of time, we understand her trials well because La Salle fills in the missing parts of her narrative using multiple other sources. LaSalle’s work is at its best as it recaptures the travails of the long trip. In addition, this volume evokes the emigrants’ sense of wonder and surprise as they traveled across the Great Plains. The tallgrass prairies of Kansas and Nebraska were the first foreign ecosystem with which the emigrants had to contend. They described this “vast green sea” as a landscape virtually without landmarks (p. 41). The wagon leaders were fortunate that they could follow the marks on the prairie left by previous trains of travelers.

The next two years of overland travel saw a tidal wave of emigrants in search of gold in California. Over seventy-five thousand travelers made the trip in 1849 and 1850, relegating the seventeen hundred emigrants of 1848 to a time virtually forgotten by later generations. Yet after the discovery of so many valuable journals and LaSalle’s tireless effort to retrace these settlers’ steps, 1848 can no longer be seen as the “lost” year.

Reviewed by Theresa L. Young, graduate student, Kansas State University, Manhattan.

With Golden Visions Bright Before Them: Trails to the Mining West, 1849–1852

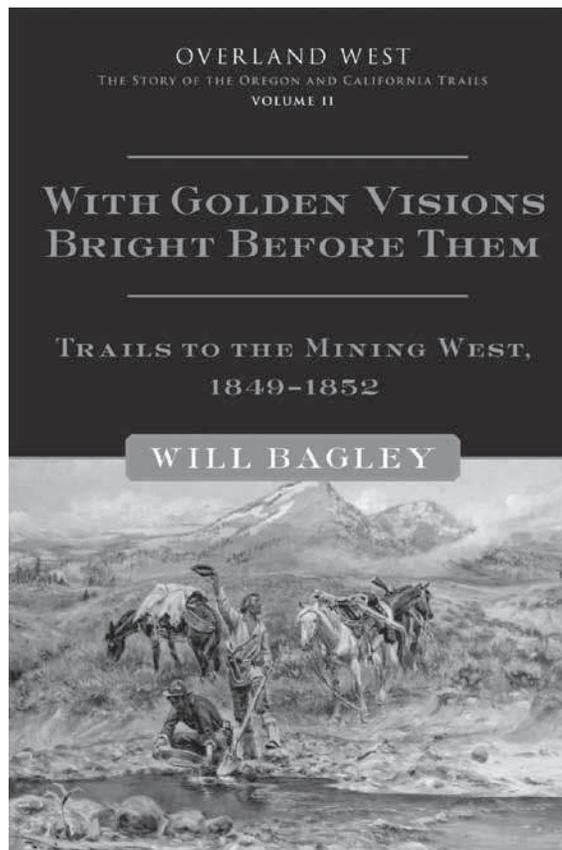
by Will Bagley

xxi + 464 pages, illustrations, bibliography, index.
Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, cloth
\$45.00.

Will Bagley's *With Golden Visions Bright Before Them* is the second volume in his ambitious project to chronicle the history of one of the great mass experiences in American history: the overland migration via the California and Oregon Trails. The topic has drawn plenty of attention before, of course, including various works by Merrill Mattes and John D. Unruh's *The Plains Across*, which became something of an instant classic after its appearance in 1979. The overland experience, however, can always bear new examination, and it is, besides, one of the best documented episodes in the national narrative, with fresh materials constantly surfacing. In this volume and in his first one, covering 1812 to 1848, Bagley has mined much of the new documentation and has traced the story in denser detail than anyone before.

With Golden Visions focuses on the first years after the discovery of gold in 1848, when the numbers crossing the continent pitched dramatically upward (except for a puzzlingly drastic dip in 1851) and the preferred destination moved from Oregon to California. It was as if everyone living in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Florida in 1840, plus another ten thousand or so persons, packed up and walked and rode to the Pacific coast. During these years, earlier routes became more deeply ingrained, new variations were tried (sometimes disastrously), the budding commercial apparatus and the government presence greatly expanded, and relations with Indian peoples grew more complex and troubling. The years between 1848 and 1852, that is, brought the overland experience into focus.

To organize his sprawling topic, Bagley uses a mix of chronology and geography. Early chapters cover the gathering of immigrants, the first stages of the trip, and the choice of route to the Pacific. Later ones follow the story more or less year-by-year, bringing in alternate pathways forged in the process. The arrangement is as good as any, given the difficulty of trying to capture what was, on the one hand, a collective experience and, on the other, an experience that evolved in significant ways, especially during the years under consideration. Bagley describes the particulars of the many strands that formed the webbing of trails, and he offers educated guesses on points debated by squabbling historians. For example, he writes that between twenty-six and forty-four thousand individuals embarked on the 1849 migration, including more women than we previously thought; that the crossings of the Sierra Nevada in 1849 were divided roughly equally among the Carson, Lassen, and Donner Passes; and that the death toll from cholera in 1850 was possibly far below the usual estimates of three to four thousand.



Firsthand sources fill eighteen pages of the bibliography, and Bagley's eye for vivid, amusing, and hair-raising quotations adds to the book's charm. It is a vast chorus of testimony—a paragraph rarely has fewer than four or five quotations—although this necessarily works against an authorial voice. As for a unifying theme, in contrast to many traditional narratives Bagley tilts decidedly away from the heroic toward the bleak. A chapter on ill-conceived routes is titled, a bit over-riperly, "Shortcuts to Death." He also stresses what all current evidence makes clear: that the migration was an unalloyed calamity for Indian peoples. A surprising number of would-be overlanders were overwhelmed and turned tail along the way, and many who made it had little good to say. One vowed to "swim around Cape Horn on a log" before recrossing the plains (p. 248).

Those of us drawn to the extraordinary story of this great folk-wandering will find Bagley's two volumes an indispensable source and will await with pleasure volumes still to come.

Reviewed by Elliott West, professor of history, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

The Failure of Popular Sovereignty: Slavery, Manifest Destiny, and the Radicalization of Southern Politics

by Christopher Childers

xii + 334 pages, illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index.

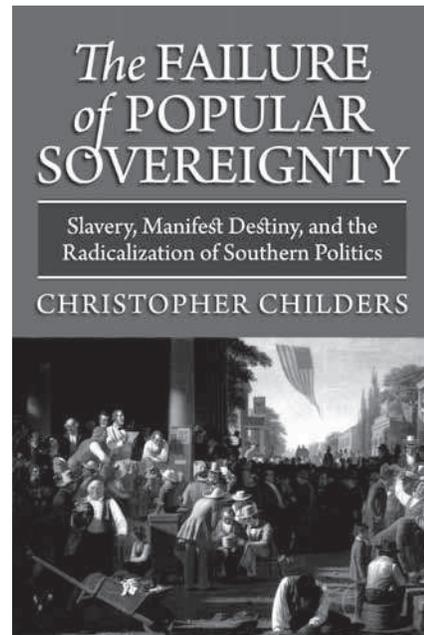
Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012, cloth \$39.95.

