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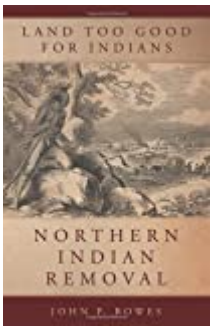

John P. Bowes. *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal.* New Directions in Native American Studies Series. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016. Illustrations. 234 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8061-5212-7.

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An encouraging indication that a more complex version of Native American history has been incorporated into the larger narrative of the US experience can be found in the fact that the Cherokee Removal of 1839-40 has become a topic in high school Advanced Placement history courses. Indeed, a Google search of the term âCherokee Removal APUSHâ reveals that a wealth of information, from flash cards to study guides to suggested topics for research, is available to help students familiarize themselves with all aspects of the forced expulsion of sixteen thousand Cherokees from their southeastern homeland. Admirable as it is that at least some high school students are now informed about one episode in Native American history that does not involve a feel-good story of a Thanksgiving dinner or a romantic interlude between a Native woman and a European man, the treatment of Cherokee removal remains problematic. The Cherokeesâ multiple forced marches are still largely framed as a narrative of disappearance, with Cherokees both leaving the Southeast and the larger stage of US history forever. The tribeâs horrific experience of forced migration, with its 25 percent death toll, is also treated as representative of the experiences of all Native peoples in the United States prior to the 1860s, inadvertently reinscribing the old view that Native peoples had vanished forever from eastern North America several decades before the Civil War. The uniqueness of the Cherokee experience, even among southeastern Native nations, is downplayed while the larger story of Native peoples north of the Ohio River remains unknown, elided into the tale of the Cherokeesâ distinctive legal strategies and creative adaptations of American political institutions and governmental structures. John P. Bowesâs new monograph, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal*, refocuses our attention on the removals of Native peoples from the understudied Lower Great Lakes, the present-day states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. Simultaneously, he places these multiple removal stories in critical dialogue with Cherokee removal, showing how complex and diffuse removal experiences were for Native peoples and how the well-meaning focus on the Cherokees still sanitizes the most difficult facts about removal, allowing both historians and the American public to avoid the really hard questions that removal as a national US policy should force us to confront.

In two initial chapters Bowes contextualizes Indian removal as idea and practice, observing that removal was hardly a new concept in the 1830s. Americans had been theorizing Indian removal since at least the decade of the American Revolution. A series of interlocking

ideas about violence shaped how Americans viewed Native peoples and how they understood removal. During the Revolutionary War itself Americans demonized the British for employing âsavageâ Native allies (echoing the charge made in the Declaration of Independence that King George III had attempted to unleash Indian warfare on the colonists). Americans also pointed to Native war practices, such as ritual torture, that they considered especially abhorrent to argue that such naturally violent and âsavageâ peoples could not be tolerated within the borders of the new Republic. Such supposedly innate Native violence further served to excuse American violence, which was configured by contrast as the virtuous defense of home and family. Even the Americansâ military conquest of the former French *pays dâen haute* could be justified by reference to the savagery of Native warfare and the complicity of the British. These mutually reinforcing tropes proved highly durable in the Lower Great Lakes country, with the specter of the deceitful British scheming to unleash Native warriors onto innocent American settlements materializing time after time from wars with the Northwest Indian Confederation in the 1790s to the War of 1812 to the Black Hawk War of 1832. Not only were Native violence and Native removal becoming conflated in American minds five decades before the 1830s, the usual start date for the so-called Removal Era, American blamelessness was also being asserted. Treaties negotiated at the ends of the regionâs many conflicts frequently involved land cessions by Native peoples, with the expectation that Native peoples would remove from ceded lands often spelled out in treaty articles. The American erasure of Native peoples and their obfuscation of their own role in the removal of tribal villages were being formulated, with Native peoples reduced to metaphors who vanished like the mist before the rising sun, victims of laws of nature rather than deliberate acts of settler dispossession.

If removal as a national policy did not spring into being fully formed in 1830 with the Indian Removal Act, different Native peoples also varied greatly in their understandings of what removal would entail for them as societies and individuals. They also possessed a varied range of experiences with previous local removal attempts that in turn shaped how they approached the stepped-up American pressures of the 1820s and 1830s. As Bowes reminds readers, the Cherokeesâ legal strategies developed out of their particular historical circumstances, including their ability to forge long-term alliances with influential groups in American society, such as Protestant missionary organizations and Andrew Jacksonâs political opponents. As a result, Cherokees sought to make their sovereignty comprehensible to Anglo-Americans by framing it within Western legal constructs and early American legal debates over constitutional authority, federal power, and statesâ rights. Lower Great Lakes tribes inhabited a very different reality, one shaped by over 150 years of mutually beneficial social, economic, and political exchanges between Native peoples and successive European empires. Imperial rivalries were fueled both by geopolitical considerations and the economic incentive of a lucrative trade in furs, a situation that made Native peoples both valued allies and trade partners of successive European and European-descended powers. Tribal nations, such as the Miamis, Potawatomis, Wyandots, Ojibwes, Odawas, and Delawares, of the Lower Great Lakes understood their treaties and their relationships to the Americans in terms of continued intersocietal cooperation and exchange. Although by the 1820s Anglo-Americans would begin to talk of the impossibility of societies of âsavageâ hunters and âcivilizedâ farmers living together compatibly, these tribal nations were not persuaded. They continued to regard a world of blended societies, allied polities, and overlapping economic interests as the norm. And for many decades, even as Anglo-Americans articulated a new rhetoric of removal, their actual behavior supported such Native interpretations. Native and settler economies remained entwined, especially once Native peoples began receiving their annual installment payments for land ceded under the earliest treaties. In exacting detail, Bowes reveals how American economic development of the Lower Great Lakes was financed by tribal annuity funds. Local elites composed of fur traders, merchants, politicians, and land speculators engrossed most of the money and resources that Native peoples received for sales of their land. They invested much of that wealth in building the infrastructure of roads, bridges, ferry landings, and canals that made the region attractive to growing numbers of Americans settler colonists. With their commitment to private land ownership and market-oriented agricultural production, these later settlers had little use for frontier exchange economies or blended fur trade societies and agitated for Indian removal.

