
B O O K R E V I E W S



Reading Territory: Indigenous and Black Freedom, Removal, and the Nineteenth-Century State

by Kathryn Walkiewicz

xvii + 293 pages, illustrations, notes, index.
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023,
paper \$32.95.

The introduction to *Reading Territory* starts with *McGirt v. Oklahoma*, a landmark 2020 Supreme Court decision in which the court ruled that tribal nations did not cede sovereignty to Oklahoma in 1907. The *McGirt* decision was hailed as a major victory for Indian territory, as the Muscogee Nation retained criminal jurisdiction over their lands. However, Oklahoma governor Kevin Stitt has criticized the *McGirt* decision because, he has argued, it directly threatened Oklahoma's sovereignty. The *McGirt* ruling highlights the tensions between tribes and states over geopolitical boundaries as well as states' right to exist on Indigenous lands. *McGirt* brings into question how states imagine and assert their white settler sovereignty over tribal lands. *Reading Territory* critically explores the idea that "state's rights logics are the glue that holds the U.S. colonial project together because states affirm white male possession of rights and land" (p. 1).

Reading Territory utilizes a literary analysis methodology, "sovereign printscapes," to understand how printed and written materials shaped physical and cultural state-making in the nineteenth century (p. 2). Land

surveys were vital to the story of U.S. empire building and were used to construct a narrative that indigenized settler presence as it simultaneously naturalized Indigenous dispossession. These materials secured settler belonging while also highlighting how "Black and Native newspaper editors, community leaders, writers, and political activists" disrupted these narratives in print (p. 3).

Walkiewicz uses "Removal" as both a theory and a method, asserting that Removal "has operated as a violence across space and time" (p. 19). The Removal of the Cherokee from Georgia boundaries "becomes something that *belongs* to the state of Georgia, and it becomes an essential chapter in the story the state tells about itself" (p. 32). Land allotment and surveys inscribed settler colonialism, as individual plots of land were used to "dismantle Indigenous territorialities and relationships with the land" (p. 64). The making of Georgia erased the Cherokee by relegating them to the past, a people who existed only in the commemoration of their Removal. Despite Cherokee Removal and dispossession by the state of Georgia, Cherokee people dared to imagine a Cherokee future and sovereignty in Indian Territory.

The author returns to the *McGirt* decision in her conclusion, linking it to the portrayal of Tulsa, Oklahoma, in mainstream cable TV shows such as *Watchmen* and *Live PD* at this cultural moment. Tulsa as a place is not visually read as Indigenous; there is no connection to this modern city as Muscogee Nation land. Instead, Tulsa is remembered more as the site of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, a city that violently expelled Black citizens from stolen Indigenous land. These two shows take place in the same city but diverge in their storytelling of "race, policing, and U.S. history" (p. 201). Nevertheless, Walkiewicz encourages us to reimagine a future for Tulsa that disrupts the state carceral violence against Black and Indigenous bodies. She proposes that "Black and Native solidarity has great untapped potentiality," as Black and Indigenous liberation are tied together by connecting the intimacies of Black and Indigenous lives (p. 204). Treaties must be honored, including those made in 1866 with freedpeople, by recognizing "the long history of the state-as-Removal, by affirming the interconnectedness of Black and Native life and honoring the commitments made between Black and Native people in Indian Territory" (p. 207). Only by recognizing and working toward "full citizenship," she

argues, can we “shift the ground toward Black and Native territorialities and away from the white supremacist state” (p. 207).

Citizens and scholars of Kansas history need to understand the complexity of “Bleeding Kansas.” Walkiewicz connects race, enslavement, and Removal as central to the making of Kansas. If Kansas’s “statehood were, in fact, a universally emancipatory project,” she argues, “then the history of Kansas would look much different” (p. 114). The *Kansas Free State* published a map on March 17, 1856, showing tribal space yet depicting Indigenous peoples as limited to “the eastern corner of Indian country, leaving the rest of the territory empty and open for settlement” (p. 117). The map is a product of white fantasy, a colonial printscape, not Indigenous reality. *Reading Territory* is a groundbreaking book that reads Indigenous presence into the narrative and onto the land.

