

are not considered when making overall government funding assessments. The first one-third of the book relies on the secondary literature which too often takes “federalist self-justification” to be history. As such, the author makes several minor factual errors about the financing of the War for Independence and the 1790 Funding Act that could have been avoided if the relevant original sources had been consulted instead. The author notes but does not fully appreciate or exploit how similar, in structure and sequence of methods tried, the financing of the Civil War by the northern federal government was to the financing of the War for Independence by the Continental Congress. Finally, the author’s story has an air of inevitability. Given the actual decision process, a chaos model of historical evolution might be more appropriate. While the author advances our understanding of federal finances during the early U.S. Republic, and its contribution to the expansion and survival of the United States, much research still needs to be done.

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Little Business on the Prairie: Entrepreneurship, Prosperity, and Challenge in South Dakota. By Robert E. Wright. Sioux Falls: Center for Western Studies, 2015. Pp. viii, 340. \$16.95, paper.

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There has been a current of revisionism in recent works about South Dakota and Great Plains history. Jon Lauck describes a South Dakota culture in almost idyllic terms in his monographs *The Lost Region* and *Prairie Republic*, as well as in the series *The Plains Political Tradition* for which he serves as coeditor. Lauck has resurrected the Turner thesis in his effort to explain what he claims is the culture of independence and success on the prairie. David Mills revises the image of the people of the Great Plains during the Cold War in his book *Cold War in a Cold Land*. Like Lauck, Mills promotes the idea of a practical people who did not cower in fear during the Cold War, but who sought to profit from it.

Professor Robert E. Wright’s new book, *Little Business on the Prairie: Entrepreneurship, Prosperity, and Challenge in South Dakota*, is a celebration of entrepreneurship and of revisionism. Wright acknowledges Lauck’s influence, writing that he helped convince Wright “of the importance of South Dakota and its entrepreneurial business and political cultures” (p. viii).

Wright seeks to revise not only modern South Dakota history, but also the history of ancient Indian cultures that he claims were proto-entrepreneurial (pp. 18–19). The author’s message is clear: “Entrepreneurial enterprise—the system of political economy that encourages innovations large, small, and in between—drives prosperity and even happiness” (p. 4). South Dakota, he asserts, is good for entrepreneurs—it is a “pro-business state”—due to its relative lack of business regulation (p. 4). Wright’s characterization of South Dakotans as hard-working, ethical, and libertarian seekers of freedom nicely fits the new revisionist portrait.

He has considered a host of sources in establishing his narrative: his bibliography runs 14 pages. He has examined the standards of South Dakota history (his footnote and bibliographic citations read like a “Who’s Who” of South Dakota historians over the

years), journals of pioneers, papers of influential business people, and even the KKK collection at the Center for Western Studies. This is not surprising in a book whose second chapter title suggests its breadth: "Economic Activity on the Northern Plains, 10,000 B.C.E. to A.D. 1888." Professor Wright's research and his effort to incorporate it are praiseworthy.

Of course, there is a problem with celebrations: they do not carry a mandate to engage in constructive criticism. Before I point out what I think are weaknesses in the book, I should note that I approach economic history from a different perspective than Wright. I am a diplomatic historian first, a historian of South Dakota second, and have no formal training in economic history.

Although Wright does recognize an "exploitative" entrepreneur in his triple typology that also includes "innovative" and "replicative" entrepreneurs, he rarely writes about the consequences of their behavior (p. 6). He mentions the word "pollution" only once and it is in reference to light pollution, not Whitewood Creek, the Big Sioux River, or the uranium tailings in Edgemont (p. 15). There is no discussion of what right the feedlot entrepreneur asserts to pollute the air his neighbors and travelers alike must breathe. A sense of stewardship must accompany entrepreneurship, and that part of the equation is absent from Wright's analysis.

One of the strengths of Wright's book is that he addresses the situation of Native Americans past and present and the reservation system. Nonetheless, when assessing government policies toward Native Americans, Wright attributes the "immiseration of the nation's Native peoples" to the federal government (p. 212). Although the federal government has certainly perpetrated and perpetuated horrendous Native American policies, Wright does not address the fact that individual entrepreneurs who violated borders in their search for gold and land made it very difficult for the federal government to enforce treaty obligations in South Dakota.

