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William Heath. *William Wells and the Struggle for the Old Northwest*. Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2015. xviii + 401 pp. Prologue, epilogue, bibliography and index. HB \$34.95

William Wells lived in two worlds – Native and American – and played an integral part in the settling of the Northwest Territory. The Wells family moved to Kentucky at the end of the American Revolution, and those living in these early outposts struggled to survive. Throughout the Ohio Valley, settlers became entangled in the growing conflict between the Natives and the Americans. Many lived in fear of Native attacks. In March 1784, this fear became a reality for thirteen year old William Wells when captured by Native warriors. After an arduous journey north to Snake-Fish Town, Wells became an adoptee of the Miami Tribe and lived as a full member of the tribe. Yet, “Wells would eventually return to white society while drawing upon his Indian skills to survive and, for a time, thrive in it.” The book *William Wells and the Struggle for the Old Northwest* details the life accomplishments of Wells and how he lived in white and Native culture.

Heath organizes the book into ten chapters along with a prologue and epilogue. He starts the discussion of Wells’s life with the end of his life. Wells died in the War of 1812 during the evacuation of Fort Dearborn. Fired as Indian agent in 1809, Wells lived in Fort Wayne with his family at the start of hostilities between the Natives and Americans living on the frontier. Because of his relationship with Natives and his service in General Anthony Wayne’s Legion and to the government as an Indian agent, government officials consulted with him after the surrender of Fort Mackinac knowing tensions increased daily between the British, Natives, and Americans. The British, now, controlled the Great Lakes and hostile Indians surrounded Fort Dearborn, the only hope for those living there was to secure their safe retreat to Fort Wayne. Wells, hoping to save family members as well as others, intervened. Thirty Miami warriors agreed to escort the Americans through the frontier but would not fight against the hostile tribes.

After arriving at the fort, Wells met with the Natives surrounding the fort. Wells, with Captain Nathan Heald, negotiated a peaceful evacuation. Familiar with Native culture and ever observant, William Wells doubted it would hold. He warned those preparing for the morning retreat of an attack. On the morning of August 15, 1812, Wells, painted for battle as a Miami warrior, led the Americans from the protection of Fort Dearborn. Upset about not receiving supplies and Wells’s relationship with the Americans, younger Potawatomi warriors viewed Wells as a traitor to his adoptive people and after the attack started quickly surrounded and killed him. The account of Wells’s last days not only details his important role in shaping the Northwest Territory as both an Indian and white person but shares the important story of settling the Northwest Territory. Not a typical pioneer because of his adoption, Wells moved within the complex social and political worlds of the frontier.

Chapters Three through Nine detail Wells's life dedicated to the service of the United States government. At the time of his death, Wells's family equally received a hefty inheritance and several acres of land, a mark of success for anyone living on the frontier. William Wells excelled as a Miami warrior and married Sweet Breeze, the daughter of Little Turtle, who was the Miami chief and leader of the Western Confederacy. After fighting with Little Turtle in Harmar's Defeat and St. Clair's Defeat, Wells re-united with his older brother, Kentucky militiaman Captain Samuel Wells. Turning away from his Native life, Wells became a spy for the American Army. His exceptional knowledge of the land, fluency in several Native languages, and understanding of the Native position proved invaluable to General Anthony Wayne. Following Washington's Indian Wars, Wells continued to serve political leaders as an Indian agent at Fort Wayne. Heath argues, "By switching sides, Wells was both committing an act of betrayal and making a rational choice founded in self-interest" (154). Living on the frontier required the ability to provide for one's self and family. Understanding the strength of the American government, the culture, and the thirst for land, Wells placed his family in the best position for success.

Heath tirelessly researched Wells' life story. He combed through scholarly works as well as primary sources detailing the unique and personal history of William Wells. Wonderfully written, *William Wells and the Struggle for the Old Northwest* is a must read for anyone interested in frontier life, the relationship between Natives and settlers, Washington's Indian Wars, and/ or the War of 1812. The life of William Wells exemplifies Richard White's *The Middle Ground*. Adding to the scholarly field, Heath helps to complete the story of settlement and provides an amazing example of the "intricate system of coexistence" (400) between Natives and Americans on the Ohio Valley frontier.

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