

his political rival, Winfield Scott. The enormous cession of land wrenched from Mexico was secured in part because of the efforts of Carson and John C. Frémont, etc. Excepting Johnny Appleseed, the willingness to either personally engage in or call for combat with Native Americans or Mexicans to satiate American land hunger and facilitate territorial expansion served as a common link among these men.

Focusing solely on famous figures in the story of the West can easily lead to hagiography, a pitfall Morgan acknowledges in his prologue. "Historians may concentrate on the famous, but most of what happens is the composite deeds of common folk.... We must consider the 'lions' of the West, but it was the unnoticed thousands on foot and on horseback, in wagons and ox carts, who made the story a fact, who wrote history with their hands and feet, their need and greed, their sweat, and often their blood" (p. xix). While Morgan himself falls into that pit on

several occasions, he does seem to make a genuine effort at balance.

Morgan's book is obviously not aimed at academics, who would find in it precious little new information or insight. Indeed, many of the chapters read simply like condensed versions of recent biographies of their subjects. Morgan's ability as a writer—and the narrative does flow quite smoothly—has already led to considerable popular success, and this book will no doubt find a similarly broad audience. The numerous excellent maps and useful timeline will be helpful to the droves of history buffs who will delight in the simple, concise sketches of their frontier heroes.

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Kentucky Rising *Democracy, Slavery, and Culture from the Early Republic to the Civil War*

By James A. Ramage and Andrea S. Watkins

(Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011. Pp. 445. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00.)

James Ramage and Andrea Watkins's *Kentucky Rising* is the best single overview of antebellum Kentucky ever written. Skillfully weaving polit-

ical history with the social and cultural aspects of early Kentucky, Ramage and Watkins have produced a lasting and excellent framework that

future historians will learn from, expand upon, and contend with.

The authors set out to recover a sense of the state's glory days, a time when "Kentucky had a relatively elevated status compared with the other states in the first half of the nineteenth century" (p. 1). Highlighting "the optimistic and hopeful dreams of a rising globally oriented society," Ramage and Watkins make a generally solid case that Kentuckians rejected provincialism and "embraced progress and learning" (pp. 16, 338). The argument is especially convincing when the authors describe the state's impressive cultural achievements. Ramage and Watkins skillfully catalog and profile early Kentucky's dozens of talented artists, academics, physicians, surgeons, and scientists, as well as universities, theaters, concerts, and historical societies. They intersperse this discussion with concise and well-executed accounts of political and military history. The lucid and concise discussion of Kentucky in the War of 1812, for example, is perhaps the best short discussion of the conflict I have ever read.

The book also identifies gaps in our knowledge of early Kentucky. The authors' all too brief treatment of the state's epic Relief War testifies to the fact that no full-length study of the episode has been published since 1929. (That said, the authors' comparison of the relief movement to socialism and communism during the Great Depression is, to put it kindly, far-fetched.) Likewise, their cursory

treatment of the 1855 Bloody Monday nativist riots underscores the need for more research into the infamous episode.

Like any stimulating synthesis, readers will find some aspects of the work more convincing than others. In their determination to emphasize the brighter side of things, Ramage and Watkins sometimes lose sight of the shadows that haunted early Kentucky. By concentrating on the state's wealth, talent, and refinement, for example, the authors lose sight of more ordinary citizens who led a rougher, much earthier existence. The whiskey-guzzling, "half-horse, half-alligator" Kentuckian who "always likes to rest unless the game is flying" was of course a myth; but it was not a myth made up out of whole cloth. And Henry Clay, whose career and personality the authors skillfully sketch, was a much more controversial figure than they let on. Many Americans—including a good number of Kentuckians—deeply resented and distrusted his neo-Hamiltonian American System.

The account of Kentucky's role in midcentury conflicts might also raise a few eyebrows. The depiction of the Mexican War—in a chapter subtitled "Honor Reconfirmed"—may be the most unconflicted account of the war written in a half century. The extended discussion of the Civil War era, meanwhile, places considerable emphasis on the heavy-handed actions of Union commanders, the heroism of the Confederate Ken-

tuckians, and the post-emancipation losses of white slaveholders. The chapter on the aftermath of the Civil War, while discussing the Lost Cause and its “great symbol” John Hunt Morgan at length, gives little attention to the fact that white Kentuckians’ reunification was premised upon the annulment of African Americans’ civil rights.

Yet, in the end, even if Ramage and Watkins have created a portrait with a bit too much light and not

enough shadow, *Kentucky Rising* should be appreciated for what it is: the new starting point for all future accounts of antebellum Kentucky.

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Full Steam Ahead

Reflections on the Impact of the First Steamboat on the Ohio River, 1811-2011

Edited by Rita Kohn

(Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2011. Pp. xviii, 240. Illustrations, index. Paperbound, \$19.95.)

The Indiana Historical Society promotes *Full Steam Ahead* as a book intended for general readers, and editor Rita Kohn does a good job of delivering on that promise. Under her guidance, a Naval architect and members of the Army Corps of Engineers join professional historians to present nine essays that effectively span the two centuries cited in the title. The book’s maps, photographs, and diagrams help readers understand the tales being told as well as to visualize the various kinds of steamboats, towboats, and systems of locks and dams.

Kohn’s editing results in a well-balanced presentation of material with little overlap between essays. Alan L. Bates’s layout of the nuts and

bolts of steamboat construction and design evolution is as interesting as the story of the first voyage and its aftermath by Leland R. Johnson. Thomas C. Buchanan and Joe William Trotter Jr. inform readers of the transportation revolution’s impact on Native Americans, as well as the role it played in ante- and postbellum African American history. Sandra M. Custer contributes a welcome study of the music that travelers enjoyed on their journey. Two chapters add layers to our understanding of traditional steamboat lore: Jack E. Custer explains the ins and outs of towboats, while Gerald W. Sutphin diverts readers’ attention from the mighty Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to explore the