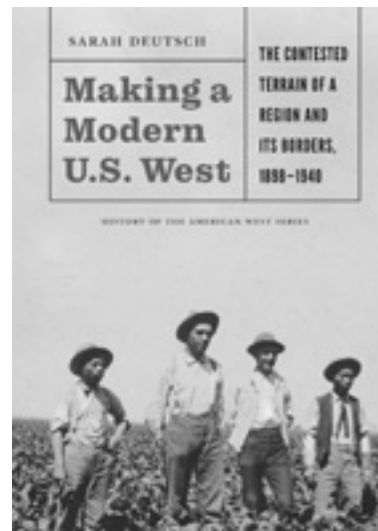
Reviewed by Elise Boxer, associate professor of history and Native American studies, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, South Dakota.

Making a Modern U.S. West: The Contested Terrain of a Region and Its Border, 1898–1940

by Sarah Deutsch

x + 640 pages, notes, bibliography, index.
Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022, cloth \$50.00.

Sarah Deutsch traces American modernity to those who lived in and migrated to the West starting in 1898, redefining the meaning of “‘frontier,’ ‘race,’ ‘citizenship,’ ‘manhood,’ ‘opportunity,’ and nationhood” (p. 6). Why 1898? The answer lies in the buildup of U.S. power following victory in the international contest known as the Spanish-American War. Deutsch argues that the federal government began to operate with a “freer hand” (p. 7) between 1898 and 1940 to fine-tune its “national and imperial discourses” (p. 9) through rigorous policies that “stabilized identities” (p. 9). The government policed the borders of the West, knowing that this landscape represented to the world the strength of a nation on the move. Deutsch also argues that this increased federal intervention required management of the West’s diverse populations and settlement zones and that, despite this diversity in “a white man’s country,” the government would prevail in the making of a modern



civilization (p. 454). Not inconsequentially, the author emphasizes the role of Theodore Roosevelt and his vision for a white, manly West as well as the New Deal programs that later reengineered the space for conservation and progress simultaneously.

Deutsch highlights lesser-known projects of environmental redesign, such as the Newlands Reclamation Act, which developed irrigation systems in the desert West to save dryland farmers from themselves and Mother Nature. Nevertheless, there was a “whiteness” to these projects, which demanded compliance and labor from Natives and immigrants to complete (p. 296). For instance, in discussing the construction of the Coolidge Dam, government officials admitted to seeking out Apache men as builders and promised wages in exchange for moving their buried dead out of the building zone. Progress, unfortunately, required sacrifice in the West, as usual. But the rise of “labor wars” demonstrated a new form of resistance by workers in the West and therefore represented modernity (p. 125). These wars of the twentieth century mimicked the land wars of the long nineteenth century, often sharing the same outcome: carnage, as in the coalfields of Ludlow, Colorado.

Deutsch devotes significant attention to the role of women and the political redesign of the West. In particular, she focuses on the expansion of suffrage, as advocated by both women and men who sought to mobilize women in a space that offered new opportunities for civic engagement. Women partnered with farmers, prohibitionists, unionists, socialists, and populists to assert their growing authority. Within this discussion, Deutsch often acknowledges the role played by Kansas—and the Great Plains as a region—

in bringing about modern, progressive change. In fact, the Great Plains figure prominently throughout Deutsch's narrative, bucking the trend of excluding this zone from the broader discussion of the West.

In one of her best chapters, Deutsch tackles the practice of federal and state racial classifications, which complicated settlement for nonwhite people in Oklahoma. The division of reservation lands and the rights of Indigenous people to sell their parcels required such classification. Creek freedmen, referred to as "native negroes" (p. 104), are at the heart of this discussion. However, the author's language also becomes tangled, leaving the reader confused as to who a Creek freedman actually was. Deutsch does not immediately connect the freedmen to prewar African American slavery, but when she does, she notes that these freedmen "usually had no Creek lineage" (p. 102).

