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**Review of *The Louisiana Purchase and American Expansion, 1803-1898* Edited by Sanford Levinson and Bartholomew H. Sparrow**

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*The Louisiana Purchase and American Expansion, 1803-1898.* Edited by Sanford Levinson and Bartholomew H. Sparrow. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005. vii + 262 pp. Notes, index. \$82.50 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

Editors Sanford Levinson and Bartholomew H. Sparrow are unequivocal about their book's mission: to use the territory of Louisiana, hence, much of the Great Plains, as a catalyst to study United States expansionism, particularly in regards to expansion's constitutionality.

With one exception, these essays were first presented at a symposium at the University of Texas at Austin in 2003 by scholars representing such diverse fields as constitutional law, history, sociology, government, and political science. Besides the editors' wonderful introduction, which clearly explains that the purchase of Louisiana served as an example for further American expansion during the nineteenth century, there are eleven essays that

explore varying issues regarding expansion beginning in 1803 to constitutional questions about United States overseas possessions such as Puerto Rico and Guam.

The editors explain that they wanted the essays to be controversial and "to raise some quite jarring questions." And many of them accomplish this goal, such as Mark A. Graber's challenge to readers to question whether George W. Bush should be president because Texas was never constitutionally admitted to the Union. While the essays are innovative and designed to have us see from new perspectives, the editors make no pretense that these pieces will answer every question or be the final word on American expansion. At times there is a bit of wandering into academic jargon, and on the surface some of the theses seem a bit preposterous. For example, because of the chain of events that followed its purchase, William W. Freehling suggests in chapter 3 that the Civil War probably would not have been fought without the acquisition of the Louisiana territory by the United States. Yet most of the presentations are logical and persuasive.

In one sense, the essays demonstrate how the Constitution was used to perpetuate what became known in the mid-nineteenth century as "Manifest Destiny." Regardless of legal or constitutional questions, nothing was going to stand in the way of America's "Manifest Destiny." In the volume's final essay Sparrow writes that "without the Louisiana Purchase, the growth of the United States . . . would have almost certainly been slower and more fractious, and may well have resulted in the establishment of independent governments on North America. . . ." The Great Plains, therefore, played a meaningful role in the maturation and expansion of the United States, both in states and territories, including the Caribbean and Pacific holdings. This is demonstrated in the majority of the essays in this thought-provoking book.

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