For political historians of the antebellum decades, the work of Chris Childers in laying out the convolutions of southern (and northern) politicians over the implementation of popular sovereignty is required—and enjoyable!—reading. Childers expertly dissects the changing positions of major politicians on popular sovereignty between 1784 and 1861 and shows how the disillusionment of southerners with popular sovereignty led to the radicalization of southern politics. By detailing the faults of popular sovereignty, Childers as well points to the only policy that could have handled the controversy of slavery in the territories: extension of the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific Ocean.

Childers discovers that southerners were the first ones to argue for popular sovereignty because they expected immediate benefits from it. Southerners were not particularly interested in the Old Northwest but were in the Old Southwest, where cotton and sugar plantations could be established. For the territories in that area, southern political leaders argued strongly that settlers should decide the matter of slavery themselves—because they knew slavery would be instituted. The alarm bell that awoke southerners from their popular sovereignty slumber was the Missouri controversy of 1819 to 1821. During this battle over Missouri's entrance to the Union, southerners came to fear that the northern antislavery impulse might use the central government to restrict slavery's expansion.

Childers presents much new information on popular sovereignty ideas up to 1844, but when he enters the period 1844 to 1860 he treads upon well-traveled ground. Nevertheless, he adds interesting twists. He charts the ambiguities and maneuvering of northern proponents of the doctrine, especially Daniel Dickinson, George Mifflin Dallas, and Lewis Cass, during the Wilmot Proviso crisis. He argues that in 1849 President Zachary Taylor "had done nothing less than advocate the *southern version* of popular sovereignty" (p. 183) in his actions toward California and New Mexico by trying to stimulate them to create state constitutional conventions, thereby horrifying southern Whigs who feared the result would be two more free states. After 1846 Calhoun and other radicals came to see that popular sovereignty foretold more free states from the territories, and so to obtain more slave states they initiated the radical southern movement calling for positive federal government protection of slavery in the territories.

In detailing the fate of popular sovereignty between 1852 and 1861, Childers usually follows established interpretations. Older historians found Stephen Douglas a hero for arguing for a middle road; Childers finds Douglas a lackluster figure



possessing no solution at all. Childers argues, controversially, that a back-door deal existed in 1854 to make Kansas a slave state and Nebraska a free state, although he admits that "no explicit proof has ever surfaced" to substantiate the charge (p. 215). The finale for popular sovereignty came in the Lecompton Constitution debacle, when southerners realized that the doctrine was virtually a free-soil policy because the North's numerical majority guaranteed that all future territories would become free states.

As excellent as Childers's exposition is, some areas still require further exploration, but only one will be noted here. Childers merely hints at the reasons for popular sovereignty's failure. The insuperable difficulty was that no one was willing to trust voting unless partisans from the beginning determined that voting would produce a result they favored. Why northerners demanded victory on the territorial issue is something of a quagmire, but the southern position is not. It was a landscape dominated by only one topographical feature: property rights in slaves were beyond the legislative process. In the Continental Congress of 1776, Judge Thomas Lynch said, "If it is debated, whether their [southerners'] slaves are their property, there is an end of the confederation" (quoted from James L. Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union: Slavery, Property Rights, and the Origins of the Civil War* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003], 15–16). That statement announced the death knell of popular sovereignty decades before it came into the world. In so many ways southern political leaders made it clear that the right to property in slaves was beyond legislative tinkering. Southerners were never going to let a democratic process determine the fate of property rights in slaves.

Reviewed by James L. Huston, professor of history, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater.

African American Faces of the Civil War: An Album

by Ronald S. Coddington

xxix + 338 pages, illustrations, bibliography, index.
Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012,
cloth \$29.95.

*Men of Color to Arms! Black Soldiers, Indian Wars,
and the Quest for Equality*

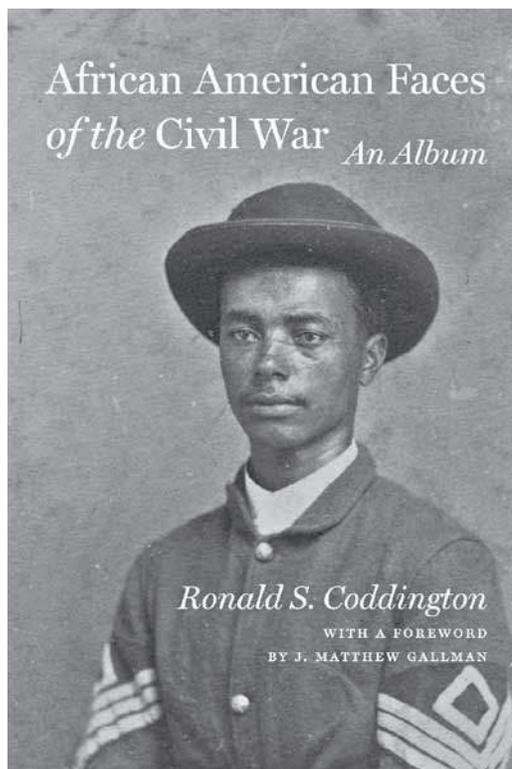
by Elizabeth D. Leonard

xxviii + 315 pages, illustrations, index.
Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012, paper
\$19.95.

Frederick Douglass, renowned orator, abolitionist, and former slave, celebrated Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 with these words: "This is scarcely a day for prose. It is a day for poetry and song, a new song." To Northern voters, President Lincoln presented both the Emancipation Proclamation and the subsequent recruitment of black soldiers into the Union army as wartime necessities. But Douglass and his fellow African Americans rightly recognized these events—the latter the direct result of the former—as major turning points for black Americans. In particular, by making soldiers of black men, the Union implicitly acknowledged black manhood and potential for citizenship. In *African American Faces of the Civil War* and *Men of Color to Arms!*, Robert S. Coddington and Elizabeth D. Leonard respectively explore the private desires and collective dreams that motivated nearly two hundred thousand black men to heed the call to defend the Union and become soldiers in the United States Colored Troops (USCT), embarking on what, as Frederick Douglass assured them, was a path from slavery to freedom and, even, citizenship. As each author concludes, however, the journey turned out to be both longer and more arduous than any of these men (Douglass included) had hoped.

