

Society for Historians of the Early American Republic

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Twilight of Empire: A Narrative* by Allan W. Eckert

Review by: Roger L. Nichols

Source: *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer, 1989), pp. 270-271

Published by: University of Pennsylvania Press on behalf of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3123229>

Accessed: 30-01-2022 22:44 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, University of Pennsylvania Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of the Early Republic*

women as teachers. Ohio paid women only six tenths the salaries of males, and local schools were encouraged to hire women as a cost-cutting measure. Still, the majority of Ohio's antebellum teachers were men. Sklar observes that several midwestern states, including Illinois (1891) and Ohio (1894), first let women vote in school elections, a comment upon the unusual ties linking women and education

Much educational activity occurred in adult formats, as settlers received legislative charters for lyceums, institutes, agricultural societies, and subscription libraries. Both Edward Stevens and Wayne Wiegand trace this process, which led Ohio to charter 60 adult lyceum societies (1831-1845) and 173 libraries (1805-1853). Peter Dobkin Hall emphasizes the familiarity of New Englanders with voluntary associations as an important element in northwestern adult education.

Jurgen Herbst observes that Ohio's evangelical activism was reflected in its twenty denominational colleges (1830-1860), while even state colleges relied upon ministers as teachers. Classical and denominational schools were joined by newer colleges that emphasized either a scientific curriculum, or education in the agricultural and mechanical arts.

It is clear that the Midwest developed a strong educational system, relying upon local and state schools, voluntary associations, and several types of colleges. This volume offers a good collective picture of the evolving midwestern system.

New Mexico State University

Jeffrey P. Brown

Twilight of Empire: A Narrative. By Allan W. Eckert. *The Winning of America Series.* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1988. Pp. xiv, 587. Maps. \$24.95.)

This is the sixth book in Allan Eckert's ongoing series that traces the process of how Europeans took North America away from the Indians. In it the author examines the events leading to the Black Hawk War of 1832, the actions of whites and Indians in that conflict, and the results of that war. His basic thesis is that both sides and many individuals among each people played some part in bringing about the violence. He writes that the Europeans acquired land from the Indians "through encroachment, trickery, warfare, deceit, treachery, purchase, alliance, gift, theft, and treaty" (xiii). Although those words carry some negative connotations, the author writes that heroes and villains, kindness and cruelty, right and wrong, intelligence and stupidity existed on both sides of the frontier. As a result, he sees his main purpose as providing a detailed narrative of what led to the war. This is popular history. Its author does not pretend to be adding either new data or new ideas to what is known about the Black Hawk War,

and his narrative provides no new conclusions about that well-known conflict.

The author has done his research thoroughly. All of the major manuscript and archival collections are cited and often quoted. Unfortunately, Eckert makes it unnecessarily difficult for scholars to follow his trail. His endnotes are explanatory and give no sources. For each chapter he has a separate listing of his documentation, but rather than list the material as it appears or is used in the text, he lists the sources alphabetically within each chapter. While this will not bother casual readers, scholars hoping to check the material will find the arrangement unnecessarily obscure or even difficult. Nevertheless, the work is carefully done, the controversies are explained thoroughly, and the conclusions are judicious.

If this were a television program one would have to describe it as a "docudrama." Based on extensive use of primary material the narrative is both detailed and accurate. At the same time Eckert strives to make his work as much like a novel as possible. To do this he creates conversations from letters and dispatches, so that the characters are saying exactly what they wrote in the past. While this might make some scholars look askance or at least raise their eyebrows, he does something else that is more troubling. That is, he employs conversations that may have happened but for which there is no historical record. He justifies this technique as being necessary "to maintain dramatic narrative pace," and defends it as always being "in keeping with the character and the fundamental leanings of the individual to whom the words are attributed" (xii). An example of one such conversation is a meeting in 1831 between Black Hawk and his friend Neapope in an Indian lodge. Obviously, there were no witnesses to this meeting, and thus no one recorded what passed between the two leaders. This is not to say that Eckert is trying to pass off fiction as history, but he has crossed the bounds of acceptable historical writing in his effort to create a dramatic narrative. The story has plenty of interest without such gimmicks. There are heroes and villains, bravery and folly, adventure and danger, suspense and conflict enough without having to embellish the story.

University of Arizona

Roger L. Nichols

Defender of the Union: The Oratory of Daniel Webster. By Craig R. Smith. *Great American Orators.* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1989. Pp. xiv, 195. Illustration. \$38.95.)

Craig Smith's study of Daniel Webster begins a series by Greenwood Press on great American orators. Smith undertakes a study of Webster's eloquence by examining Webster's speaking in each of the three classical genres of oratory—legal, ceremonial, and political. While he is writing primarily for an audience of scholars in rhetoric and public address, there is little to