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French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World (review)

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*French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*. Edited by Bradley G. Bond. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005. Pp. 346. Acknowledgments, illustrations, tables, maps, notes, contributors, index. ISBN 0807130354. \$59.95, cloth.)

Colonial Texas and Louisiana share common experiences that include the presence of René Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle; the 1718 founding of both San Antonio and New Orleans; and an arduous eighteenth century in European economic and demographic development. Beyond these similarities, however, differences abound. To commemorate the third centenary of French beginnings on the Gulf Coast and Louisiana and shed light on those events, in 1999 the University of Southern Mississippi cosponsored a symposium where specialists presented papers. As generally happens, those published here range widely in distinction, topic, and time.

Daniel Usner's historiographic essay examines differing perceptions of French Louisiana by nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers. Interpretation has evolved from colonial absolutism, intolerance, indolence, and avariciousness, to an amelioration that began with Louisiana's Creole historians, who projected positive images of white Creoles and plantations, and to the most recent emphasis on the state's exotic food, music, and laid-back life style to promote tourism.

Among other essays, Christopher Morris discusses French attitudes toward bison (for robes and domestication), that coupled to American Indian preferences (cows for meat), inadvertently brought about the destruction of "buffalo" herds on the Mississippi River's east bank. Khalil Saadani points out clashing French and American Indian visions of gift exchange produced misunderstandings. Indian cosmology, as explained through "sacred circles," is James Taylor Carson's topic. The arrival of Europeans, with their technology, goods, and diseases, dramatically transformed the natives' lives and worldview. Bertrand van Ruymbeke offers a new explication on why Huguenot refugees did not settle in Louisiana—they preferred to live elsewhere—and not absolutism and intolerance that Francophobes have long expounded. Cécile Vidal, meanwhile, scrutinizes the life of the Illinois planter and trader Antoine Bienvenu, who rose to become Upper Louisiana's wealthiest man. In doing so, Vidal explores trade exchange between Lower and Upper Louisiana and the boats, sailors, crops, and goods involved in that commerce.

In additional studies, Paul Mapp addresses Louisiana's eighteenth-century unexplored far west in the thinking of the French foreign office that initially considered its ownership as opportunity for mineral riches, trade, and travel across an imagined western sea and river to reach the Pacific Ocean and Asia beyond. After 1747, Newtonian logic awakened doubts about Louisiana's value that eventually induced ministers to part with it in 1762. Four essays deal with demography and immigration. James Pritchard observes the languid growth of New World French colonies while Paul LaChance focuses on Louisiana's inadequately utilized censuses from 1699 to 1766. Nathalie Dessens and Ibrahim Seck analyze the cultural impact of Saint Domingue refugees and African Senegambian slaves on Louisiana.

Gwendolyn Hall's "Epilogue" concentrates on an overview of the African experience in Louisiana. While she rightly condemns racism and praises black contributions, she clings tenaciously to her published views on slavery and rigidly ignores challenging newer scholarship. That aside, upper division and graduate students and general readers fascinated by the colonial era of the American south-east will find essays in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World* worthwhile reading.

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*A Whole Country in Commotion: The Louisiana Purchase and the American Southwest.*

Edited by Patrick G. Williams, S. Charles Bolton, and Jeannie M. Whayne. (Fayetteville, Ark.: University of Arkansas Press, 2005. Pp. 248. Contributors, acknowledgments, map, notes, index. ISBN 1557287848. \$19.95, paper.)

In his introduction to the eleven excellent essays in this fine anthology, Patrick Williams notes that historians of the Louisiana Purchase traditionally have focused on the benefits it brought the young nation. At the same time it "created turmoil along the territory's fringes and brought wrenching changes to many Americans both east and west of the [Mississippi] River" (p. xi). This anthology, he promises, "hopes to do a better job at examining these latter aspects of the Purchase . . . many of its essays attend to the more complexly multilateral negotiations among peoples, nations, and empires that preceded and followed the actual transfer of territory" (p. xi). With particular emphasis on the southern reaches of the Purchase, particularly modern Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and the Red River watershed, it does just that, documenting the impact of Jefferson's great diplomatic bargain on Native Americans, African Americans, French, and Spanish residents of the Purchase, as well as the white settlers who flooded into the area seeking a better life west of the Mississippi.

Several essays stand out as being of particular interest to historians of American territorial expansionism, Texas, and the Southwest borderlands. The first essay in the anthology, Elliott West's "Lewis and Clark: Kidnappers" sets the tone for those to follow, by arguing that all the hoopla over the Lewis and Clark expedition in recent years has allowed Americans to forget that the Louisiana Purchase was of far greater importance; and furthermore, that the real thrust of Jeffersonian expansion was not "west and *north* but west and *south* . . . toward Texas and New Mexico" (p. 5). Dan Flores's "Jefferson's Grand Expedition and the Mystery of the Red River" continues this theme, demonstrating how interest in finding a possible trade route to Santa Fe led to "the southwestern counterpart to Lewis and Clark" (p. 22), the 1806 Freeman-Custis expedition up the Red River. Charles Robinson's "The Louisiana Purchase and the Black Experience" correctly observes that "The Louisiana Purchase, though a grand and joyous event for many, brought little positive change for blacks in the region" (p. 119). It extended the domain of slavery, ended the Spanish practice of *coartación*, a legal mechanism that enabled some slaves to purchase their freedom, and resulted in a sharp decline in the legal and social status of free blacks in Louisiana and New Orleans. Historians