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Spring 2007

## Review of *A New South Dakota History* Edited by Harry F. Thompson

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*A New South Dakota History*. Edited by Harry F. Thompson. Sioux Falls, SD: Center for Western Studies, 2005. xiv + 648 pp. Maps, photographs, notes, selected readings, index. \$59.95 cloth, \$39.95 paper.

In some academic circles today the study of governmental units—nations or states—is passé. Race, class, and gender, categories of analysis that are “stateless,” rule the discourse. That is unfortunate for the study of history. Politics and political designations matter. They shape the lives of the individuals who live within them and create or limit the possibilities for individual achievement within their borders. Herbert T. Hoover and John E. Miller, both scholars of South Dakota and its peoples, have collaborated to write portions and edit the entire anthology of substantial chapters and thoughtful essays. Harry Thompson, archivist at the Center for Western Studies, is the general editor responsible for its publication. The book is detailed, readable, and brings the South Dakota story in its many facets completely up to date, a great service to the public and to scholars working in the field of Great Plains, agricultural, or Native American history.

The book has several interesting features. It begins with an essay by the late Vine Deloria Jr. describing Dakota/Lakota beliefs, culture, and relationship to the land, and then moves

to chapters on the geography of the place, the Native Americans who resided there, exploration, and so forth, through the chronology of early South Dakota history. An engaging addition to the more typical chapter divisions is the one on "Missouri Valley Culture," which tells the tale of the mixed-blood societies that developed along the river as a result of the fur trade, the presence of U.S. Army forts, and Indian agencies.

The book's chapters become denser and even more detailed as they describe the system of Territorial government, the settlers who arrived to make use of it, farming and ranching and the struggles of those who tried to make livings from the land, the growth of cities and towns, and the history of the Black Hills. The chapter on African Americans in the state is especially useful, given the general sense that South Dakota's "diversity" comes only from the presence of Native Americans. Topics not often explored in state histories are also included. There are chapters on health care, communications, performing arts, and transportation and tourism. Excellent essays on small-town life, women writers, and a traditional Sioux family today round out the collection.

The sixteen contributors to this volume have done an excellent job with their respective topics, and their work reveals impressive research in a variety of sources. The only criticisms arise from the anthology structure. Because each chapter is written to stand alone, chapters sometimes begin with information readers will have already encountered earlier in the volume in a different context. Yet the material cannot be left out: it is too important as the foundation for the subject under review. The result is an occasional sense of repetitiveness. It also would have been helpful having editorial notes before or after some essays or chapters to clarify or explain particular issues. In the case of the Deloria essay, for example, I would have liked an explanation of why the geographical and metaphysical manifestations he describes differ in places from the historical explanation of Sioux history. The oral tradition and the faith of a people sometimes do

differ from history recorded in documents. A paragraph accounting for the disparities would help readers navigate the subject. Also, French or mixed blood men in the Missouri Valley culture are described as marrying multiple Indian wives. A word explaining the function of multiple marriages in Native culture and the role of women in these marriages would dispel confusion.

Overall, however, the book is very well done and makes a valuable contribution to the history of the state and to the history of a portion of the Great Plains.

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