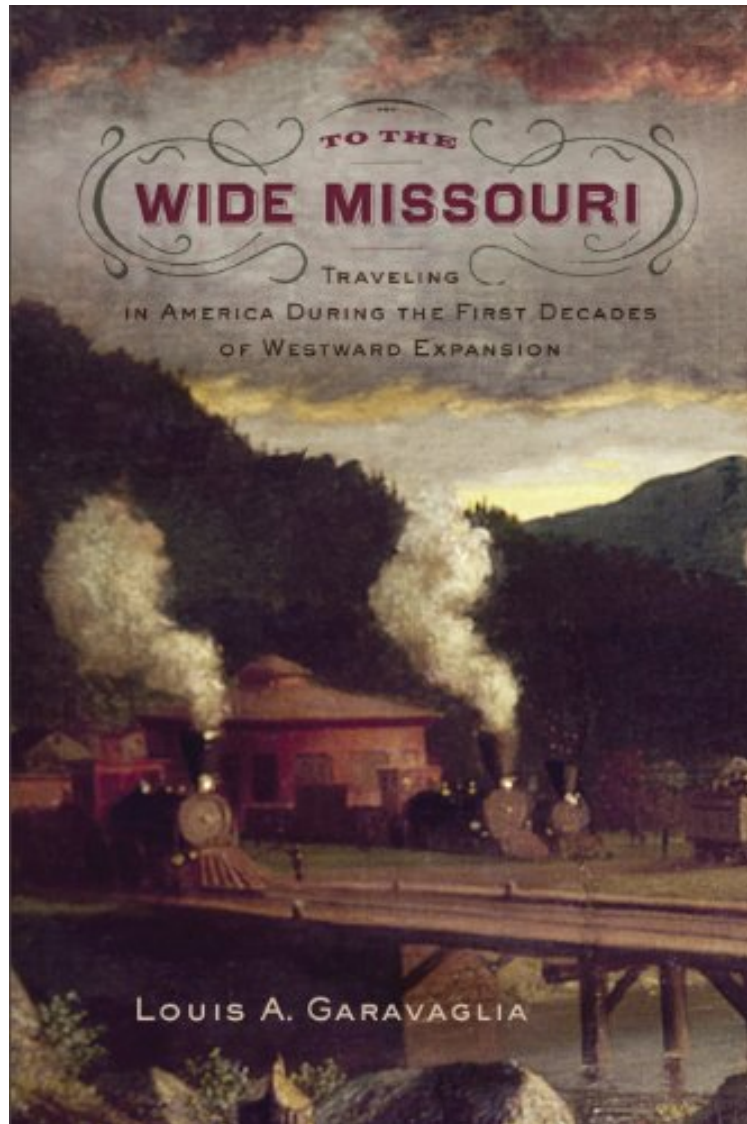


(Pdf free) To the Wide Missouri: Traveling in America During the First Decades of Westward Expansion

To the Wide Missouri: Traveling in America During the First Decades of Westward Expansion

Louis A. Garavaglia

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Louis A. Garavaglia : To the Wide Missouri: Traveling in America During the First Decades of Westward Expansion before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To the Wide Missouri: Traveling in America During the First Decades of Westward Expansion:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Overall an interesting and unique look at the early American RepublicBy A Florida ReaderThis book starts off well, using a number of good primary sources to relate what it was

like to travel west in America from about 1803 to 1843. It breaks down the chapters by time period and by methods, like roads, steamboats, and later railways. It has many illustrations and photos which are a nice touch. The extensive use of primary sources provides a unique and captivating look at what it was like for the traveler. The quotes vary in length but their selection and use is very well done. They never drag on but are pertinent and entertaining. I have two minor issues with the book that should be mentioned. One is that there are no usable maps. There are maps used as illustration, but they can't be used to look up the numerous place names mentioned in the book. However this is a minor issue, as between the internet and a decent US atlas you can follow along, and frankly to include maps with all these place names would have been somewhat messy. The second weakness is that later in the book the author spends much time on the construction of canals, road and railroads, which is sort of a letdown. The relating of the experience of traveling is very interesting and well done and I wish that the book had concentrated more on that, but some folks may appreciate learning more about the construction aspect as well. Nevertheless, the writing is crisp and keeps the interest of the reader. Overall it's well worth getting if you have an interest in the history of the early Republic.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding for its primary source research

