# *The Making of the Midwest: Essays on the Formation of Midwestern Identity, 1787–1900* ed. by Jon K. Lauck (review)

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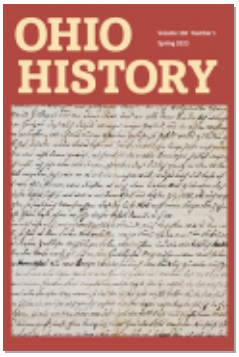


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war's conclusion. This view of the troubles and chaos of demobilization is rare and informative. Holliday was still young and didn't have a wife or children who were struggling to maintain the farm. He was excited about the potential adventures and experiences to be found on the frontier.

Holliday's motivation in writing was not to justify his or his country's actions or claim his spot in history. He was trying to tell a good story, which he did. There are humorous and exciting stories about his fellow cavalrymen and their officers. He describes his first meetings with Native Americans, both peaceful and hostile. His impressions of the Native Americans are informative if not comfortable for contemporary sensibilities. He shows us the difficulty of frontier army life. Holliday and Longacre have given us an entertaining and enlightening work. Any historian of the American West would be well served to have *On The Plains in '65* on their shelf.

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***The Making of the Midwest: Essays on the Formation of Midwestern Identity, 1787–1900.*** **Edited by Jon K. Lauck. Hastings, Nebraska: Hastings College Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-942885-75-7. 430 pp., paper, $30.00.**

In recent years the American Midwest has, as region, been largely overlooked. The term "flyover states" has been frequently applied to the area west of the Appalachian Mountains, north of the Ohio River, and west of the Mississippi. As a region, scholars have found the Midwest difficult to identify or characterize. In his edited volume, *The Making of the Midwest,* Jon Lauck seeks to resolve some of those deficiencies. His anthology concentrates on the period of time from the end of the American War for Independence through the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Midwest was, perhaps, most distinct in its identity. He argues that the characteristics that make the Midwest unique have their origins there. He states, "What emerged in the Midwest was a culture dense in Christianity, civic commitments, and attention to the arts" (xiv). Throughout the long nineteenth century, his midwesterners espoused the preservation of the Union, civil and civic reforms, and promoted individual endeavors such as family farms, incipient industrialization, and commercial entrepreneurship. His contributors, however, remind their audience that these midwesterners also promoted the removal of native populations, and were frequently hostile to immigrants, indigenous peoples, and African Americans.

In his introductory essay, Lauck narrates each of his core propositions and offers an introduction to each of his authors' work. To illustrate each of his themes, Lauck recruited essays from a very able group of scholars who clearly illustrate the changing temperament of the region. The first group of essays discusses the Midwest as it takes shape, and the various authors contend that midwesterners, and indeed much of the new republic, perceived the region as nearly idyllic. This is perhaps best characterized by Barton Price in his work on "The Protestant Imagination." He contends that during the first half of the nineteenth century, the confluence of evangelical enthusiasm, frontier development, and growing political influence placed the Midwest as the center of the "future religious and moral caliber of the nation." Lauck also emphasized civic engagement and the corresponding civil development in a selection of contributions. The essayists discuss midwesterners' participation in politics and reform in great variety. From Edward Franz's discussion of the Midwest's domination of the presidency from the Civil War to the Great Depression to Lisa Paine Ossian's reevaluation of midwestern women's roles in the temperance movement, the reader is reminded of the centricity of midwestern political power. Also included in this work is a collection of essays that focus on the importance of the arts in the Midwest, and how they both define the midwestern consciousness, and are defined by it.

In the last of the selections, Lauck's authors concentrate on the more complicated issues of midwestern identity, those that concern who is allowed to identify as a midwesterner. Michael Cox, Eric Rhodes, and Brie Swenson Arnold tackle the Midwest's "difficult" histories with Native Americans and African Americans at center stage. They delve into the midwesterners' dilemma of favoring civil equality in principle but struggling with the realities of interracial relations. In a different vein, David Miller's biographical piece on Carl Humke, who reconciled his German heritage with his new Midwestern identity, emphasized the impact of "whiteness" on his experiences. While Humke, at times, felt pressure to submerge his German heritage, he found room to accommodate his place of origin to his home of choice. The last work in Lauck's anthology, Jason Stacy's "Popucrats," is, perhaps, a warning that identity is not static but ever changing. Just as the Populists in 1980s and 1890s fought to reconcile the diverging rural and urban cultures of the Midwest, so, too, do more modern residents of the "flyover" region struggle to redefine themselves.

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