Occasionally, the author tries to do too much. In chapter 4, what begins as the story of the "vanishing" Indian mutates into a story about labor issues, including arms smuggling, that strained U.S.-Mexican relations during the era of revolution south of the border (p. 122). In chapter 9, she addresses urban development, tourism, national parks, highways, prohibition, cross-border tourism, and the film industry of the West under the thematic label of 1920s growth and speculation. Overall, Deutsch succeeds in making us rethink the time stamp of American modernity, in part because she *does* address such a wide variety of topics. In some ways, her work resembles Barbara Young Welke's *Law and the Borders of Belonging in the Long Nineteenth Century United States*, with both authors pointing to the design of the West as key to a mature America. However, Deutsch fits the construction of modernity most squarely within the twentieth century, with a stronger emphasis on the laboring westerner.

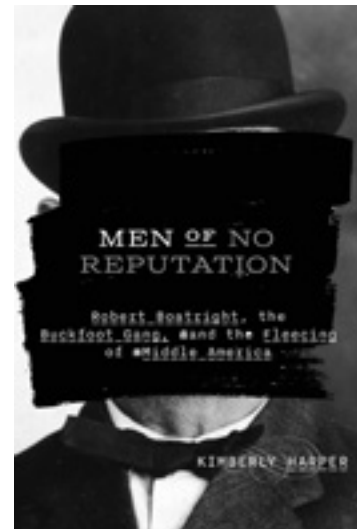
Reviewed by Donna Devlin, assistant professor of American history and government, Sterling College, Sterling, Kansas.

Men of No Reputation: Robert Boatright, the Buckfoot Gang, and the Fleecing of America

by Kimberly Harper

x + 308 pages, illustrations, notes, index.

Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2024, cloth \$34.95.



"There is a tendency to think of confidence men as an urban phenomenon, a symptom of societal ills concentrated in large cities," Kimberly Harper writes (p. 199). Her new book, *Men of No Reputation*, overturns this tendency by exploring the Buckfoot Gang's heyday in Webb City, Missouri. There, under the leadership of Robert Boatright, the gang ran a nationwide operation that targeted rural and urban dwellers alike. Harper's exposé of this mostly forgotten operation reveals how effective rural organized crime can be.

Having grown up in rough neighborhoods of St. Louis, Boatright started his con career as a youth wriggling his way out of murder charges. By 1891, he resided in Jasper County, Missouri, whose mining towns had already created a haven for gamblers—the perfect environment for his dreams of grandeur. Other men with colorful pasts and proficiency in skills relevant to cons joined him in establishing the Webb City Athletic Club. They sent out "ropers" (recruiters) to find "marks" (victims) and brought them back to bet on footraces and boxing matches. After a roper showed the mark the clubhouse and persuaded him that they were a group of sport aficionados, the mark was encouraged to put up his betting money on deposit in the local bank. Since the point of these cons was to separate the sucker from his money, the scheme was now complete. The rest was just for show.

Following through with the sporting contest, the gang proceeded to have an athlete throw the contest at the last minute. Many men caught on and retaliated with legal action. However, Boatright had ties to the political and legal establishments as well as the money to pay bail bonds. These circumstances kept the gang from prosecution for

over a decade before Boatright died in 1903. The gang continued without him and evolved its strategies.

Another potentially related ring under the leadership of John C. Mabray took over as the Buckfoot Gang's heirs. Mabray's connections to Benjamin Marks from Council Bluffs helped him expand to horse racing and mail fraud. The second ring used condoms full of blood to fake the deaths of their chosen athletes during boxing matches. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service started an investigation after confiscating a package containing contraceptives, as it was illegal to mail them at the time. The investigation proved fruitful in tying the gang's mail-fraud schemes to the athletic scams. Under pressure from several law services, the gang found itself cornered. However, making the circumstantial evidence fit proved much harder. Ultimately, Mabray was spared jail time, fined \$10,000, and later pardoned by President Warren G. Harding. The rest of the men met various ends—some stayed crooked, while others found their pasts catching up with them or tried (and failed) to go straight.

This meticulously researched book presents an in-depth study of the Buckfoot Gang and provides insights into how these operations ran. While the argument is strong and clear in the introduction and the last paragraphs of the conclusion, it is harder to find in the main body and would benefit from greater detail, as readers are frequently led to fill in the gaps on their own. Overall, the book provides an excellent study of the Buckfoot Gang and how confidence men operate in rural settings.