By James Denny "To the Wide Missouri" has as its focus travel in the eastern United States (east of the Mississippi) in the years 1803 to 1843. Why start in 1803? Because that was the year that President Thomas Jefferson persuaded Congress to approve the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France, a land acquisition that would suddenly double the size of the United States and spur settlement. This is an outstanding work, well-researched and well-written. Author Louis Garavaglia themes his chapters with such headings as "Waterways," "Roadways," "Stagecoach Routes," "Canals" and "Railroads," and presents the developments that occur during a designated range of years in each of those chapters. "To the Wide Missouri" rivals the historical works of esteemed author David McCullough for its breadth and depth. Maps, sketches, photographs and charts are included that depict and fortify the narrative. Best of all, Garavaglia makes use of little-known but spot-on first person accounts. These provide context and will make the reader feel as if he is on that stagecoach, getting thrashed about on a bumpy, bone-jarring ride or battered around on a canalboat as it bangs through a lock. One suggestion to the author is that with a historical work of this magnitude, the index is not what it should be. The reader will want to be able to easily look up the towns, rivers, names and places mentioned in the narrative. The index is the natural place to key them to the page in the book where they are found. Having produced a family genealogy, I can speak to the value of providing what is known as an "everyname" index. A second suggestion regards the historical maps: in selected cases, a modern map co-located with the historical map would help the reader to see the consequences of the early routes including the National Road, canals, stagecoach routes and railroad lines. This is a fine work. Five stars!

While the great overland migration routes to America's far west are well known and documented--the California, Oregon, Mormon, and Santa Fe Trails, the Central Overland and Pony Express--less attention has been given to how Americans in the first decades of the republic traveled across the western frontiers of the original colonies. Following the revolution, Americans began to seek their fortunes to the west in greater numbers. Land grants to veterans inspired others to move, including tradesmen, merchants, and tavern owners. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the country doubled in size, and the rate of migration became extraordinary, with wider and more durable roads built, ferries installed at river crossings, canals cut to move goods, regular stage routes established, and ultimately the first railroad tracks laid down. Entire regions that supported few communities in the 1790s exploded in population, and as a result seven new states were admitted to the Union in the decade following the War of 1812. John Bradbury, who traveled through the United States between 1809 and 1811, wrote that "In passing through the upper parts of Virginia, I observed a great number of farms that had been abandoned, on many of which good houses had been erected, and fine apple and peach orchards had been planted. On enquiring the reason, I was always informed that the owners had gone to the western country." In Maryland, a newspaper reporter wrote, "The time is close at hand when the region west of the Allegheny mountains will sway the destinies of the nation." By 1839, the National Road extended more than 700 miles from Baltimore to central Illinois, New York's Erie Canal operated from Albany to Buffalo, and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad carried passengers briskly west, ultimately to the Ohio River. *To the Wide Missouri: Traveling in America During the First Decades of Westward Expansion* by Louis Garavaglia covers the routes and methods that emigrants used to reach the west in the forty-year period following the Louisiana Purchase. Using contemporary maps and the graphic descriptions found in diaries, journals, letters, and newspaper accounts, the author details not only the land and water routes that led settlers to the western country, but also illustrates the hardship, perseverance, humor, and romance that colored their journey.

About the Author LOUIS A. GARAVAGLIA, a graduate of Western Michigan University, served as an Army lieutenant with a Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) unit in Vietnam. He has published numerous articles in both historical and technical journals and is co-author of *Firearms of the American West*. He divides his time between writing and mechanical design, and at present holds two U.S. patents.