

Reviews

■ Anders Bo Rasmussen. *Civil War Settlers: Scandinavians, Citizenship, and American Empire, 1848–1870*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. xiii + 359.

Prominent historian Alison Clark Efford recently published an overview of cutting-edge scholarship on the relationship between immigration and the upheavals of the Civil War and Reconstruction era that discussed dozens of studies of Irish, German, Chinese, and Latino populations, but cited no work on Scandinavians except Jon Gjerde's books of the 1980s and 1990s (Efford, "Civil War-Era Immigration and the Imperial United States," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 10:233–53, 2020). Anders Bo Rasmussen seeks to fill this gap with a monograph based on more than a decade of research in an impressive variety of sources. He specifically adopts Efford's imperial framework, which stresses not only the geographic expansion of American power but also a contrast between the workings of a liberal nation-state and an empire. In contrast to the liberal promise of uniform citizenship, Efford indicates, empires leverage differences among constituent social groups and exercise authority in inconsistent, often locally specific ways. Rasmussen constructs an ambitious design for exploring these themes by situating Scandinavian immigrants to the United States in social, economic, religious, political, military, and diplomatic contexts. His complex contribution ensures that Scandinavians will figure more prominently in the next historiographical survey of mid-nineteenth-century American immigration and state formation.

The first of Rasmussen's three major sections places Scandinavian immigrants at the vanguard of the settler colonialism fundamental to the

coming of the Civil War. He achieves the depth of a community study by focusing on New Denmark in Brown County, Wisconsin, though he also draws evidence from elsewhere in Wisconsin and Minnesota. He sketches the economic impulse for migration and the allure of landownership in the United States. Zeal for social mobility aligned Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian immigrants with the Republican call for free soil and free labor, as did a shared antipathy toward Catholic and urban Irish and German immigrants. Rasmussen stresses the religious conservatism and ethnocentrism that most Scandinavians brought with them, set in relief by the more radical abolitionism of Danish clergyman Claus Clausen. Grasping farmers swarmed across Chippewa lands in western Wisconsin and spilled into Dakota territory in Minnesota.

The second major section, which covers the Civil War years, is the highlight of the book. Immigrants' expansionism emerged as a primary force behind the Dakota War of 1862, a central event in recent scholarly linkages of the Civil War to wars against Indigenous Americans. Rasmussen creatively cross-cuts these incursions with a different attempt to shift people and sovereignty, the project discussed by the Lincoln administration and Danish diplomats to make St. Croix a site for colonization of African Americans. Most of the chapters in the section focus more directly on the crisis precipitated by southern secession. The worries of Norwegian-born Wisconsin politician John A. Johnson that the United States might splinter into ineffectual pieces nicely illustrates Rasmussen's observation that the conjunction of the Civil War and the Second Schleswig War dramatized Eric Hobsbawm's "threshold principle," or the notion that nations must maintain a minimum size to ensure autonomy. In addition to the territorial aspects of empire, the section excels in exploring the relations between individuals and the state, often identifying patterns of difference and inconsistency along the lines sketched by Efford. Hans Christian Heg identified one important form of differentiation, between military veterans and other citizens, when he told the editor of the newspaper *Emigranten* that "the men who conduct this war are going to be the men who will conduct affairs after it is over and if we are going to have any influence then we must get into the war now" (p. III). Heg was the founding colonel of the 15th Wisconsin, the only regiment comprised mostly of Scandinavian Americans and consequently the broadest platform for officers' commissions. Though Heg died at Chickamauga, the monument to him installed at the Wisconsin capitol in 1925 testifies to Norwegian Americans' continued recognition of the political importance of military service.