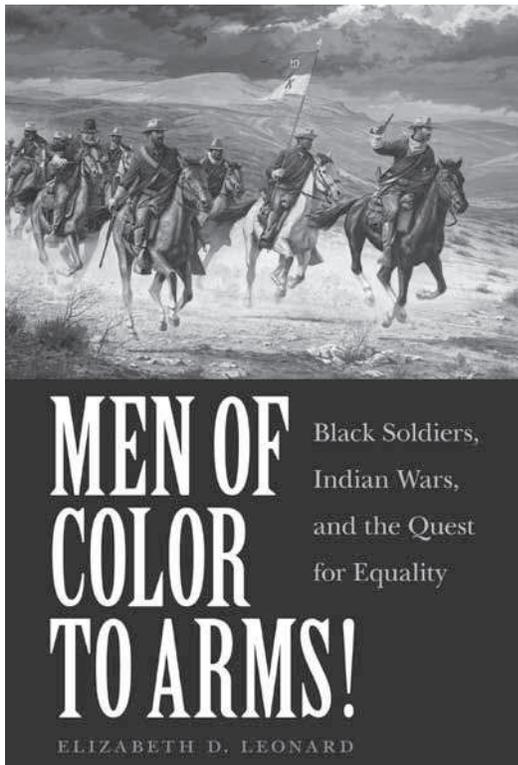
Coddington's book, as its title suggests, is an "album" composed of the photographs and personal stories of seventy-five African American participants in the Civil War. It is the third in a series written by Coddington, assistant managing editor at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. (His first two works showcase photographs and stories of white Union and Confederate soldiers, respectively.) Coddington reminds us that images of black men in uniform are considerably difficult to find because black soldiers usually could not afford to have their picture taken. The author spent two years discovering portraits all over the country in museums, archives, and private collections. Then, through creative use of African American newspapers and pension records, Coddington pieced together the biography of each man pictured.

African American Faces of the Civil War, like the photographs it presents, captures the moment when black men in America transitioned from slaves to soldiers and the Civil War became



about more than merely preserving the Union. Unlike any single photograph, however, Coddington's book depicts this moment from a diverse variety of perspectives. There is the image and story of First Lieutenant William Dominick Matthews of Kansas, who operated a station along the Underground Railroad and was the "first man of color" to respond to Kansas senator James Henry Lane's early proposal to recruit black troops (p. 37). In fact, Matthews not only responded to Lane's call but also raised his own company of two hundred former slaves. As the regiment awaited formal authorization to join the Union army, some of the men participated in a skirmish at Island Mound in Missouri, becoming the first black troops to engage in combat during the war. Matthews, Coddington finds, echoed Douglass in encouraging his fellow black men to don the Union blue, declaring, "If we fight, we shall be respected. I see that a well-licked man respects the one who thrashes him" (p. 39). Coddington also recovers the story of Private Allen W. King, a Kentucky slave bought by a drafted physician to serve as his substitute in the Union army, a legal option that many Northerners exercised. In addition to soldiers, Coddington's volume includes servants and laborers who never officially joined the USCT but who served the cause of freedom in other ways. As Coddington relates, all of these men confronted and helped to challenge generations of racism and doubt about the capabilities of their race.

Colby College professor Elizabeth Leonard similarly opens her study of black soldiers with Douglass's 1863 call for men of color to enlist in the USCT. Yet Leonard follows the story of



black soldiers until decades after the war in order to show that, sadly, African Americans' wartime service did not secure them equality. It is well known that, during the war, black soldiers received inferior pay, supplies, and equipment compared to white soldiers and that, regardless of the sacrifice or leadership abilities they demonstrated, they could not be commissioned as officers. Leonard finds that this pattern of discrimination within the military continued once the war was over and slavery abolished, paving the way for the rise of Jim Crow segregation.

For example, while white soldiers celebrated Northern victory in spring 1865 with parades, including the magnificent Grand Review of the federal armies in Washington, D.C., in May, black soldiers were made to remain on duty. According to Leonard, in the ensuing summer months white soldiers were released from military service but USCT soldiers were not. As late as 1867, the majority of African American soldiers were still in the South, where they disproportionately enforced Southern defeat and protected the freedom of ex-slaves—enduring ongoing Southern hostility and abuse. Indeed, as Leonard relates, white Southerners' resentment toward black troops provoked a riot in Memphis in May 1866 that lasted two days and saw forty-six blacks killed. Many of those killed were USCT soldiers or their families. Leonard argues that the Memphis riot set the tone for Southern whites' resistance to Reconstruction, and especially to the plan of Radical Republicans to correct the balance of social and political power between the races.

Despite the ill-treatment they suffered in the wartime army, black men still sought to lay claim to Douglass's promise of

full citizenship based on military service. Leonard examines the contentious postwar debate within the U.S. military and the federal government over the future participation of African Americans in the armed forces. Assuming blacks would be allowed to continue serving in the military, would they be enlisted soldiers or laborers? Would any of them be honored with an officer's commission, or would they be relegated to noncommissioned status? One particularly important army officer who chimed in on these questions was Ulysses Grant, who was decidedly ambivalent. Writing to the chair of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs in 1866, Grant recognized the important contributions that the soldiers of the USCT had made during the war. However, he also advised against creating permanent regiments of "colored" soldiers. Grant explained, "Our standing army in time of peace should have the smallest possible numbers and the highest possible efficiency," suggesting that he did not consider black troops as efficient as white ones (p. 38). Many members of Congress agreed with him. One who did not was Senator Lane, an early champion of black men's military service. Lane continued to push for the inclusion of black soldiers in the postwar military as a primary means of elevating the status of African Americans and of securing black male voting rights. By the middle of 1866, the hope of including blacks in the postwar military was fulfilled, although they would still be forced to serve their country in segregated units.

One of the most important contributions of Leonard's book is its uncovering of the key role that black regulars played in America's postwar mission to subdue the West. With the South vanquished and brought back into the Union, the next major strategic—though morally questionable—task confronting the U.S. military was to conquer the remaining western lands and native peoples within the nation's borders "in preparation for the advance of 'American civilization'" (p. 76). Leonard argues that in their own ongoing quest for equality, black soldiers became "accomplices in . . . their country's racial and imperialistic policies" (p. 121). She suggests this irony was not lost on black soldiers. *Men of Color to Arms!* ends with a survey of the indignities and abuse black Americans continued to face both inside and outside the military—including failed attempts to desegregate West Point—throughout the final decades of the nineteenth century.

