

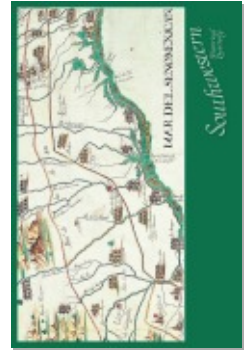


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Crossings: Women on the Santa Fe Trail by Frances Levine
(review)

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odds over slavery in American territories,” (p. viii) makes Hyslop’s case all the more tragic. Hyslop’s elision of the traditional historiographical boundaries that often stifle the connections that bound the Revolutionary, Early Republic, and Antebellum periods together for those living through the four score years they represented speaks to a need that academic writing often misses.

Lumping Jefferson, Jackson, Polk, and Douglas together as men who “all maintained as much distance as they could from the harsh realities and unsettling consequences of slavery while relying on it personally and advancing it materially,” (p. 263) certainly helps maintain the narrative thread that Hyslop’s argument requires, but it can fray a bit at times. Jefferson’s enlightenment ideology of natural rights, for instance, which compelled him not merely to rhetorical flourishes against slavery’s continued existence, but actual concrete attempts to stymie its advance, are not as easy to dismiss as Hyslop suggests—especially when compared against the relative moral indifference of the others. Competing arguments for expansion in the days before the Civil War—like those championed by Robert J. Walker, Lewis Cass, and John Quincy Adams—are also not always so easily attributed to overt or covert attempts to expand the domains of slavery. The prevailing American obsession with the machinations of the global superpower, Great Britain, brilliantly illuminated in works like *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* by Sam W. Haynes (2010)—which is missing from the bibliography—is also too easily dismissed.

These quibbles aside, *Building a House Divided* is a clear, succinct, and engrossing look at much that is familiar from the Northwest Ordinance and the Texas Revolution to the War of 1812 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. While the conclusion is not new, the vignettes and evidence will likely be fresh to those stuck in the historiographical silos of our profession. Perhaps more importantly, this might easily be adapted to any introductory early American History survey course to show how essential slavery was to the context of the Civil War, indeed as that conflict’s alpha and omega.

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Crossings: Women on the Santa Fe Trail. By Frances Levine. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2024. Pp. 252. Notes, bibliography, index.)

With *Crossings: Women on the Santa Fe Trail*, author Frances Levine engages in the historical discussions of the oft-described Santa Fe Trail, but she centers the conversation on women’s experiences, which supports her argument that historians should expand studies of the Trail to include St. Louis. Levine employs many sources well known to historians and uncovers several new ones. Yet, even with the well-known sources, she offers novel perspectives or uses the sources in original ways to include diverse women that represent those living near or traveling the Trail. Some of the historical figures left little behind in the historical record, but Levine strives to include them.

The book is arranged chronologically and thematically. Levine begins with Rosa Maria Villapalando in the late colonial era and relates her life experiences that spanned from Taos, New Mexico, to St. Louis. This examination allows for a detailed discussion of women captives. Chapter Two focuses on the post-1821 period, during which Mexico legalized foreign trade in New Mexico. The story of Carmel Benavides Robidoux illuminates women's experiences in this era. While her husband and his brother are well known to historians, her story has been unappreciated. Chapter Three investigates young women from elite New Mexican families who traveled the Trail to St. Louis to receive an education. Adaline Carson, Francisca López de Kimball, and Marian Sloan Russell journeyed the Trail seeking an education and found an environment in St. Louis rather hospitable to mixed-race people. The next chapter examines women traveling the Trail seeking improved health. The heartbreaking story of Kate Messervy Kingsbury reflects the stories of the many people of the era suffering from tuberculosis who traveled the Trail to New Mexico hoping for a healthier climate. Chapter Five examines African American women who lived along the Trail. Levine notes that there are not autobiographies or biographies of enslaved women from the Trail, but these women lived and worked there. The famous account of Susan Shelby Magoffin, which is often used to tell the story of the Trail, offers Levine the opportunity to relate the account of Magoffin's enslaved servant Jane. Levine also notes that black men and women lived and worked at forts along the Trail. The last chapter looks at the Trail and women who traveled with the army on paths of conquest. Here, the experiences of military wives are centered. Levine gives particular attention to Julia Anna Archibald Higgins Holmes, who climbed Pikes Peak, was an abolitionist and women's rights activist, but also faced abuse at the hands of her husband.

Crossings is artfully written and incorporates recent historiographical interpretations with clear influences from historians such as Juliana Barr and Ned Blackhawk. Centering upon women allows for a richer picture of how women offered access to markets, hunting grounds, and other opportunities to newly arrived men. While not necessarily a new argument, Levine's examples provide more support for this argument over a broader period of time and within a larger geographic lens while relating compelling individual accounts.

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Decisions of the Galveston Campaigns: The Twenty-One Critical Decisions That Defined the Operations. By Edward T. Cotham, Jr. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2024. Pp. 170. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index).

In this book, author Edward T. Cotham Jr. dissects a series of command decisions by Union and Confederate leaders in the struggle for control of Galveston. Cotham brings his personal experience guiding battlefield tours to his analysis, which gives the reader a close look at the commanders involved. This