In addition, Wright makes no mention of the contemporary entrepreneurs who sell alcoholic beverages in Whiteclay, NE, a stone's throw away from the historically "dry" Pine Ridge Reservation, and their share in the process of "immiseration." His solution for Native American immiseration is less government regulation and more entrepreneurship (p. 41). "Tribal corporations," he asserts, "have done best when not subjected to political oversight" (p. 214).

Wright occasionally draws sweeping conclusions from single pieces of evidence. An example is when he accepts one New Yorker's observation that in 1990 there was "almost no price gouging" at the Sturgis Rally (p. 2). Conventional wisdom holds that price gouging does occur, so such a generalization demands evidence, not opinion.

More troubling is Wright's selective use of at least two sources. *Hapa Girl* is May-lee Chai's memoir of an American girl of Chinese descent who spent some difficult years as a teenager in Vermillion, South Dakota. Although her memories are an important part of her identity, there are few if any sources that corroborate them. Six of her nine footnotes are to Peter Matthiessen's problematic *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, yet Wright cites her 14 times and uses her as his source for an alleged William Janklow quote (p. 212). I would not, as Wright does, use *Hapa Girl* for an epigraph or as an authoritative source.

The other example is Wright's citation of Frank Bloodgood's memoir of life in Huron as evidence that "South Dakota is a less bigoted place than outsiders may assume . . ." (p. 214). The same people of Huron who were debating whether "Indians received more injustices than the Negro" in the 1880s could read editorials in their paper that used the

common racial epithet for Americans of African descent in an effort to diminish their capacity as soldiers during the Spanish-American War (p. 214).

Although any reviewer will find assertions to challenge in any book, Wright's book is worth reading. It will provide advocates of free enterprise much to relish; in equal portions, it will give proponents of state regulated markets ammunition for their policies. Anyone who reads it will, I am certain, be provoked to think further about entrepreneurship in South Dakota and in general, and that is not a bad thing for a history book to do.

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Building the Empire State: Political Economy in the Early Republic. By Brian Phillips Murphy. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. Pp. xii, 287. \$49.95, cloth.

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Brian Murphy revisits the connections between politics, development projects, and corporations in Early-Republic New York. If any evidence is needed that developmental corporations were inherently political, look no further than New York's master politicians DeWitt Clinton and Martin Van Buren. Van Buren, who as state senator voted against every bank charter bill but one because he considered corporate privileges anti-republican, nevertheless supported the canal and served on the board of directors of the State Bank of Albany. Clinton was variously, and sometimes simultaneously, a director of the Manhattan Company, Erie Canal commissioner, and governor. The lure of the canal was so powerful that it briefly allied Clinton and Van Buren; it even reconciled Clinton and John Swartwout whose political and personal enmities had earlier led Clinton to shoot Swartwout—twice—in a duel. Personal disputes and political schisms alike were, even if only briefly, “mended by the balm of common interest” in developmental projects (p. 185).

A second feature that separated Van Buren, Clinton, and Swartwout's generation from the Revolutionary-era generation of politicians was that wealth was no longer a prerequisite for holding public office. The aristocrats were replaced by a class of political entrepreneurs, or “people who sought to translate their influence and connections into sources of income and opportunity” for themselves and for others (p. 2). Political entrepreneurs were not conflicted by using their political powers to realize economic gains that tended to further entrench their political power. Van Buren later emerged as one of the nation's premier political entrepreneurs because he could claim to be anti-privilege in not voting for bank charters, but behind the scenes he manipulated the process so that only his political allies received charters; it was understood that the fortunate few would use their banks to further the party's objectives (Howard Bodenhorn, “Bank Chartering and Political Corruption in Antebellum New York,” *Corruption and Reform: Lesson's from America's Economic History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press [2006]: 231–57).

New York's Livingston clan—namely Robert R., John R., Edward, and H. Brockholst—take center stage in Murphy's analysis of New York's fraught relationship with banks, canals, and steamboat companies. Robert R.'s entrepreneurial efforts appeared in the 1784 banking debate. Three bank proposals were debated: a