

Identity Politics: A Secessionist Governor Left His Imprint On Missouri's Culture

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Review

IDENTITY POLITICS

A secessionist governor left his imprint on Missouri's culture

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Phillips, Christopher *Missouri's Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West*. University of Missouri Press, 2000-03-01. ISBN 826212727

The past few years have been highly enjoyable ones for anyone with an interest in the Trans-Mississippi Theater. Not only have outstanding studies of Richard Taylor, Nathaniel Lyon, Pea Ridge, and Wilson's Creek been published, but the exploits of William Clarke Quantrill's guerrillas have even attracted Hollywood's attention. Now, in **Missouri's Confederate**, Christopher Phillips offers the first book-length study of Claiborne Fox Jackson, who in 1861 did more than any other man to try to bring about Missouri's secession from the Union, but has been overshadowed by Sterling Price in the hearts and minds of neo-Confederate Missourians ever since.

The appearance of this study is long overdue. Not only were Jackson's life and political career interesting and important, but Phillips demonstrates that they also tell us much about the early history of Missouri. A native Kentuckian, Jackson emigrated to Missouri in 1827. There he attained financial success and social prominence thanks to a series of strategic marriages into the Sappington family of Missouri's Boon's Lick region.

He then went into politics as a stalwart supporter of hard money and Thomas Hart Benton, and became one of the most controversial and important leaders of the Democratic party in Missouri. After his efforts as governor to maneuver Missouri out of the Union were thwarted by Lyon and Frank Blair in 1861, Jackson established a government in exile that, before his death in December 1862, managed to enact a secession ordinance and secure recognition, but not much material support, from the Confederate Congress.

In **Missouri's Confederate**, Phillips offers an informative and painstakingly researched account of Jackson's life, and presents an intriguing analysis of Missouri society, politics, and culture before and during the Civil War. He persuasively demonstrates that Missourians came to develop a southern identity during the Middle Period and he shows how Jackson's endeavors (most prominently his turning against Benton when "Old Bullion" embraced free-soilism in the 1840s and his defiance of the Yankee invaders in 1861) both advanced and reflected Missouri's "southernization."

This is Civil War biography at its best. Balanced in its judgments, cogently argued, and superbly written, **Missouri's Confederate** sheds valuable light on how the Westerners who happened to be born in the South of Benton's Missouri became Southerners who happened to live in the West.

Ethan S. Rafuse teaches history at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Johnson County Community College.