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*Stealing Indian Women: Native Slavery in the Illinois
Country* (review)

Michael J. Sherfy

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campaigning; his use of patronage, his less than admirable attacks on opponents as well as his inclination to turn every contest personal. Still, Vazzano's explanation of Davey's allegiance to the Democrats as the party of the people is not very convincing. As a congressman, Davey served his constituents well but his red-baiting, anti-immigrant position, and effort to eliminate waste through reorganization are more personal than partisan. His two terms as governor were scandal ridden and dominated by petty political feuds, disputes with militant labor, and conflicts with the New Deal. Vazzano shows Davey as a "politician extraordinaire" dedicated to political power and not public leadership.

PATRICK F. PALERMO
University of Dayton

Stealing Indian Women: Native Slavery in the Illinois Country. By Carl J. Ekberg. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007. 256 pp. Cloth \$38.00, ISBN 978-0-252-03208-0.)

In his fourth volume on colonial Illinois, Carl Ekberg has again demonstrated that he is the premier authority on the Illinois Country during the French and Spanish colonial era. His latest work emphasizes an aspect of life that has generally been overlooked—or which has at least gone without systematic scrutiny—by other scholars: the enslavement of Native people, especially women.

Ekberg presents this work in two parts. In Part One, he meticulously picks apart records from American, French, and Spanish archives to extract remarkable and sometimes poignant details about the institutionalization of Native slavery in French Illinois between the late seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries. From an admittedly incomplete set of records, the author fleshes out a multicultural, multilingual, multiracial, and eminently civilized community that existed deep in North America's interior "wilderness" long before the first Americans appeared on the scene. He tells readers of a period during which a French-speaking population (largely of mixed Native and French descent), loosely governed by distant Spanish authorities and surrounded by Indian nations of varying degrees of friendliness, developed a unique community of free *habitants* and *coureurs de boise*, enslaved Africans and Native people, and indentured individuals of indeterminate status.

In Part Two Ekberg narrows his focus to a single, well-documented legal case: the so-called Céladon affair. This convoluted incident produced copious records that, the author explains, "dovetail to describe in extraordinary detail a fascinating story involving Indian slavery, miscegenation, grand larceny, kidnapping, and possible murder" (xiii). Difficult to summarize, the Céladon affair provides something too often absent from works of this

type: a set of accessible characters who help readers better understand the deep effects of the enslavement of Native women on the Creole French Illinois community—and the difficulties liable to beset those who defied established conventions.

Ekberg builds on foundations laid in his earlier works and again demonstrates that he is not only willing to explore sources that others have ignored, but he is also able to pull from them details that hint at how communities like Ste. Genevieve (west of the river in today's Missouri but as much a part of French Illinois as Kaskaskia, Fort Chartres, and Cahokia) actually functioned. He looks between the lines and letters to find the practical men and women who lived their lives not on paper but in a Creole colony to which few scholars have given its due. Theirs was a frontier that did not move west, that featured little violence, that did not involve Native displacement on a massive scale, and that did not evoke the divine sanction of "manifest destiny." It was, however, an outpost tied both to Europe (via Louisiana and Quebec) and to what Ekberg calls "the outback" that surrounded it. And it was a place where African and Indian slaves enjoyed remarkable freedom but nonetheless felt frustration and sadness at their status and at their isolation from their people (from whom many had been taken at ages too young to remember).

Ekberg does not write dry history. He uses evocative and colorful language and makes connections between his subject matter and themes more familiar to his readers. He often presents his material episodically—drawing as much as possible from a particular source before moving on to the next—and creates less a linear narrative than a crazy quilt of anecdotes loosely stitched together. Sometimes he makes imaginative leaps that strain the support offered by the limited sources at his disposal. But in his books, as he once did in Illinois State University's classrooms, he makes us feel a part of a lost world. Both scholars and general readers will come away from this book with a greater understanding of colonial Illinois. Retired or not, in print or in person, Carl Ekberg is a teacher . . . and a damn good one.

MICHAEL J. SHERFY
Western Illinois University

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