

## Duels and the Roots of Violence in Missouri

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No synthesis of this scope will be without detractors. Certainly, some members of the professional community may take umbrage at some of Alex's analyses and interpretations. In my opinion, however, there are no dramatic gaffes or analytic miscues. Numerous illustrations, including a center section of color photographs, complement the text, lending the book a richness it would not otherwise have. Many useful and informative illustrations of key projectile points, for example, as well as a two-page Iowa archaeological timeline, enhance the book's usefulness. The chapters also have short appendixes exploring a variety of topics such as radiocarbon dating. A glossary of key terms perhaps could have been expanded given the book's intended lay audience.

Some production errors detract from Alex's efforts. These include typos, such as figure 9.3, which is boldly marked "RESCAN," and several photos that were printed too dark to see the image displayed (for example, the Ramey vessel, figure 8.14, and the photo of Mildred Wedel, figure 11.4). Particularly perplexing is the publisher's failure to identify Lance Foster, an Ioway Indian and anthropologist, as the creator of the original artwork that beautifully illustrates the paperback version of the book. Sadly, the more expensive hardcover edition does not have a book jacket.

*Iowa's Archaeological Past* is the only widely available synthesis on Iowa archaeology and is among the best in the region. The book is strongly recommended for professionals and nonprofessionals alike. *Iowa's Archaeological Past* will be the standard for years to come.

*Duels and the Roots of Violence in Missouri*, by Dick Steward. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000. ix, 286 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Jeffrey S. Adler is associate professor of history at the University of Florida. He is the author of *Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Urban West: The Rise and Fall of Antebellum St. Louis* (1991) and several articles about crime and violence in St. Louis and Chicago.

Dueling, according to Dick Steward, shaped the development of Missouri. In *Duels and the Roots of Violence in Missouri*, Steward traces the rise and fall of dueling in nineteenth-century Missouri. The impact of this ritualized and venerated form of violence, however, survived long after dueling had disappeared. Thus, by examining the history of the practice, Steward explores the "roots of violence" in modern America.

Early nineteenth-century conditions made Missouri a hotbed for dueling. Southern culture, particularly the ethos of honor, infused the region, and southern migrants introduced the code duello. But "fron-

tier" culture, which celebrated individualism, assertiveness, and "unbridled ambition" (60), also influenced Missouri. Because of this cultural blend, elite Missourians were especially loathe to ignore public insults. Political conditions, however, reinforced those cultural pressures, as rapid population growth and approaching statehood created a power vacuum. Hoping to cement their class status and to gain political advantage in this wide-open setting, elite Missourians used duels to affirm their claims to power and to discredit (and even eliminate) political enemies. By the 1820s, political institutions had matured, and the duel lost its political role.

Ironically, Jacksonian rhetoric democratized dueling and enhanced its popularity. Just as elite Missourians defended the duel as a legitimate, civilized tool for maintaining social order, working-class residents in the age of the common man embraced the notion that a fair fight was an appropriate way to resolve disputes. Shorn of much of its aristocratic ritual and restraint, dueling helped to legitimize gunfights and family feuds during the final two-thirds of the century. By the twentieth century, according to Steward, even street brawlers often invoked the "metaphor" of the duel to provide a patina of legitimacy for explosions of murderous rage.

*Duels and the Roots of Violence in Missouri* provides rich portraits of celebrated duels and duelists. Steward employs a traditional methodology. He carefully reconstructs the events leading up to the duels and offers captivating vignettes of the participants while eschewing the analytical approaches of both the new cultural history and the new western history. Therefore, his examination of a gendered form of behavior includes little discussion of the construction of masculine identity. Similarly, Steward describes the West in traditional terms, emphasizing the "rugged individualism of the frontier" (147) and the "American march of progress" (90).

Steward's larger argument—in which he avers that the ethos of dueling became ingrained in American culture and hence has served to legitimize the widespread use of violence in modern society—is thoughtful and provocative, though it is asserted more than proved. He does not place Missouri dueling in regional or national perspective, making it difficult to link dueling in Missouri to violence in other midwestern states. Moreover, he stops short of connecting the rise and fall of dueling to shifts in other forms of violent behavior. In a book on the "roots of violence," Steward does not examine levels of violence or changes in patterns or rates of violence. But even if the overall argument is mainly suggestive, this is an interesting and intriguing exploration of (midwestern) violence and American culture.

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