Reviewed by September Gering, PhD student, Department of History, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas.

The Camp Fire Girls: Gender, Race, and American Girlhood, 1910–1980

by Jennifer Helgren

x + 354 pages, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.
Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022, paper \$30.00.

Camp Fire Girls, founded in 1910, was the nation's first girls' organization. In *The Camp Fire Girls: Gender, Race, and American Girlhood, 1910–1980*, Jennifer Helgren successfully demonstrates that the Camp Fire organization strengthened girls' connections to domesticity while simultaneously offering opportunities to participate in "civic life and



outdoor athletics" (p. 14). Simultaneously, she argues that while Camp Fire envisioned inclusion for all girls, this ideal was not fully realized due to "acquiescence to local racial practices and a false universal vision of girlhood" (p. 14). Helgren uses the history of Camp Fire to tell the larger and more nuanced story of American girlhood, although her work is unique in the history of youth organizations in that it does not focus just on the founding years. Utilizing an impressive array of sources to construct this history, she skillfully weaves historical context with primary sources not just from Camp Fire leadership but also from the girls themselves. In doing so, she demonstrates how American girls shaped their own worlds in the modern era and how they interpreted Camp Fire programming—sometimes in ways that differed from the leaders' intent.

Camp Fire's founders hoped that by glorifying roles traditionally associated with women, they could elevate the societal status of women and girls. To this end, they promoted education related to motherhood, homemaking, health, and nature. By completing tasks, girls earned "honor beads" that they sewed "onto Indian style gowns" (p. 25). Camp Fire organizers specifically sought to include Native imagery in dress, ceremonial activities, and naming conventions. The watchword for Camp Fire was *Wohelo*. Designed to "sound Indian," this word was "an acronym of work, health, and love" (p. 3). Girls participated in a variety of ceremonial rituals that mimicked Native cultures. Helgren notes that this racial mimicry functioned differently in the context of Native boarding schools, where girls exhibited assimilationist identities and also fashioned their own tribal identities.

While the racial mimicry of various groups carried

on within the organization well into the 1970s, in other areas, Camp Fire was ahead of its time. For example, programming included sexual education for girls. Camp Fire was also, at least theoretically, open to all girls. The organization encouraged immigrant girls' participation but propped up white, native-born girls as leaders who could function as mentors. Helgren argues, "Camp Fire presented a set of middle-class, Protestant, white ideals as if they were equally accessible and useful to all girls" (p. 93). Camp Fire required the purchase of uniforms, camping equipment, ceremonial fashions, and a magazine subscription, all of which put financial burdens on members. Black Camp Fire girls were welcomed but were typically relegated to segregated groups. Camp Fire also operated in institutions for disabled girls and in places such as the Philippines and Japanese internment camps. Despite Camp Fire's model of inclusion, local customs and practices, financial barriers, and ableism meant that most groups of girls on the margins were not incorporated into the white, middle-class, Protestant groups.

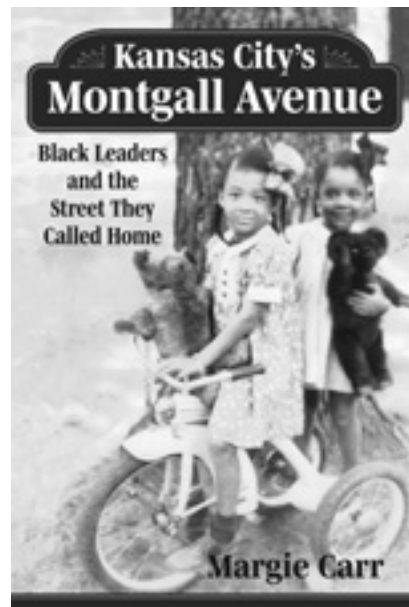
In the post-World War II years, Camp Fire made real attempts to include Catholic and Jewish girls. Still, the organization largely accepted racial segregation and did not hold itself accountable for putting its visions of inclusion into practice. In the 1970s, Camp Fire restructured and began including boys as well as younger girls. In her epilogue, Helgren mentions the ways in which Camp Fire has included twenty-first-century programming designed for LGBTQIA+ communities, particularly in the Midwest and South, where rural populations have less access to diversity and equity training.

