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Slavery, Freedom and Expansion in the Early American West. By John Craig Hammond. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007. Pp. 245. Cloth, $39.50.)

Reviewed by Gwynne Langley Rivers

In John Craig Hammond's *Slavery, Freedom and Expansion in the Early American West*, the debate over the politics of slavery is moved out of Washington and into the territories of the Louisiana Purchase and the Northwest Territory. Hammond traces the debates over slavery in Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois from the passage of the Northwest Ordinance in 1790 until the Missouri Crisis in 1820. As these states were admitted into the Union, each contended with the question of whether to allow slavery within their borders. Hammond argues that the decisions made in local political arenas were far more important in securing the nation as a slaveholder's republic than any laws passed in Congress. Because the federal government was rather weak and overextended in the early republic, ample room was left for legislators and advocates in the territories to lobby for proslavery legislation that would take effect when the territories were admitted as states. Further, proslavery legislation was seen as critical to the process of western expansion long before the Missouri Controversy brought it to national attention. In spite of the antislavery Article VI of the Northwest Ordinance, Congress did not pass similar restrictions in the Southwest Territories due in part to "the weaknesses of the federal government . . . that greatly amplified the influence that westerners could exercise over the federal government" (11). Because of this imbalance, proslavery settlers in the Southwest Territories were able to advance their cause. The federal government was more concerned with expanding settlement in the West, and in many cases saw proslavery legislation as the price they had to pay to continue the course of expansion.

Hammond therefore argues for a recentering of our understanding about the slavery debate. Instead of focusing on the limited debates in Washington, the important conversations happened in the territories among westerners. The Washington-centric historiography "produces a distorted understanding" (5) of the reasons why slavery was federally sanctioned and its expansion was not checked. By refocusing attention on the territories themselves, Hammond demonstrates that securing the nation as a slaveholder's republic was not done through a process of

neglect, but instead was due to westerners' advocacy for proslavery laws. Hammond claims that this process of allowing each territory to decide the question independently led directly to the Missouri Controversy and the ability of southern politicians to argue that slavery was both necessary and permanent by 1820.

Hammond further claims that while Washington politicians could do little about deciding the question of slavery, they were not indifferent to the issue, and northerners did not leave the debates to the southern representatives. Instead of dismissing petitions from Indiana to repeal Article VI of the Northwest Ordinance, Congress referred them to committees, where they were discussed but later tabled. This action, Hammond contends, goes against the traditional view that the House was in the control of the southerners, and instead he argues that northern politicians chose their battles carefully and were intent on preserving slavery in areas where it was possible, as in Indiana and Illinois (109).

Slavery, Freedom and Expansion presents a compelling counternarrative to the question of how the nation became a slaveholder's republic during the Jeffersonian era. Hammond creatively mines the records of local political elites in the territories in order to present his case that the real work on behalf of the expansion or suppression of slavery was being done in those territories rather than in the halls of Congress by established southern politicians and planters. By using local newspapers, Hammond ably traces the contours of the debates as they unfolded. The backgrounds of the major contributors to the debates are identified, and through this, Hammond in many cases makes the political personal. Hammond also places a great deal of emphasis on toasts given at political events and other public ceremonies. They were, he argues, a good gauge of popular sentiment among both proslavery and antislavery factions. From these, Hammond draws conclusions about the attitudes of both the givers of the toasts, as well as the hearers. In Ohio, for example, Hammond argues that a series of toasts offered at Cincinnati's Independence Day celebration looked forward to freedom "for every son of Adam." Thus, Hammond concludes, that these Christian Republicans saw the abolition of slavery as a moral and religious rather than economic question (88).

Finally, Hammond looks closely at the route petitions to Congress took from the territories. He uses these documents, from both sides of the debate, in order to demonstrate the types of action politicians were willing to take on behalf of westerners. These petitions illustrated that

Washington politicians had a significant interest in making laws about slavery through committee work, thus going against the traditional view that Congress was unwilling to touch the slavery question in open debate. They also demonstrated that while some settlers might have been ambivalent or indifferent on the issue, the act of political participation was sometimes enough to get citizens involved and galvanize popular opinion (147).

Slavery, Freedom and Expansion is a particularly well-written and well-researched contribution to the field. The book refocuses the historiography and reminds us once again that all politics are local. By looking at the local debates, and Washington's reaction to them, it is clear that western interests had more power than previously understood. Hammond's book raises several interesting questions about how the slavery debates developed in each territory, and the responses that citizens had to the ways the debates were conducted. Questions about why certain arguments were used, and if some of those were more successful than others, also linger. In addition, Hammond offers a chapter about how ex-slaves were received in Ohio that gives us a tantalizing glimpse of how those people might have been viewed in light of the earlier debates. Overall, the book is an impressive look at the role that slavery played in the course of western expansion during the Jeffersonian era and forces historians to reconsider the relationship between the western territories and the established eastern politicians and slavery advocates.

Gwynne Langley Rivers is a graduate student at the University of Illinois, Chicago. Her dissertation looks at the relationship between communitarian societies and larger antebellum reform movements.

The Market Revolution in America: Liberty, Ambition, and the Eclipse of the Common Good. By John Lauritz Larson. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. 208. Cloth, $75.00; Paper, $20.99.)

Reviewed by Daniel Walker Howe

In this model monograph, John Lauritz Larson explores the transformation of the American economy from independence to the eve of civil war, emphasizing its consequences for the population. A master of the sub-