The chapters on military recruitment display the advantages to Rasmussen's combination of wide and narrow lenses. His account of landownership

ideology prepares the reader to recognize the Homestead Act of 1862 as an attempt both to coax Scandinavians into the Union army and expand white settlement. That ploy failed, however, as the influx of immigrants declined with the prospect of conscription. The connection between eligibility for Homestead land and eligibility for the draft was only one way in which the war sharpened definitions of citizenship. Even more important was federal clarification of the principle that immigrants who voted were liable for duty, a tie between the suffrage and military service that African Americans would flip to advantage in the campaign for the Fifteenth Amendment. On a local level, however, such ideological equations were less important than individual circumstances. Scandinavian Americans joined energetically in efforts to avoid conscription. Brown County declarations of intention to become an American citizen fell from 177 in 1860 to twenty-five in 1862 and eight in 1863. Rasmussen reports that Scandinavian Americans were also disproportionately successful in obtaining medical exemptions from service. Wisconsin drafted nine New Denmark men from a pool of sixty-eight able-bodied men in November 1862, but only one entered the army. The Scandinavian War Aid Association helped its constituents pay for substitutes. Federal authority was erratic and incomplete, layered with alternative sources of power.

The third and final section of the book focuses on Reconstruction. Rasmussen follows through on his previous indications that Scandinavian Americans were not likely to join in the post-emancipation drive for racial equality or extend citizenship principles to gender equality; Chicago-based journalist Marcus Thrane was a notable exception. More typical, Rasmussen suggests, was the postwar continuation of debate within the Norwegian Synod over the extent to which the Bible sanctioned slavery, with the defenders of slavery holding the upper hand. Diplomacy takes the stage in the last chapter, which dissects the failure of 1865–1870 negotiations for American purchase of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John. This episode is a valuable addition to the recent literature on international affairs during Reconstruction. Rasmussen underscores the intersections between foreign and domestic policy, including Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Charles Sumner's solicitude for congressional parity with the State Department and his wariness of any initiative sponsored by President Andrew Johnson. Skillful narration from the standpoint of Danish diplomat Waldemar Raasløff brings to a climax the tale of contrasting Danish and American fortunes after the wars of the 1860s. Denmark, reeling from the loss of territory in the Second Schleswig War, turned to characteristic small-state cultivation of bilateral relations with a rising global power. The Washington veteran Raasløff sought to draw on years

of friendship with Sumner and tactfully argued through indirect channels that the United States was honor-bound to fulfill a treaty initiated by the Lincoln administration. The campaign nevertheless collapsed, not least because the United States now inclined toward the large-state idea that it could take what it wanted in the Western Hemisphere without the inconvenience of a purchase.

Civil War Settlers ends on the verge of the major phase of Scandinavian immigration to the United States. The next generations of settlers would continue to seek landownership as epitomized by the Homestead Act and support a Republican party hostile to Indigenous peoples and much more concerned with white prosperity than racial equality. The logic of the threshold principle would not prove as disastrous as Danes feared in the 1860s, but many Scandinavian immigrants would pursue the response to national decline envisioned by a Danish consul in Wisconsin, cultural rebirth in the United States. This conclusion typifies the challenge Rasmussen faces in weaving the specific circumstances of different countries into a pan-Scandinavian story. He is alert to distinctions and careful to draw evidence from Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish immigrants. For all his nuanced detail, however, he is ultimately less interested in the individual experiences of settlers than in the ways that people in motion transformed the structure of the United States, an example of the ways that scholars of immigration have shifted attention from social history to the state.

Rasmussen's account of citizenship in the Civil War and Reconstruction era differs sharply from the traditional view of that period as the pivotal phase in the development of American citizenship. The standard centerpiece is the invention of rights-based citizenship framed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Rights play almost no role in Rasmussen's book. Instead, the Civil War transforms citizenship by strengthening Scandinavian American communities and preparing them for rapid growth. These populations would advance the territorial expansion of the United States and build American influence in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The Scandinavian enclaves would also create new pockets of ethnic difference within the United States, which federal and state officials would address separately from other social groups. America would develop further as an empire rather than a liberal nation-state. The monograph is a thoughtful interpretation of a period and a people, and it should attract wide readership among historians of citizenship and immigration.

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