Helgren's work is well written, efficiently organized, and thoroughly researched. Because Camp Fire had strengths in the Midwest, historians of Kansas will appreciate her examples of Camp Fire girls in the region. *The Camp Fire Girls* will appeal to anyone interested in American girlhood, youth organizations, or childhood history.

Reviewed by Hollie Marquess, lecturer of history, Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas.

Kansas City's Montgall Avenue: Black Leaders and the Street They Called Home

by Margie Carr



xii + 283 pages, illustrations, notes, index.
Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2023, paper \$26.95.

"Why don't I know this?" I kept asking myself as I read Margie Carr's *Kansas City's Montgall Avenue: Black Leaders and the Street They Called Home*. From the introduction onward, Carr takes us to the neighborhoods where deep history has long been buried beneath weeds, trash, and homes that have fallen on hard times. Walking the 2400 block of Montgall Avenue today, one would have a hard time believing that behind those doors once lived some of Kansas City's most prolific Black citizens, who built the legacy foundations of many institutions that still serve our community today.

Carr spotlights some contemporary Montgall Avenue newspaper headlines: "Large KC House Fire Might Involve Meth Lab"; "Police Find Victim's Body on Sidewalk of KC Neighborhood" (p. 1). Then we are reminded that Lucile Bluford, editor of the *Kansas City Call*, once called this street a "Black island" (p. 1). As Carr elaborates, the street became "an enclave of African American families living amid the larger majority" (pp. 1-2). Indeed, the story of Montgall Avenue is a "microcosm of the changing face of discrimination in the twentieth century as it transformed from a middle-class, integrated community to the neglected, blighted place it is today" (p. 2).

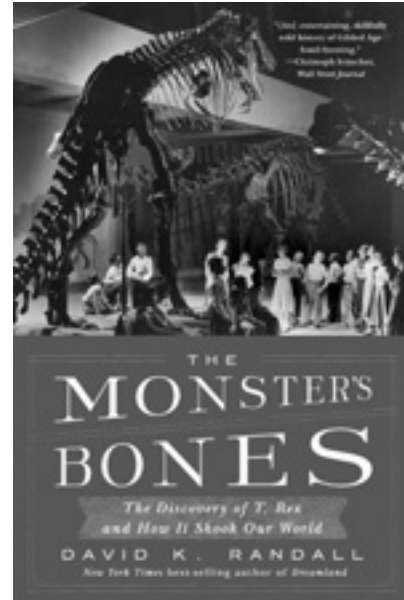
Chapter by chapter, we visit homes on the 2400 block where we witness the plans, dreams, and conversations of Kansas City's Black physicians, educators, activists, journalists, businessmen, entrepreneurial women, and mu-

sicians who helped shape the Black neighborhoods that we know today. From redlining to riots to the founding of Wheatley-Provident Hospital and Lincoln University, we are taken through challenges, struggles, and successes that cause a wide range of emotions to surge through the heart and mind. One minute, I would be in a triumphal glow of pride and the next, seething with anger. Black history can do that to you.

The book is thoughtfully organized, highlighting individual addresses and homeowners across various chronological periods in the neighborhood's history. Part 1 begins in the years 1904–1919, while part 2 takes us from 1920 to 1940, when Jim Crow rules “became more entrenched in Kansas City and discrimination morphed from personal attitudes to institutional policy” (p. 7). In part 3, the focus moves from the 1940s through the turn of the century. This part, titled “The Transformation of a Community,” places special emphasis on Lucile Bluford's life and endeavors and how her beloved Montgall Avenue began to disintegrate. As I moved through the book, I found myself returning to previous pages to revisit the connections between historical facts and family histories. While this book sometimes reads like subtle fiction, it is deeply historical, factual, and data-rich.

Carr's fantastic interweaving of Black community life with heritage, culture, finance, and politics paints a vivid picture of Kansas City's Black history as well as the city's history more broadly. In those early days, Montgall Avenue was the epitome of the concept of “place-making” and why it was and remains vital to preserve, imagine, and sometimes reimagine our Black neighborhoods. At the University of Missouri–Kansas City Center for Neighborhoods, we engage neighborhood leaders and equip and empower them with the tools they need to build community, capacity, and connectivity. We can learn from the lessons of Montgall Avenue—the past and the present. This book will be highly recommended as a necessary read for participants in our neighborhood leadership training classes.