This fluid environment, which relied on Native people to finance their own gradual dispossession, made the resulting removals of the regional tribes highly contingent on local circumstances. In four chapters, Bowes details the astonishing variety of tribal experiences with forced removal. Delawares, Wyandots, Senecas, Cayugas, Shawnees, Miamis, Potawatomis, Ojibwes, and

Odawas navigated different local situations and contended with different political and economic combinations arrayed against them. Occasionally, a fortuitous circumstance allowed tribal communities, wholly or in part, to hold onto some portion of their tribal lands and remain, the Michigan Odawas and Ojibwes representing the best known, although by no means the only, such instance. These successes notwithstanding, most of the Lower Great Lakes tribal communities succumbed to mounting pressures, which included a great deal of unrecognized physical violence and assaults on tribal property, and moved. The actual removals themselves were badly planned and badly executed. Tribal people who were removed suffered from hunger, disease, and exposure; death rates were high.

Interesting as these several removal histories are, Bowesâs fifth chapter is the bookâs greatest contribution. In it, he details the continuing removals of the midwestern tribal communities once they crossed the Mississippi. Neither forced migrations nor the erasure of tribal presences stopped. While the tribes that were removed made a number of different choices, including strategic alliances with the Texas republic or settlement near one another in what would become the state of Kansas, they began the process of rebuilding their lives only to find themselves once more in the line of fire. American settler colonists expanded across the Mississippi, bringing with them their national struggle over the expansion of chattel slavery into the western territories where Native people were supposed to be able to live forever. At the same time that Americans battled each other, they renewed their demands for the removal of Native peoples from these now-desired western lands to yet another permanent home in the newly constituted Indian Territory. Over the course of the 1850s and 1860s, most of the relocated Lower Great Lakes tribes moved to the Indian Territory, where the logic of removal would inexorably continue. Federal policymakers in the post-Civil War period would endorse the allotment of tribal lands, while ignoring the likelihood that politically un-enfranchised Native landholders would become victims of such perfectly legal actions as land forfeitures for overdue taxes as well as a range of less savory swindles and scams that constantly whittled away at the lands remaining in Native hands. Erasures too would continue, with descendants of these midwestern tribes now residing in Oklahoma recalling in oral interviews how Anglo-American farmers who bought former tribal lands would plow under the graveyards, subjecting tribal ancestors to yet another form of disappearance. Despite a policy reversal in the 1930s, by the end of the next decade, Americans would be advocating for the termination of the federal trust relationship with Native nations, reframing removal in yet another guise.

After describing the overall trajectory an American removal policy that far outlasted the removal era, Bowes returns to the theoretical questions that engaged him at the beginning of the book. He once more insists that removal as a US policy cannot be confined to a small number of years surrounding the Jackson administration nor can it be understood as only involving the southeastern tribes. American officialsâand more importantly, the ordinary Anglo-Americans who supported their policies and elected them to officeâsought endlessly to separate Native peoples from their lands and resources. He urges historians to reconceptualize removal as an enduring component of American Indian policy and explore its larger significance. Such a reconsideration would compel Anglo-Americans to reckon with the fact that Native dispossession and removal as central, not peripheral, to the building of the American nation-state. Attention to the larger context of removal would also create a deeper appreciation for the significance of Native peoples themselves as actors in the larger American historical narrative from which they are so often absent. Their many efforts, whether in resisting removal through the American courts, developing strategies to remain in spite of removal pressures, or removing and rebuilding elsewhere on the North American continent, reveal them as participants in history whose own actions were responsible for their survival in the face of âthe pure relentless power of the removal and dispossessionâ (p. 225). Far from being ushered off the stage of history, they have ultimately denied the logic of removal and remain.

Although *Land Too Good for Indians* was published in early 2016, it seems particularly timely in light of the actions of the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies in opposing the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline that first gained national American attention in the latter months of that year. While the multiple issues involved in halting (or permitting) the pipelineâs completion are unresolved as of this writing, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the appropriation of Native lands and resources continue to be an American objective to this day. Bowesâs case studies provide convincing examples of a past history of such appropriations. Yet he also details how Native peoples of the early twenty-first century face the United States from a stronger position than their nineteenth-century ancestors. Whether the past will be repeated remains to be seen.

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