

*The Partisan Spirit: Kentucky Politics, 1779-1792.* By Patricia Watlington. (New York: Atheneum, for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Virginia, 1972. Pp. viii, 276. Notes, bibliography, index. \$12.95.)

"Heaven is a Kentucky of a place!" said one frontier preacher, but few of the early inhabitants were angelic. It was the urge for land which inspired men to migrate to Kentucky, and according to Professor Watlington land questions divided them into political parties, two at first, then three. Those who study other states would do well to imitate her careful examination of land matters, for land was the basis of prosperity and status on every frontier.

Virginians, especially the county surveyors and later the legal guild, formed an "articulate center in a diverse society" (p. 43) and thought themselves the proper leaders of the district. They were opposed by non-Virginians and the landless in general who felt cheated by Virginia's land policy, particularly the act of 1779. Termed "partisans" by their betters, the latter group formed a self conscious opposition seeking support from the Continental Congress and a general reallocation of land.

In 1783-1784 the nature of the dispute changed sharply as land questions faded after Virginia's claims were upheld. The center divided. A "court party" of judges and lawyers, centering about the notorious James Wilkinson, favored commercial development and separation from Virginia while secretly dealing with Spanish officials at New Orleans. The surveyors, now a "country party" of large landowners, also came to favor separation, but only through orderly legal procedures giving full protection to their land. By 1786 everyone had shifted positions, with the partisans now active against a separation that their enemies would control.

The shifting fortunes of these three parties are explained as fully as the sources permit, but much remains vague, particularly the reasons for a marked lack of popular interest in politics. Watlington shows that the Spanish Conspiracy was far wider and more important than most scholars believe. By 1787 the country party, led by the Marshall family, prevailed and finally achieved statehood in 1792 under a court

and country constitution. Their rivalry continued for many years, with most federal appointments going to court men who in time became Republicans, while the country party turned Federalist.

The author skillfully defends her use of "party," rightly anticipating the criticism she has received. Her usage seems legitimate enough, for the word was certainly often employed in the controversies she so carefully elucidates. She knows well that "politics in Kentucky was largely a matter of personal friendships and antipathies" (p. 156), frequently involving the quarrelsome Humphrey Marshall, although these relationships were at times obscured. Perhaps if she had used the phrase "court interest" in the eighteenth century British fashion, those who worry so over "party" would study more carefully the valuable substance of this work, which is based solidly on painstaking examination of scattered and sometimes sparse sources. They should also heed her warning that Kentucky attitudes simply do not fit the liberal and conservative categories cherished by so many observers of the frontier. Kentucky politics, Watlington concludes, were never conventional—or as Judge Mulligan put it so long ago:

Thunder peals the loudest,  
The landscape is the grandest,  
And politics—the damndest—In Kentucky.

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*A History of Missouri. Volume II, 1820 to 1860.* By Perry McCandless. *Missouri Sesquicentennial History*. Edited by William E. Parrish. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972. Pp. ix, 325. Notes, maps, essay on sources, index. \$9.50.)

In this second volume of *The Missouri Sesquicentennial History*, a five volume series being published in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Missouri's statehood, Professor Perry McCandless traces the story of Missouri and its people through the formative years between statehood and the Civil War. The author has developed a concise and sound synthesis based on extensive research in both primary and secondary sources, and the result is a well balanced history