Based on abundant primary research, *African American Faces of the Civil War* and *Men of Color to Arms!* are both filled with lively and poignant details of war and sacrifice. Each author provides a far richer and more complete account of black military service in America than is currently available to us, and helps us better understand the ways in which race relations shaped all aspects of nineteenth-century American life. While Coddington's book leaves the reader with the sense of hope and pride the men he researched felt about their military service, Leonard demonstrates the frustrated postwar reality faced by African Americans.

Reviewed by Kelly Erby, assistant professor of history, Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas.

The Man Who Saved the Union: Ulysses Grant in War and Peace

by H. W. Brands

718 pages, illustrations, notes, index.
New York: Doubleday, 2012, cloth \$35.00.

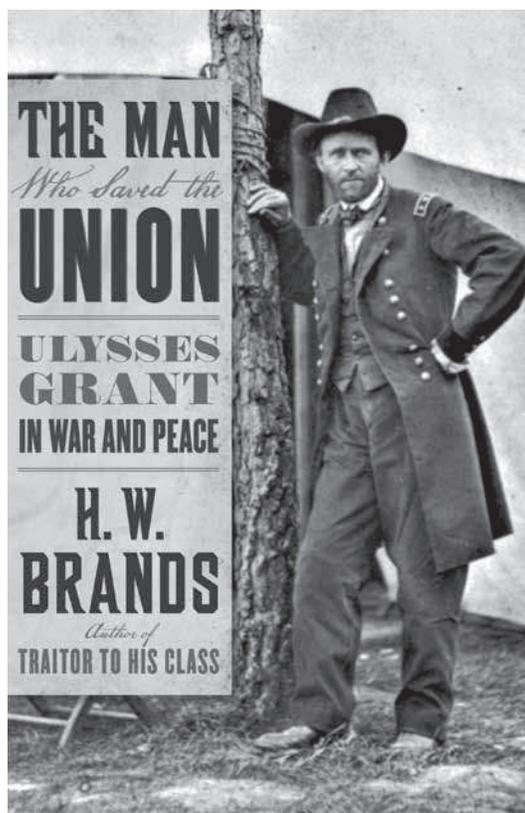
I remember a student in Civil War history asking the professor if Ulysses S. Grant was a drunk. I thought to myself, "There goes that kid's grade." The student's question is typical of the myths and misconceptions that many people have of Grant, a fascinating human being and one of the greatest generals in the history of the American army. In this clearly organized and superbly written biography, H. W. Brands conveys fascinating truths of Grant's life. Grant was a man of principle and courage, and this is how Brands portrays him.

Grant was born in Ohio to a family whose patriarch, Jesse, expected hard work from his sons and who always had an eye on economic and social advancement. Jesse obtained for Ulysses an appointment to West Point. The younger Grant would not have chosen to be a soldier, but like other tasks forced upon him during his lifetime, he was a success at it.

After serving in the U.S.-Mexican War, Grant was transferred to the Pacific Northwest. Far from his new bride, Julia, Grant was plagued with loneliness and indulged in heavy bouts of drinking. Rather than face a court-martial for drinking while on duty, Grant resigned from the army. Back in Missouri with his wife and young family, Grant's life can best be described by the name given to his homestead: "Hardscrabble." Farming was not his forte, and Grant was forced to take a job working for his brother in a leather business in Galena, Illinois. At the outbreak of the Civil War, when trained soldiers were in great demand, Grant volunteered to help organize the Illinois militia, and thus he found his way back into the military.

As the war progressed, and Grant rose up the military ranks, his relentless pursuit of Confederates in the western theatre, strategic victories at Fort Donelson and Shiloh, and capture of Vicksburg brought him to the attention of President Lincoln, who had been searching for a general who would fight: more specifically, one who understood the necessity of an all-out war. Promoted to the rank of lieutenant general in March 1864, Grant led the Union forces to victory. Simply stated, Grant always looked forward, not backward; he was a man who accomplished what he set out to do. This was the guiding principle of his life, and Brands's biography illustrates the many particulars of this truth.

After the war, Grant was caught up in the battle over Reconstruction between President Andrew Johnson and Radical Republicans. Grant disliked Johnson's abandonment of freedmen in the South. A hero to most northerners, Grant was elected president in 1868 and again in 1872. Brands details Grant's years in office, emphasizing how the president worked



to bring additional civil rights to newly enfranchised African Americans and to stop the terrorist campaign of the Ku Klux Klan.

Leaving the White House after eight years, Grant and his wife traveled around the world. They returned to live in New York, and Grant became a partner in a New York investment firm. It failed. Facing insolvency and terminal throat cancer, Grant raced death to complete his memoirs, which were best sellers and left his family with a financial inheritance.

All of the details of Grant's life are here in this authoritative biography. Brands offers no stunning new facts, and no bold new insights. This volume simply—but very effectively—narrates the story of a man who faced hardship and personal defeat to become the general who won the Civil War, and, as the book's title suggests, saved the union. The author depends upon primary sources and quotes at length from Grant's own writings, especially *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* and his *Memoirs*. Indeed, the remarkable thing about this volume is that Brands offers so many primary sources while still offering a fluid page-turner.

Reviewed by Patricia Ann Owens, independent scholar, Lawrenceville, Illinois.

Bucking the Railroads on the Kansas Frontier: The Struggle Over Land Claims by Homesteading Civil War Veterans, 1867–1876

by John N. Mack

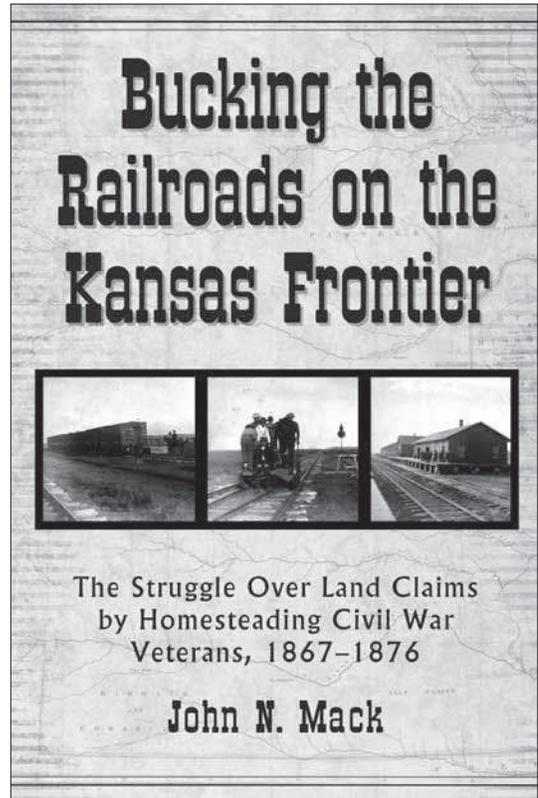
xi + 211 pages, illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index.

Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2013, paper \$45.00.

In 1876 settlers in the Osage Ceded Lands of southeast Kansas, many of them Union veterans, enjoyed what they saw as a second great victory against the forces of slavery and oppression. This one was won not on the battlefield but rather in the chamber of the Supreme Court of the United States, and their opponent was no longer the Confederacy but rather the railroads. John N. Mack offers a compelling narrative of the settlers' struggle to create lawful, ordered communities on the Kansas frontier, and their efforts to protect these communities, once established, from a number of internal and external threats, including the railroads. His central questions are why their battle against the railroads took place in the legal (as opposed to the extralegal) forum, and why the settlers were so driven, and so united, to take the powerful corporations all the way to the Supreme Court. These are two important questions, to be sure, but one question he does not ask is why the settlers were ultimately victorious.

Although divided into five chapters, Mack's central argument has three essential parts. First, he links the unity among settlers to their common experiences during the Civil War, experiences that committed them to the protection of "freedom" and "liberty," whatever the threat. This ideological harmony manifested itself not only in their initial allegiance to the Republican Party but also in their formation of extralegal "claim clubs" to protect one another in their not-yet-legal claims to land. Mack then traces the establishment of formal social, political, and legal institutions, and the emergence of a legal culture within the communities, all of which led one newspaper editor, as early as 1870, to term the administration of law and order "regular Kansas style" (p. 105). Finally, Mack demonstrates how the settlers' shared ideological commitment to the protection of personal "freedom," their social and political unity (an idea challenged by scholars in recent years), and their commitment to the rule of law provided them the motivation and tools to fight the railroads in court, when the railroads laid legal claim to lands that the settlers saw as rightfully theirs.

Mack relies heavily upon newspapers for his primary source material, in part because newspapers were in many cases the only sources available for answering the questions asked, but also because newspapers in fact served as the principal voices of their respective communities. Indeed, this book is a treasure trove of rich, insightful quotations, skillfully contextualized with insights drawn from social, political, and cultural histories. However, harvesting newspapers for their value as sites of social interaction and relying upon them to establish true "facts" are two different things. While Mack acknowledges the fallibility



of newspapers as historical sources, he also at times takes them at face-value, even when the material is self-serving or self-celebratory.

Ultimately, Mack falls short of showing how the settlers' opposition to the railroads "changed the course of American history, [changed] the nature of western settlement, and laid the foundation for the evolution of political thought in Kansas and the American west" (p. 6). Such a claim seemingly depends upon the settlers' victory having to some degree "settled" the question of land ownership" (p. 160), at least as between homesteaders and railroads. This was not the case. The Supreme Court's reasoning in *Leavenworth, Lawrence, and Galveston Railroad Company v. United States* (1876) was neither original nor dispositive of the great bulk of future land disputes between railroads and settlers. Still, the case was undoubtedly of vital importance to those directly involved with or impacted by it. This is only part of the reason that *Bucking the Railroads* should be read by any student of Kansas or western history. The main reason is simple: it is a fascinating story, told with a proper mix of analytical and narrative history. If not an essential read, it certainly is an enjoyable one.

Reviewed by Sean M. Kammer, assistant professor, University of South Dakota School of Law, Vermillion.

Bethel College of Kansas, 1887–2012

by Keith L. Sprunger

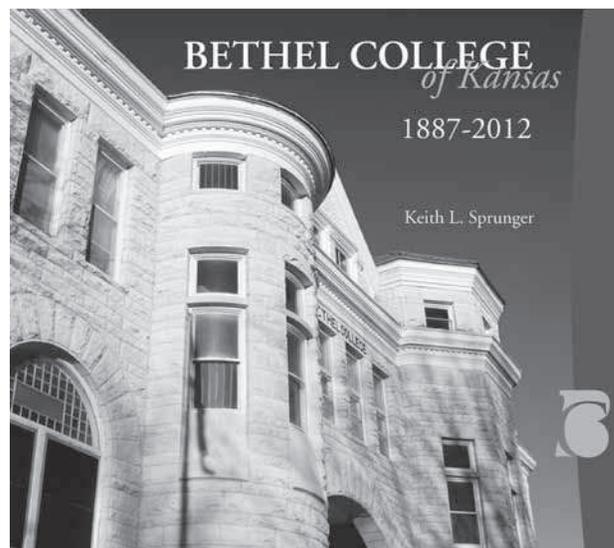
ix + 278 pages, illustrations, notes, index.

Newton, Kans.: Mennonite Press, 2012, cloth \$39.95.

Like other frontier boosters of various denominations of the late nineteenth century, Kansas Mennonites determined, beginning in 1887, to offer a program of higher education for their children. At first little more than a glorified high school, Bethel gradually evolved into a college with a more rigorous academic curriculum, and it graduated its first class of bachelors of arts students in 1912. Four years after graduating its first class, the college received accreditation from the Kansas State Board of Education. Thenceforth the college followed a path familiar to many other institutions of higher learning in the twentieth century, one marked by the excitement of the Roaring Twenties, devastating financial problems during the Great Depression, conscription of its students during World War II, and then surging enrollments spurred by the GI bill, student activism in the 1960s, rising enrollments in the following decade, and finally a roller-coaster cycle of enrollments and finances in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1990s, the college received full accreditation from the North Central Association and its first-ever recognition by *U.S. News & World Report*. Complacency, however, was shattered at the end of the century, when an employee embezzled one million dollars from the school.

Keith Sprunger, who taught history at Bethel from 1963 until his retirement in 2001, has carefully and lovingly researched multiple sources to create this volume. Still, he does not entirely demonstrate why Robert Kreuder's 1984 history of Bethel required replacement. The writing is good, although Sprunger can be a bit condescending at times, especially when he defines common terms, i.e., "a gentle eminence (a little hill)" (p. 15); "fin de siècle (end of century)" (p. 35); and "streaking [or] running around nude in public" (p. 185). The author also provides the paralyzing minutia of faculty and administration names that seems to be a necessary part of this genre. Everyone, regardless of their significance must be recognized for their contribution to the college.

Of his approach to writing the history of a college, Sprunger notes, "There were plenty of suggestions for an interpretive theme, such as challenge and response, continuity and change,



the role of 'people power'; or challenge and achievement" (p. viii). The author decided to use a combination of all three of these themes, and in doing so he has produced an empathetic account of his alma mater that comes through on every page. He laments the fact, for instance, that the task of presidenting was so onerous that most Bethel presidents served only a few years each. This resulted partly from the fact that the president also had to serve as pastor of the college church. And perhaps presidenting a church-related college during the turn of the century was more stressful than most realized. Still, this was not the experience of all the school's leaders. Ralph Kaufman, a "micromanager" who served for twenty years, apparently endured little stress during his tenure.

