(pp. 16–17) that proofreading did not catch. In addition, the author does not grasp the difference between “further” and “farther” (p. 64).

“In Askin’s life….the close interconnectedness of trade and empire resulted in his greatest and most lasting successes and his most disastrous and enduring failures” (p. xiv). Many of those “lasting successes” involved his two Indigenous wives and several talented multiethnic children, and this reader would have liked much more information on their lives before, and especially after, Askin’s death.

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Frontier Democracy: Constitutional Conventions in the Old Northwest
By Silvana R. Siddali
(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. 392. Illustrations, tables, maps, index. $120.00.)

Many students of history will define the Age of Jackson as one that wrestled with national constitutional questions, but the era also produced a flurry of constitutional activity at the state level. Between 1830 and 1860, twenty-two states either crafted new constitutions as they entered the union or revised existing ones. This interesting moment nestled between the first wave of constitutional activity that ended with the entry of Missouri and Maine into the Union in 1820, and the punctuated bursts of constitutional revisionism, largely among slaveholding states, during the Civil War and Reconstruction eras.

In Frontier Democracy, Silvana Siddali examines state constitutional debates in the Old Northwest (which she defines as Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin) as they began “to push their way into the national polity and economy” from the 1820s through 1850s (p. 8). Iowa seems an odd inclusion, yet the author explains that the importance of the state’s economy, its geographic location, and its timing of entry to the Union make it a reasonable adjunct to the study.

Siddali weaves two sets of conversations as she crafts her argument. The formal debates of the conventions sit at the center of her study,
but she is keen to set those debates within the larger political discourse and culture. Two guiding questions give purpose to the larger work and the individual chapters: “How do citizens in a racially and politically diverse frontier democracy talk to each other about framing governments and defining rights? What happens when those citizens—in spite of profound differences that drive them apart—agree on the core ethical principles of democratic self-government” (p. 1)?

Frontier Democracy treats convention representatives largely as sympathetic men who, despite bitter disagreements and occasional violence, embraced their civic duty and understood the gravity of their charge. As she argues, convention delegates believed they “were shaping a brand new iteration of the American political ideal, a government more rational, more ethical, and more democratic” than previous state constitutions, even as they succumbed to prejudices that contradicted their embrace of ethics, moralism, principle, science, and philosophy (p. 76).

Rather than trace the evolution of debates within each state, she organizes the book thematically, examining the most prevalent issues debated across the conventions. Doing so has the benefit of conveying to the reader how political discourse acted as a conversation across states throughout the era. On that mark, Siddali’s book is a refreshing view into the intersections of legal conventions, moral authority and ethical standards, philosophies of government, party politics, and a matrix of “rough-and-ready” western beliefs. This formulation also leads to some repetition across chapters, which is to be expected as weighty constitutional issues—like citizenship and land rights for example—could not be easily disentangled at the conventions. This is most consistently the case when dealing with the exclusions of women, Native Americans, and African Americans from various rights. Although more formally addressed in the chapter on citizenship, these exclusions reappear in many other chapters, especially those on citizens and wives. Given the centrality of race to the guiding argumentative thread set up in the introduction, this reviewer expected to see it more centrally located in the chapters. But this critique should not detract from what is otherwise an insightful contribution to antebellum political developments in the Old Northwest.

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