Reviewed by Dina Newman, director, Center for Neighborhoods, University of Missouri–Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri.



The Monster's Bones: The Discovery of T. Rex and How It Shook Our World

by David K. Randall

xvii + 260 pages, illustrations, bibliography, index.
New York: W. W. Norton, 2022, paper \$27.95.

The Monster's Bones, by David K. Randall, is a wonderful, engrossing, turn-of-the-century action/adventure/biographical story detailing the individuals who discovered and introduced *Tyrannosaurus rex* to the world: paleontologists Barnum Brown and Henry Fairfield Osborn.

Many pages are spent on Barnum Brown, widely considered the most prolific paleontologist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Named after P. T. Barnum, Brown grew up in Carbondale, Kansas. Randall's book details Brown's life in Kansas, his interest in earth history, and his wanderlust stoked by an 1889 wagon drive to Montana. That journey led to his enrollment at the University of Kansas, where he studied under noted paleontologist Samuel Wendell Williston. The book thoroughly explains how Brown matured over time from a young, inexperienced student to a seasoned, hard-traveled, intrepid paleontologist who explored the world. Through Randall's writing, we feel Brown's excitement as he prospected badlands in the western United States and Canada and discovered *T. rex* in 1902. We also learn about his personal life, including his marriage to his love,

Marion; her involvement in his adventures; and the sting of her loss when she died from scarlet fever.

Randall also introduces the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and H. F. Osborn, who would become its first curator of paleontology. Only after Osborn became curator of paleontology and pushed the museum to collect dinosaurs did the AMNH become a force to be reckoned with.

Randall does an excellent job fleshing out Osborn, born a wealthy aristocrat obsessed with status. After graduating from Princeton, Osborn taught at Columbia University until he accepted the curator position at AMNH. He decided that the best way to increase the museum's attendance and its prestige (as well as his own) was to find mountable dinosaur skeletons for public exhibition. Brown was recommended to Osborn for fieldwork, and in 1896, the two met at the famous Como Bluff in Wyoming after Brown had found a long-necked sauropod skeleton (*Diplodocus*). The rest, as they say, is history. In Randall's book, we see the growing trust that Osborn placed in Brown as the latter began to deliver more results, leading to the discovery of the first *T. rex* specimen in 1902 (as well as that of a better, more complete specimen in 1908).

Randall does not shy away from some of the distasteful aspects of both Brown and Osborn. After the death of his wife, Brown used his wanderlust as an escape mechanism from both New York and his daughter, Frances. He became known for his affairs and possible paternity claims, which AMNH paid off. We learn that Osborn's obsession with class and status mutated into something worse: he viewed evolution through the distorted lens of racism, considering nonwhite people a "lesser" human species and delving into the pseudoscience of eugenics. He even started the

American Eugenics Society and hosted eugenics symposia at AMNH.

Although I consider myself an armchair Barnum Brown history buff, I learned some new things about him, including that he had a reconciliation of sorts with Frances later in life. They shared an apartment in Washington, DC, during World War II and went on expeditions together until his death in 1963.

Randall also provides a brief history of the science of paleontology. It's easy to forget that paleontology is a relatively new science, barely one hundred years old when Brown was hired at AMNH. This needed context is provided throughout the book, introducing the reader to concepts such as extinction, natural selection, and deep time while also profiling paleontologists from the past who paved the way for Brown and Osborn. Lastly, the book sheds light on how the celebrity of *T. rex* has morphed into a commercial industry focused on selling privately owned specimens and examines how this market risks removing important specimens from the scientific process and the public trust.

The book is an excellent read, and it is well researched. Aside from a few minor errors regarding geologic dates and the number of Brown's scientific literature contributions, the book is an excellent addition to the history of paleontology. If anything, I wish the book spent additional pages on Brown's adventures from the 1930s through the 1950s. Perhaps a sequel is in order.

Reviewed by Scott A. Williams, paleontologist and Director of Exhibitions and Planetarium, Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, Montana.