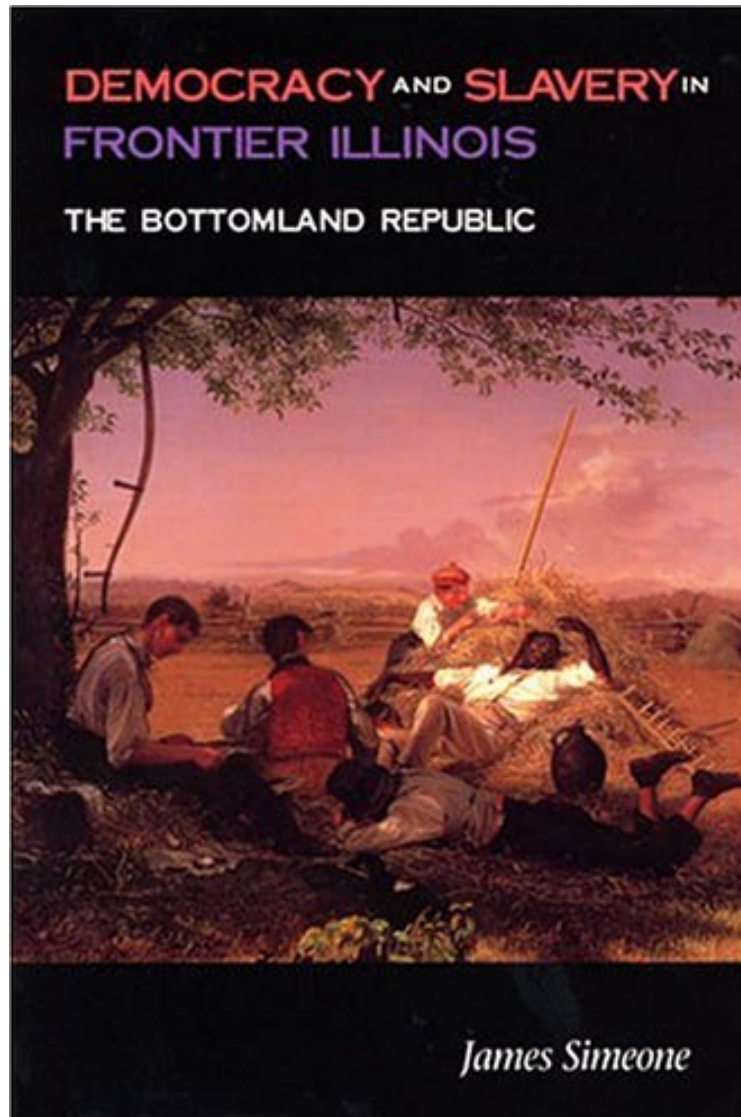


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Democracy and Slavery in Frontier Illinois: The Bottomland Republic

James Simeone

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James Simeone : Democracy and Slavery in Frontier Illinois: The Bottomland Republic before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Democracy and Slavery in Frontier Illinois: The Bottomland Republic:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Illinois History By Casey This is a well-written book about the early days of Illinois history. So much Illinois history focuses on the Civil War to modern times, but this

book explains antebellum Illinois. I have been researching the years before the Civil War since the issue of slavery was a contentious part of American history long before the Civil War. I heard about this book in a bibliography and I was interested because I am a multi-generational Illinoisan. My parents and my grandparents, and even a number of my great-grandparents were life-long Illinois residents. My paternal grandparents were from southern Illinois. I grew-up near Chicago, but I had many relatives in the southern part of the state and visited there often. The state of Illinois is really two worlds, in that Southern Illinois is very different culturally than northern Illinois. This was more obvious in the past. I knew that there were southern sympathies in pre-Civil War Illinois, but this book explained that there was an active pro-slavery movement in the early days of the state and there was a push to make Illinois a slave state when it joined the Union in 1818. This book explains the culture and the politics that helped shape Illinois and is also representative of the border areas of many states in antebellum America. If you love American history you will like this book.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A welcome contribution to 19th century American history

By Midwest Book Review

It was during the 1820s that Illinois experienced one of the earliest and most important battles between the slavery and anti-slavery forces that unleashed riots, arson, and mob violence across the state -- and that would eventually culminate in the American Civil War. James Simeone's supports his contention that the contest over slavery in Illinois prefigured the course of national politics that would lead to four racking years of war with meticulous and scholarly research, revealing and documenting the complexity of the slave problem in fragile American republic. In attempting to bring slavery to a free state, white migrants from southern states hoped to create a "Bottomland Republic" of free and equal white yeoman farmers who could own slaves on the basis of popular sovereignty. Abolitionists allied themselves with the governing class of "aristocrats" against the upstart, pro-slavery migrants in a struggle that would alter the state's political culture and foreshadow the Democratic-Whig cleavage in antebellum politics. Democracy And Slavery In Frontier Illinois: The Bottomland Republic is an impressive and very welcome contribution to 19th century American history in general, and the neophyte struggles between pro- and anti-slavery forces on the Midwestern frontier in particular.

During the 1820s, Illinois witnessed one of the earliest and most important battles between slavery and antislavery forces in the new American republic—one that unleashed riots, arson, and mob violence across the state. In this deeply researched and finely argued book, James Simeone contends that the contest over slavery in Illinois prefigured the course of national politics up to the Civil War, revealing the complexity of the slave problem in the early republic. In attempting to bring slavery to a free state, white migrants from southern states hoped to create a Bottomland Republic of free and equal white yeoman farmers who could own slaves on the basis of "popular sovereignty." Abolitionists thus found themselves allied with the governing class of "aristocrats" against the upstart, proslavery migrants. The struggle permanently changed the state's political culture and foreshadowed the Democratic-Whig cleavage in antebellum politics by posing questions of regional and sectional identity, of the relation between republicanism and the market, and of the role of religion in public life. Democracy and Slavery in Frontier Illinois reveals the paradoxes within the quest for a democracy that also fostered slavery. Placing early Illinois politics in the context of the national politics of the Jacksonian era, it will appeal to readers interested in the political development of the early republic and the midwestern frontier, the roles of race and class in constructing political identity, and the nature of liberal democracy in nineteenth-century America.

"An admirable contribution to our evolving understanding of American political development."—The Journal of American History

"A major contribution to the thorny subject of democracy and slavery in frontier Illinois."—Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society

"Provides bracing and sophisticated understandings of complex, unstably dynamic, and often paradoxical politics and politicized issues in early Illinois."—American Historical