

age (1990). Stephanie Pratt's *American Indians in British Art, 1700-1840* (2005) is an especially important work that goes much further in exploring the subject. John C. Ewers's pioneering study of the ethnographic accuracy of the work of many of these artists and Christian Feest's study of material culture of Woodlands tribes are among the many addi-

tional reliable sources available to those seeking to broaden their understanding of the material content of the paintings highlighted in Truettner's book.

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Wicked River

The Mississippi When It Last Ran Wild

By Lee Sandlin

(New York: Pantheon Books, 2010. Pp. xxviii, 270. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$26.95.)

I first saw the Mississippi River on June 3, 1984, when my wife and I crossed it at St. Louis, heading west to Denver on our honeymoon. It was the second day of our marriage, my thoughts were turned to love, so I scarcely noticed the river or the Gateway Arch rising beside it. In the next twenty-seven years, I would walk beside it, fly the length of it, drive over and beside it, and cross it on a ferry. Though I live hundreds of miles from it, it feels near. Were I to launch a canoe in the creek that bisects my southern Indiana farm, I would end up on the Mississippi and eventually in New Orleans. Others had done it before, most notably Abraham Lincoln, in the year 1831, when the river ran wild.

Native North Americans lived along the Mississippi for thousands of years before European observers first recorded their presence. The

Sioux, whose villages dotted the river's northern banks, were among the first people encountered by French travelers in the seventeenth century. The Chippewa moved in from the east, skirmishes commenced, while the real threat – a grasping European presence – went unchecked. Although the violence and disease that followed in the new settlers' wake drastically decreased tribal populations along the river, Native people continue to call the Mississippi home. The most obvious reminder of those early days is the river's name *Mizu-ziipi*, the Ojibwe phrase meaning "very big river."

Today, the Mississippi is an industrial corridor, corralled, controlled, and contained, except when spring rains and snowmelt spill onto the farms, towns, and cities that line its path. That is the Mississippi we know, the muddy giant rising behind

the harried reporter, spilling over the levee, another hundred-year flood.

The Mississippi we don't know, the river of Tom and Huck, is the wild river Lee Sandlin has brought to life. Primeval forests lined its banks, trees touched the clouds, prairie grasses grew so thick and high that river travelers who wandered into them even a dozen feet were disoriented, lost, and left behind; a river so pure that those who drank its water claimed it made their sweat sweet. Flocks of passenger pigeons, so immense they took days to pass, flew overhead. A verdant paradise, millions of years in the making, laid waste in one frantic century. *Wicked River* is the story of that century, a eulogy for an ecosystem now deceased, never to return. Past generations called it the wicked river, but what was done to it was criminal.

Who among us, while reading *Huckleberry Finn*, didn't long to join Jim and Huck on their river journey? The water remains, but the river they floated is gone, its bends straightened,

channels dredged, currents tamed by locks, levees, and lakes. But such is Sandlin's gift that those who lament the river's death find themselves transported back to those days of the birch bark canoe, when the nighttime sky was so brilliantly lit by stars, and "the Milky Way was in full flood" (p. 10).

Sandlin not only makes readers mourn the passing of this flowing jewel, he fires their imaginations. He does it with impeccable research, powerful language and imagery, and always with the awareness that something precious, something sacred, has been lost.

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Gallatin

America's Swiss Founding Father

By Nicholas Dungan

(New York: New York University Press, 2010. Pp. xiv, 193. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.95.)

Albert Gallatin and his friends, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, were outstanding leaders in the young United States. Curiously, however, unlike the latter two, Gallatin

has gradually faded from national consciousness and into relative obscurity. Now, in anticipation of the 250th anniversary of Gallatin's birth in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1761,