



PROJECT MUSE®

A Whole Country in Commotion: The Louisiana Purchase and the
American Southwest (review)

Jeffrey G. Mauck

Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume 110, Number 1, July 2006,
pp. 131-132 (Review)

Published by Texas State Historical Association

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/swh.2006.0026>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/203058>

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.

Fort Lewis College, Emeritus

GILBERT C. DIN

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

of Texas are encouraged to reference anthropologist George Sabo's "Dancing in the Past: Colonial Legacies in Modern Caddo Indian Ceremony," which discusses the Turkey Dance, a modern Caddo practice, and one of their oldest surviving traditions, which LaSalle's lieutenant Henri Joutel may have observed in an earlier form in his visit to the Hasinai in 1687. *A Whole Country in Commotion: The Louisiana Purchase and the American Southwest* is recommended for anyone interested in the history of Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and the Southwest borderlands.

Texas State University—San Marcos

JEFFREY G. MAUCK

Engraved Prints of Texas, 1554–1900. By Mavis P. Kelsey Sr. and Robin Brandt Hutchinson. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005. Pp. 492. Foreword, preface, illustrations, notes, references and suggested readings, index. ISBN 1585442704. \$60.00, cloth.)

This massive work served as a companion piece for the 2005 exhibition of the engravings collection of Houston surgeon Mavis P. Kelsey, housed at Texas A&M University. In the preface, Dr. Kelsey and Robin Brandt Hutchinson, the collection's curator, discuss illustrative art as well as selection criteria while emphasizing that this work should be regarded as a first step, not an exhaustive study. Ron Tyler's very helpful introduction offers a concise history of printing illustration in America (and Texas subjects' place in it), as well as giving the historical context for the works and artists included in the catalog.

Following the introductory essay, the book is organized chronologically, according to date of publication of the works discussed in each of the remaining eight chapters. Each chapter opens with an overview essay concerning the highlights of that decade's illustrations, with the exception of the first chapter, which discusses Texas engravings prior to 1830 (the earliest image is a 1554 engraving of a buffalo based on Cabeza de Vaca's description). In addition to discussing specific works and artists, these essays serve as capsule discussions of the technology of engraving, especially during the nineteenth century as wood engravings dominated the middle decades only to be gradually supplanted by photomechanical and photographic reproductions during the 1880s and 1890s. Each essay is followed by detailed catalog entries that are the strength of the book. Since the authors strived to include all Texas-related illustrations from the publications selected, the entries, taken as a whole, also serve as a rough outline of the state's history.

The book is a treasure trove of unexpected images, such as an 1830s depiction of Houston as nestled among mountains, an 1867 illustration of Apaches reading newspapers that they captured after attacking a stagecoach near Fort Davis, and illustrations for "Texas Rain Making Experiments," in an 1892 issue of *Scientific American*. One of the most remarkable aspects of the authors' research is the diversity of sources, including currency bills, standard illustrated histories, railroad promotional literature (which illustrated scenes of smaller towns as well as large cities), church denominational publications, and government boundary survey