Bethel College of Kansas is handsomely illustrated with black-and-white, two-toned, and full-color photographs. Alumni will want a copy of this book, if for no other reason than its coffee-table allure, as will those interested in the world of higher education in the Sunflower State.

Reviewed by R. Alton Lee, emeritus professor of history, University of South Dakota, Vermillion.

Eisenhower: The White House Years

by Jim Newton

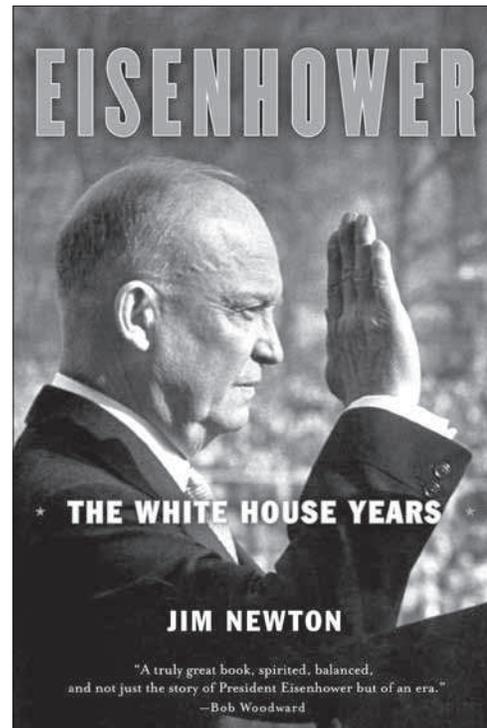
480 pages, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.
New York: Random House, 2011, cloth \$29.95.

Despite numerous biographies, facets of Dwight D. Eisenhower's life still offer rich opportunities for analysis. Beyond his military and government titles, who was Ike, truly? To answer this question, Jim Newton's *Eisenhower: The White House Years* emphasizes the thought process behind Eisenhower's decision making as it recounts the familiar events of his presidency. *The White House Years* contributes effectively to the continued dismantling of the old image of Eisenhower as primarily an absent president and avid golfer. This biography's real strengths, however, are its descriptions of the human side of the hero, which emphasize how little ascending to the presidency changed the personality and values of the man from Abilene, Kansas.

To trace Eisenhower's personal path to the White House, the book's first section focuses on those who "made" Ike, both in positive and negative ways. Newton's list of key influences includes the standard mentors—Generals Fox Conner and George Marshall—as well as Ike's mother and his wife. Eisenhower's early years in Abilene proved vital because during them he learned the values that would stay with him throughout his life. Each of the six surviving Eisenhower sons learned the value of hard work and to appreciate what they had, and their mother, Ida Stover Eisenhower, pushed each of her children toward success. Above all, Mrs. Eisenhower and Abilene taught young Ike the importance of home, which, Newton asserts, helped Eisenhower keep a healthy sense of perspective throughout his adult life. Though brief, Newton's summary of Eisenhower's pre-presidential years offers an illuminating portrait of the man who would be elected president in 1952.

The core of the text is a chronological summary of the main domestic and international developments of the Eisenhower presidency. Among the topics discussed are civil rights, McCarthyism, covert operations, and the Cold War. Details are sometimes limited, but Newton provides enough information to paint a clear picture of not only historical events but also of what Eisenhower thought about them. The moments when Newton breaks to include Eisenhower's words regarding a crucial moment of decision (or the words of those close to him, such as his son and staff member John Eisenhower) help distinguish this volume from others.

Although Newton does not always hide his great respect for Eisenhower, he remains focused on portraying Eisenhower accurately, flaws and all. He does not shy from discussing moments when Eisenhower's decision making seemed jumbled, or when he changed his mind. For example, Newton successfully traces Eisenhower's shift from an enthusiastic supporter of nuclear weapons to a skeptic who comprehended the destructive power of the weapons and thereby strictly avoided their use.



Yet when Eisenhower struggles, so does Newton. As is well known, Eisenhower hesitated to fully endorse moments of true progress for African Americans, such as the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, decision, which he opted to merely respect. Newton notes effectively that Eisenhower's "instinct for the middle way . . . was inhibiting in the area of civil rights" because of the lack of a potential compromise (p. 117), but he leaves largely unanswered the question of how much credit the president deserves for the modest civil rights progress of the 1950s. In one paragraph he states that historians may have judged Eisenhower too harshly in this area, but he then quotes John Eisenhower's remark that "my dad was not a social reformer. He was a commander in chief" (p. 118).

Ultimately, however, *Eisenhower: The White House Years* offers both a solid starting point for first encountering Eisenhower and an engaging refresher for those more familiar with his life and career. Perhaps to the credit of his journalism background, Newton manages to concisely chronicle Eisenhower's life, offering insight into not only his professional life, but his personal life as well. Eisenhower's thoughts, observations from those close to him, and anecdotes about his family are the threads that unify this biography. Newton has skillfully demonstrated how Eisenhower's "middle way" was "as much a part of his character as of his politics" (p. 338).

Reviewed by Amy Cantone, curatorial assistant, Missouri State Museum, Jefferson City.

War-Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences

by Mary L. Dudziak

221 pages, illustrations, notes, index.

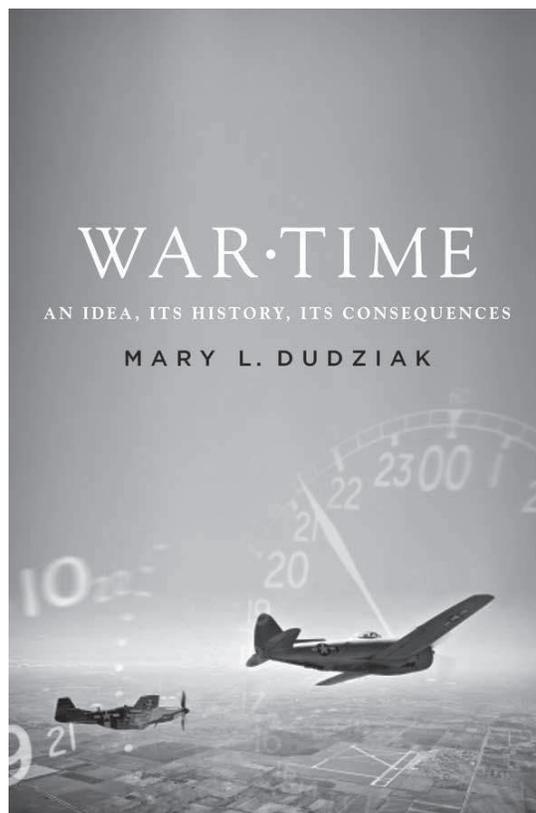
New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, cloth \$24.95.

