# UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

## Title

American Indians and the Market Economy, 1775-1850. Edited by Lance Greene and Mark R. Plane.

**Permalink** https://escholarship.org/uc/item/97f7s9jb

## Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 37(1)

#### ISSN

0161-6463

### Author

Carson, James Taylor

Publication Date 2013

## DOI

10.17953

## **Copyright Information**

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <u>https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/</u>

eScholarship.org

American Indians and the Market Economy, 1775–1850. Edited by Lance Greene and Mark R. Plane. Foreword by Timothy K. Perttula. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011. 152 pages. \$32.75 cloth; \$22.95 paper.

By now the concept of the "market revolution" has settled into the hush of conventional wisdom in the field of United States history. Most scholars agree that in the early nineteenth century economic and infrastructural changes ushered in a newish economic order that, in different ways, places, and times, disrupted traditional rural economies, altering peoples' lives and by extension, their identities. Where they differ is on whether such changes can be construed as revolutionary. For most United States historians the westward movement of the marketplace chased away Native Americans, but a handful of recent histories by Native Americanists have disproved such assumptions. Daniel Usner, Claudio Saunt, and Catherine Holland Braund, to name just three, have shown the deep levels of involvement between indigenous peoples and market economies and offer different interpretations of the consequences of their implication in the new economic order.

American Indians and the Market Economy, 1775-1850 is a welcome addition to the field. It is unique in that its authors deploy archaeological as well as documentary evidence to assert, examine, and interpret the market's arrival in Native North America. Five essays afford various glimpses of the fur trade near the Great Lakes, itinerant pottery vendors among the Catawbas of the Carolina borderlands, the Cherokee Welch household of western North Carolina, the Great Plains prior to the advent of the skin trade, and the Caddoan peoples who lived in close proximity to European rivals for their east Texas domain for two centuries. With concern with individual agency providing a common framework, each of the authors shows that Native Americans participated in the market revolution in ways that comported with the practices of their pre-market cultures, and that whatever innovations occurred were more often adaptive than destructive. Only when the skin trade and its attendant dependency or the rush of settlers pressed on their borders did the impact of the market revolution trace a trajectory in Native North America that was different from elsewhere: one characterized by loss of autonomy, land, identity, and, in some cases, life.

Market revolution historiography generally involves, first, an exploration of the degree to which customary livelihoods were lost in the face of the expansion of the market; second, how production changed in relation to the market; and third, to what degree identities changed as a result. In Michael Strezewski's study of the multicultural late eighteenth-century town of Kethtippecanunk, where French traders and Native peoples lived together within the broader Great Lakes fur trade, the author tries to separate the indigenous and trader populations based on the nature and location of their artifact assemblages. In tackling the knotty question of ethnicity and identity, although Strezewski acknowledges the great degree of cultural mixing that occurred on the banks of the Wabash River; rather than pushing further along the lines of the *métissage* that occurred he hews to an older model of cultural relations and focuses on dividing the town's population in two. Leaving such terms as *French* or *Indian* unquestioned, the potential of the archaeological work is unrealized, and confirms rather than challenges the fact that far too often, the ethnic identities we project into the past do not actually map onto life as it was lived. It remains unanswered to what degree this disjuncture calls into question not only historical approaches and conclusions, but even the language of historiography.

Mark R. Plan's examination of the market economy and Catawba itinerancy between 1770 and 1820 and Lance Green's study of post-removal Cherokees in North Carolina both locate two groups who were comfortable within the confines of the market and fully able to resist its deepest cultural incursions. Avoiding the dichotomy between tradition and acculturation that has typically characterized such studies, Plan shows how Catawba potters adapted their art to suit the tastes of their new neighbors. In turn, this allowed them to retain practices of value while innovating their participation in the market. Among the Cherokees, artifacts recovered from the Welch family homestead showed that one could adopt certain facets of the so-called "modern westernized lifestyle," such as use of silverware, while at the same time also establish a space to practice and reproduce more ancient concerns such as foodways, stickball, and meetings in the local townhouse (66). Juxtaposing conservation and innovation were typical responses to the market revolution across antebellum America, and hence the Catawbas and North Carolina Cherokees are representative participants in the market revolution, as were the denizens of Connecticut's mill towns, the cod fishermen of New England, and the cotton planters of Alabama.

While the market revolution unfolded in the east, Native peoples west of the Mississippi River found themselves confronting new goods (and diseases) well before the people of the marketplace arrived. In the Lykins Valley of present-day north-central Colorado, for example, Cody Newton finds that European and American goods could be common, but pre-contact lithic technologies and seasonal hunting subsistence patterns persisted alongside the inroads made by glass beads, metal tinkers, and guns. At one site, rock art that depicts a mounted figure is located near the more prosaic findings. Blending Spanish and Cheyenne imagery, this rock art figure suggests to Newton that cultural influences from the south were every bit as important to the peoples' lives as were the trade goods that filtered into their homes and hands from the north. In using European goods without compromising earlier lifeways,

0 0 0

the people of the Lykins Valley thus experienced an interlude when the possibilities of trade enhanced their lives without the concomitant decline and dependency that came with their future entanglement in the fur trade. P. Shawn Marceaux and Timothy K. Pertulla tell a similar story about the Caddo of Texas, whose exchange of furs, cattle, and food for muskets, ammunition, tools, and cloth reflected the persistence of older forms of diplomacy and alliance against the more self-interested imperatives that so often accompanied the marketplace. Still, by 1835 Texas had driven the Caddo from its borders, and despite their assertions of autonomy and group-identity, the broader upheavals of the market revolution eventually swept them aside.

The book bridges disciplinary gaps between historical archaeology and history, but it could be more explicit in its engagement with current United States historiography and with the dependency theory that was once central to economic histories of Native North America. While an introduction nicely links the essays to Charles Sellers' foundational text *The Market Revolution*, the essays themselves are much less engaged with either Sellars's work or the multitude of scholars who followed him. In this way the essays' contributions fall somewhat flat, where a more vigorous engagement with the historiography would have increased the book's interdisciplinary potential. As it stands, *American Indians and the Market Economy*, 1775–1850 offers clear and accessible ways to engage Native North America with the capitalist transformation that dominated much of the nineteenth century.

James Taylor Carson Queen's University

Anishinaabe Syndicated: A View From the Rez. By Jim Northrup. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2011. 248 pages. \$17.95 paper.

Anishinaabe Syndicated is a collection of excerpts taken from Jim Northrup's monthly columns in *The Circle*, a Native American newspaper published in Minneapolis. Written between 1989 and 2001, with selected passages representing each year, Northrup takes readers on a loosely chronological journey through thirteen years of his life both on and off the Fond du Lac Reservation. The reflections Northrup offers on his personal experiences and observations are sometimes entertaining, sometimes profound, and very often both. Northrup's earnest descriptions of contemporary reservation life are punctuated by a diverse collection of one-liners. Some are just plain funny: "QUESTION: What is the new Ojibwemowin word for casino? ANSWER: Jer pa win?" (64). Others bite with their veracity: "QUESTION: Why is