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May 1996

**Review of *Peopling the Plains: Who Settled Where in Frontier
Kansas* by James Shortridge**

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McQuillan, D. Aidan, "Review of *Peopling the Plains: Who Settled Where in Frontier Kansas* by James Shortridge" (1996). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 279.
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Peopling the Plains: Who Settled Where in Frontier Kansas. James Shortridge. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995. xvii+254 pp. Maps, tables, references, and index. \$27.50 cloth (ISBN 0-7006-0697-1).

Kansas was born in the bloody prelude to the Civil War, a contested territory between North and South. The settlement frontier had penetrated only the eastern third of the state before war broke out; the western two-thirds saw the frontier push westward for several decades after the war, from 1865 to 1885. In the state's extreme western parts the frontier expanded and contracted several times between 1890 and 1930. James Shortridge sets out to explore the origins of Kansas cultural geography with such questions as: Who were these "first effective" settlers on the Kansas frontier? Where did they come from? Were they Northerners or Southerners or Europeans? Did a vivid cultural mosaic emerge in Kansas?

Shortridge first establishes the source areas of the American settlers who migrated to Kansas: the Northern area, including Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, and New England; the Lower Southern area, comprising Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia; and the Midland area, subdivided in two—the South Midland (Missouri, Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia) and the North Midland (Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania), from which the great majority of new Kansas settlers came. There were, of course, European immigrants and they are dealt with separately. Shortridge also identifies several phases of frontier expansion. The northeastern part of the state, for example, was settled by 1865. Because the exploitation of mineral resources in the southeastern district, settled somewhat later, was so different from the

agricultural settlement of the northeastern area, the author analyzes settlement in the southeast using 1885 data. The western two-thirds of Kansas are examined in a third chapter, also based on 1885 state census data. Then the westernmost areas are re-examined using 1905 and 1925 data because of contractions and renewed expansion of the frontier in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

South Midlanders, especially Missourians, made a grab for Kansas in the mid-1850s, but Yankees launched a counter drive in 1854 to prevent the new state from falling into the southern bloc. Here the battle was joined that would lead to Civil War; by the end of the conflagration the various groups had developed distinct settlement cores. Shortridge provides a useful characterization of the Northerners and Southerners. Yankees were urban, pro-business, fastidious, members of organized religious congregations, pro-education, permanent, pro-temperance, Republican, and "blue-nosed." Southerners, in contrast, were rural, distrustful of big business, rough hewn with simple tastes, informal in matters of religious organization, anti-intellectual, mobile, hard-drinking, Jacksonian-Democrats, and "backward." Clear distinctions emerged in the cultural geography of Kansas which Shortridge elucidates effectively by showing the incidence of churches and institutes of higher education established in the areas settled by Northerners, especially New Englanders.

In the southeastern area South Midlanders, particularly Missourians, became effective farmers; a few Europeans, such as the Irish, were drawn to work in the coalfields. Yankees were again predominant among business folk in the small but growing urban centers. What was striking in this area of the state was the presence of black communities based on emigration from Texas and Tennessee. Few European farmers penetrated this area; those who did were mostly German, English, and Swedish. The largest group, and most influential by far, were the North Midlanders, especially farmers from Ohio and Illinois.

The great sweep of grassland in the central parts of the state attracted large numbers of settlers along a fast-moving frontier between 1865 and 1885. In the late 1860s the transcontinental railroads built trunk lines across the state and played a key role in settling central Kansas. They sent agents to recruit settlers in Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa, as well as other midwestern states where the frontier was closing and new lands were no longer available. They targeted European colonies in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and even Pennsylvania, creating seedbed colonies in central Kansas to attract settlers not only from the eastern midwest but also from Sweden and southern

Russia. These European colonies in central Kansas were essentially the creation of the Santa Fe and Kansas Pacific railroads. African American communities, though well known, were much smaller than the European settlements. Shortridge reiterates the overwhelming importance of North Midland American farmers who predominated in this part of the state. To be sure, Europeans and Southerners held dominant positions in the central and southern areas, but it was yeoman farmers from Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, and Ohio who provided the base upon which a cultural mosaic of settlement developed.

The chapter focusing on the expanding and contracting frontiers in the state's westernmost parts is perhaps the least successful. Shortridge offers no clear statement of purpose at its start and thus its goal is not clear cut, as it is in all the other chapters. Furthermore, the reasons for the frontier's contractions and lack of settlers in the early twentieth century are not fully explained. Kansas, at this point, needs to be placed not just in an American, but in a North American context. After 1896 the agricultural frontier had shifted to the Canadian prairies: farmers were being drawn not only from the American midwest (including Kansas) but also from eastern Europe to homesteads in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Shortridge attributes the lack of European settlers in western Kansas after 1900 to industrialization in Germany and Britain and a lessening of political tensions in the Hapsburg empire. In fact, large numbers of Ukrainian settlers from the Austro-Hungarian provinces of Bukowina and Galicia immigrated to the Canadian prairies in the eighteen years following the end of the depression and drought of 1893-1896. The difficulty of attracting settlers into the most drought-prone areas of Kansas, areas suited for irrigation and ranching, might have been more easily understood had the author broadened his scope to include the expansion of the frontier beyond the borders of the United States. This, however, is a minor criticism of an exceptionally fine and detailed study.

Kansas provides the scholar with a transect of the Great Plains region, and Shortridge has given us a detailed, extraordinarily well-crafted study of the settling of a portion of the American heartland. Each chapter is subdivided into sections such as "Settlers and Strategies," in which he considers the expected emigration patterns from the various source regions before exploring the "Patterns of Occupance" for each cultural group in turn. The analysis is lucid and well organized. An abundance of superb maps—wonderfully clear and diverse—undergirds the study. These include not only distributions of various nativity groups in the different parts of the state but

also elements of the cultural landscape: the distribution of churches, colleges, voting patterns, and ranching activities, for instance, and the ratio of horses to mules. Together they elucidate the detailed geography of the emerging cultural landscape of Kansas. How I wish I had had access to such a study twenty-five years ago! All North American cultural geographers, I believe, will wish to have this fine study on their bookshelves. **D. Aidan McQuillan**, *Department of Geography, University of Toronto.*