Scholars of all stripes have been exploding binaries for decades now. The most fruitful insurgencies have operated in the theatres of gender, race, and empire. Mary Dudziak, an accomplished historian who is no stranger to deconstruction—whether attacking the boundary between domestic and foreign policy, or between legal history and the history of foreign relations—is at it again. She has crafted an elegant extended essay that will leave even the most sophisticated readers slapping their forehead and asking why they did not think of that. *That* turns out to be a powerful question: what is the line between “wartime” and “peacetime”? Her compelling answer is that there is no natural line of demarcation between war and peace, despite the invocation of this distinction to support some of the state’s fiercest powers. Rather, wartime and peacetime are socially constructed. The border between war and peace is fabricated in the realm of politics—not on the battlefield or during the surrender ceremony.

Of course, many scholars indirectly have written about the interpenetration of war and peace. Jim Sparrow’s *Warfare State*, for instance, explores the complex ways in which war seeped into public consciousness long before American bombs and bullets begin flying during World War II, and it examines the implications of warfare for governance, long after peace was declared. Older works, like Ed Ayers’s *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, explored the distinct and nuanced ways in which war can arrive, and its varied levels of intensity. In such contexts the absurdity of using the word “antebellum” to describe an era becomes clear. Without knowing how, when, or why the next war will descend, we hardly organize our lives around its uncertain arrival. But to my knowledge, no scholar has asked, and answered, the question of what divides a state of war from peace as directly and effectively as Dudziak.

Her generous citations of scholars, from Lynn Hunt to Stephen Kerr, make clear the author’s debt to cultural historians. Dudziak has synthesized the questions and implications that grow out of this body of scholarship to tackle head-on the misconception that war is an effective tool for dividing history into neat periods, let alone eras. Dudziak is even more determined to dynamite one of today’s most enduring and pressing presumptions: that wartime restrictions of civil liberties are justified because war is an exception, an aberration. Whether discussing the rent forgone by Cleveland landlords in 1947, because the war-induced housing shortage lasted long after Japan surrendered, or the Obama administration’s detainees at Guantanamo, Dudziak insists that it is poor policy and even worse history to assume that war is followed by peace.

In service of her argument, Dudziak mobilizes an innovative range of evidence. She turns to relatively obscure case law to document the capacious ways in which the courts have defined war. But she also ingeniously deploys sources such as U.S.



military campaign service medals to demonstrate how the state, soldiers, and veterans’ organizations have defined war. When “small” wars are considered (wars of empire, as the British called them), it is hard to argue with the author that waiting for peace is a dangerous strategy for those who would protect the citizen’s fundamental rights.

In the wake of 9/11 the contested boundaries between war and peace have collapsed into a war with no end. As Dudziak puts it, “Since 9/11, war has been framed in a boundless way, extending anywhere in the world that the specter of terrorism resides, even as some of the country’s political leaders—on the left and right—denounce its seeming endlessness” (p. 5). Yet, by the time I reached the final chapter (on the war on terror), Dudziak had already convinced me that this distinction was far more fragile than I had realized. She concludes, “Thinking of wartime as determining our actions, rather than as an urgent occasion for politics, impedes public engagement and responsibility” (p. 136). To suspend politics until war ends, when the distinction between wartime and peacetime is largely defined by the governing regime, is to surrender before the first shot is fired.

Reviewed by Brian Balogh, Compton Professor of History, The Miller Center and Department of History, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States

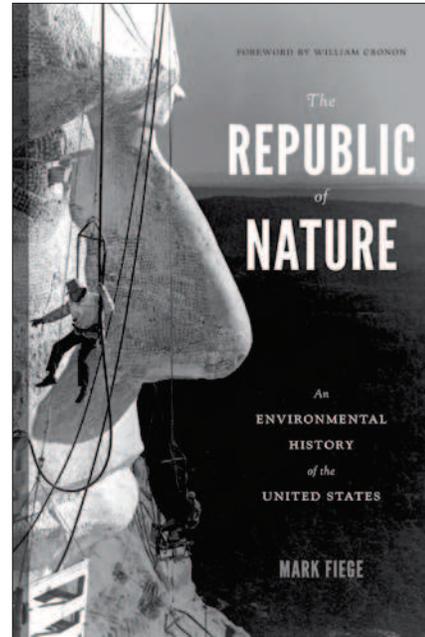
by Mark Fiege

xii + 584 pages, illustrations, notes, index.
Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012, cloth
\$34.95.

Mark Fiege's *Republic of Nature* opens with a wonderfully detailed vignette about the Lincoln Memorial. Fiege asks the reader to look beyond the frequently studied symbolic significance of the memorial and to think about it physically. How was this iconic monument constructed? Where did the marble come from? How was the site chosen? Who labored to build it? And what do the choices made in its physical construction reveal about the broader social, political, and cultural landscape of America in the 1910s and 1920s? Fiege reveals the ways in which all history, even that which is seemingly disconnected from the material world, is a story about nature—human and otherwise.

Republic of Nature argues that only by investigating the natural world and ideas about that world can we understand the major events in American history. Fiege's nuanced analysis of the historical role of nature comes through a series of case studies of topics not traditionally studied by environmental historians: the Salem Witch Trials; the Revolutionary War; slavery and the Civil War; the transcontinental railroad; the Manhattan Project; *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*; and the energy crisis of the 1970s. Although much of his narrative covers familiar ground, Fiege offers evocative detail and convincingly demonstrates that we cannot understand many well-known events without viewing them through the lens of environmental history. The chapter "Satan in the Land," for example, expertly surveys mainstream scholarship on the outbreak of witchcraft accusations in the seventeenth century, and then, drawing on recent environmental works, details the "ecological crisis" in the herds of Essex County, Massachusetts, that occurred at the same time (p. 53). An influx of British soldiers and cattle brought to Massachusetts to support wars with the French and Indians spurred disease outbreaks among local cows and humans. To explain this rampant disease, some colonists pointed to witchcraft.

Additional case studies similarly blend review of the familiar with new material understanding. Fiege describes how Abraham Lincoln's early experiences as a farmer gave him not only an appreciation for the difficulty of physical labor and the importance of wages but also for the value of education to average Americans. The excellent chapter on *Brown v. Board* reveals that the original lawsuit in Topeka was animated more by complaints about environmental conditions and the physical difficulties experienced by African American children trying to get to distant segregated schools than by complaints over inferior education. And the final chapter, which investigates America's dependence on oil, helps illuminate how the physical landscape of America—and the physical waistlines of Americans—have been shaped by access to easy and abundant oil.



Fiege's case studies clearly underscore the role of nature in the American past, but sometimes his choices are arbitrary and unsatisfying. He does not include a case study, for example, from either the Progressive Era or the Great Depression, which seems strange given that an examination of the changing role of the state in protecting natural rights and in conserving natural and human resources would have continued themes developed in the first half of the book and provided critical background to his later chapters on the twentieth century.

Moreover, by leaving out the traditional subject matter and theoretical frameworks of American environmental history, the book stalls. Analytically much of the book hinges on demonstrating the "natural" within events often not connected to nature, but that understanding was framed by critical moments in the history of conservation, public health, sanitation reform, and chemical policy. Why not include these examples, to help build a more robust analysis of events in the twentieth century? The author's approach also makes the reader wonder: is the traditional telling of American history so devoid of nature and ideas about the natural world that students really have no sense of its importance? Perhaps a more robust theoretical framework could have made this a more satisfying book to read and teach. Further, careful editing might have checked Fiege's tendency to include all the ways in which a particular topic was "natural." For example, after excellent analysis of how Abraham Lincoln's relationship to working the land informed his political philosophy, additional examples of how he responded to the nature of death and birth seem extraneous and tacked on. Despite these critiques, however, *Republic of Nature* offers a useful and insightful overview of the role of nature in American history.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Pillsbury, history teacher, Riverdale Country School, New York, New York.

*American Genesis: The Evolution Controversies
from Scopes to Creation Science*

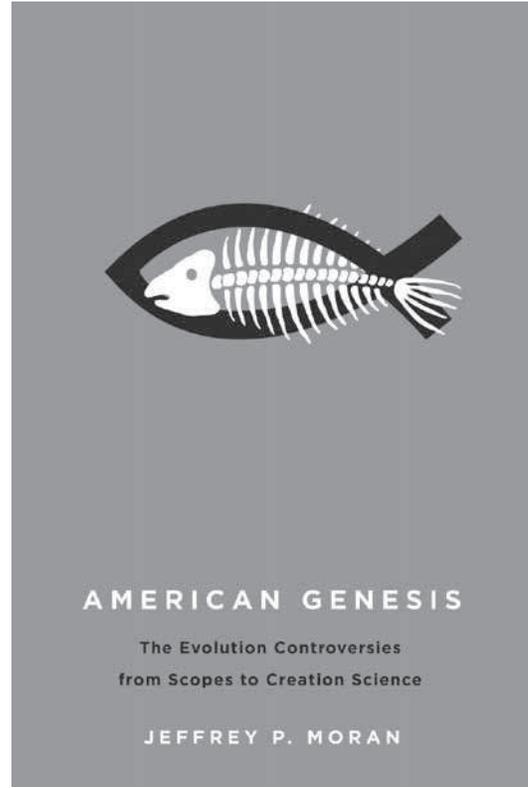
by Jeffrey P. Moran

xii + 155 pages, notes, index.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, cloth \$29.95.

For those who thought the last word had been written on the American controversies over the theory of biological evolution, think again. In a thoughtful, synthetic account, Jeffrey P. Moran, who teaches history at the University of Kansas, has opened the door to more vistas. He is well informed on the scientific as well as the social, political, and religious aspects of the American controversies over evolution, especially on the variegated opponents of evolution. After a discussion of how Darwinism and evolutionism came to America in the later nineteenth century, he asks: why has evolutionary theory roiled and boiled American public discourse so much more than it has in other national cultures? In this brief book he cannot compare different national histories. America, he insists, was “exceptional” as public awareness of evolution—especially the Darwinian version—spread. Three factors shaped it in our public discourses. These were American Protestantism, far more militant than in other countries; American democratic or populist cultural institutions and traditions; and the nation’s unique cultural diversity itself.

Then follow five substantive chapters, each of which could be extended into a separate book. First comes a chapter on how gender identity—meaning mothers—found Darwinian evolution unacceptable as they organized themselves into local, regional, and national women’s organizations to uplift civic life. These mothers were devout Protestants as well as biblical literalists; hence evolution was to be opposed, especially as the theory was being introduced into the nation’s rapidly expanding high school system in the interwar years. Next Moran pens a familiar reminder of how regionalism—meaning cultural and religious traditions in the South and the Middle West—both shaped and propelled the antievolution impulse. Here a major divide stood between city and small-town folk, with the latter usually against evolution more intensely than the former. Next comes virtually unknown territory, the reactions of African Americans to the theory of evolution. For most, who were even more fervently Protestant, evangelical, and fundamentalist church members than whites, evolution was wrong, especially if it also justified whites’ racial essentialism. African American intellectuals, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, however, took evolution as science far more seriously, insisting that science proved the potential equality of all human races, just as anthropologist Franz Boas and his followers strenuously argued. Then Moran reviews the ideas and political strategies of the antievolutionists, with rigor and even-handedness, and with enough detail that he points the way toward several areas for further research. In the fifth chapter, Moran discusses the impact of the antievolution movement on academic institutions and, in particular, their scientists—and traces the influence of



the pro- and antievolution camps. Here he carefully weighs the varying arguments, the most prominent dramatis personae on both sides, and their institutional networks and impact on public opinion and on scientific opinion, as such things have been measured quantitatively.

Moran suggests that evolution has had a wide, although not especially deep, influence on most Americans. Many are indifferent to evolution as a threat, even if they are biblical literalists, because mainstream American Protestantism is so bland and accepting of doctrine, valuing behavior and belief oriented towards the present. Yet the antievolutionists are a well-organized minority, who can raise pots of money, so they and their ideas will likely be around for some time to come, as they have been for generations. Just as evolution energized and awakened the biological and social sciences, and even helped develop theories and delusions of modernization, so evolution in other levels of public discourse have provided continuing, and likely long lasting, inconclusive controversies.

I have one recommendation. This is a fine book, which deserves to be in paperback, where, I predict, it will enjoy large sales, certainly in the college market. But the press needs to reconcile the conflicting subtitles on the cover and the front page, which disagree on “Evolution” and “Antievolution.” That is an unconscionable blunder.

Reviewed by Hamilton Cravens, research specialist, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.