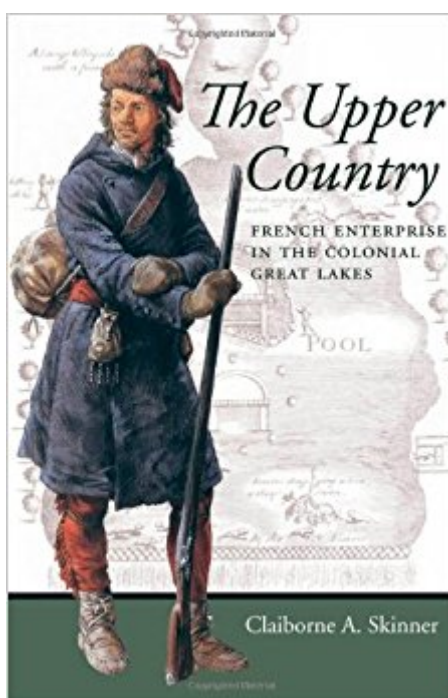


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# The Upper Country: French Enterprise In The Colonial Great Lakes (Regional Perspectives On Early America)



## Synopsis

The Upper Country melds myth and conventional history to provide a memorable tale of French designs in the middle of what became the United States. Putting the reader on the battlefields, at the trading posts, and on the rivers with voyageurs and their allies from the Indian nations, Claiborne Skinner reveals the saintly missionaries and jolly fur traders of popular myth as agents of a hard-nosed, often ruthless, imperial endeavor. Skinner's engaging narrative takes the reader through daily life at posts like Forts Saint Louis and Michilimackinac, illuminates the complexities of interracial marriage with the courtship of Michel Aco at Peoria, and explains how France's New World adventurism played a role in the outbreak of the Seven Years War and the beginning of the modern era. In this story, many of the traditional heroes and villains of American history take on surprising roles. The last Stuart kings of England seem shrewd and even human; George Washington makes his debut appearance on the stage of history by assassinating a French officer and plunging Europe into the first truly global war. From unthinkable hardship to dreams of fur trade profits, this fascinating exploration sheds new light on France and its imperial venture into the Great Lakes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A broad and compelling synthesis of the history of New France." (Rebecca Nutt *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*) "An engaging traditional narrative of the expansion of New France." (Leslie Choquette *Business History Review*) "A lively and lucid work of historical synthesis... Skinner's

mining and close reading of primary sources, along with his well-written and concise narrative, brings the historical actors and events to life." (Justin M. Carroll *Annals of Iowa*) "Recommended. General readers and undergraduates." (Choice) "Skinner... knows his subject well. The Upper Country is a straightforward narrative of familiar milestones of the French expansion in the Great Lakes and the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys." (Andrew Cayton *Reviews in American History*) "Skinner's ambitious survey history of the upper country is timely... One major contribution this book makes is that it will likely expose more American students to the notion that the history of America is not just the story of the British colonists." (Sara E. Chapman *H-France*) "Skinner provides a welcome introduction to many of those who made the Upper Country an important part of colonial North America... For those needing an introduction to the Upper Country of New France, this a good place for you to begin your quest." (David Curtis Skaggs *Northwest Ohio History*) "Provides a fine, detailed analysis of French efforts to appropriate this region, to control and extract the greatest possible benefit from it, all the while emphasizing the importance of Amerindian alliances in both exploiting this region and in denying access to the British." (Jean Lamarre *Canadian Historical Review*) "The French enterprise in the Upper Country was complex. Still, Skinner makes admirable sense of it within about two hundred pages by using both American and French historiographies to present a work that accurately summarizes the innovative research of the past two decades on this topic. In *The Upper Country* Skinner offers a survey that will be of great help to undergraduate students not only in the United States but in Canada as well." (Guillaume Teasdale *Michigan Historical Review*) "Skinner is particularly adept at expressing the shifting dynamic of French-Indian affairs and the fur trade, as well as the movements of allied forces in response to wars with the Fox, Chickasaw, and Natchez... An affordable, lively, well-mapped, and reasonably comprehensive synthesis of events in the upper country on the eve of a war that ultimately determined control of a continent." (Michael F. Dove *Itinerario: European Journal of Overseas History*) "Claiborne Skinner's *The Upper Country* offers a succinct overview of one of the great, if too often untold, theaters of North American history." (Daniel Samson *Enterprise and Society*) "An informative volume that would be a useful tool for the teaching of early Canadian, American, or North American pasts." (Thomas A. Rumney *Historical Geography*) "A historical narrative that is very readable, engaging, and coherent... What Skinner accomplishes in less than two hundred pages is really quite remarkable." (Gregory Kennedy *H-French-Colonial*) "A great analysis of the French colonial model and an historiographic leap forward... The best and most reliable synthesis I have read on the subject yet." (Denys Delâge, *Université Laval*) "A very useful synthesis... From this story of an embattled Pax Gallica emerge larger-than-life characters

like Nicolas Perrot, Duluth, Tonti 'Iron Hand,' Cadillac, Louvigny, the Huron Kondiaronk, and the Iroquois Black Kettle – important men too often neglected in American historiography." (Gilles Havard, author of *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century*) "The Upper Country presents an impressive scope of the past in an easy-to-read, accessible style that is sometimes laced with wonderfully dry humor. Clearly a passionate labor of love, it is a story masterfully told which brings this era and its participants to life again." (Timothy J. Kent, historian, author, living-history researcher) "An excellent book." (Dale Miquelon, University of Saskatchewan) "An easily accessible handbook for historians." (Benjamin G. Scharff) "An informative volume." (Thomas A. Rumney *Historical Geography*) "Skinner's work is a superb, even masterful, synthesis that testifies to the importance of New France and the history of French colonization to the overarching narrative of early America." (Bryan Rindfleisch *H-Canada*)

Claiborne A. Skinner is an instructor of history and social science at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy.

This is a frustrating book to read. It covers a lot of history in a few short pages. I just finished Chapter 3. Apparently, Cadillac has been appointed commandant of Michilimackinac. That was mentioned in passing while discussing the denouement of the conflict between the Iroquois and the Hurons. I see that the next couple chapters will cover another 30 or 40 years. The maps are there, but I can't say they're very good. For instance, the Ottawa River plays a big role in the conflict with the Iroquois. It would be nice to have a zoomed-in view of the Ottawa and its features mentioned in the text. The faults lie probably not so much with the author as with the publisher/editor. If you're going to do a survey of this time and place any justice, you need some heft in the text and graphics. The other possibility is to cut the time span covered by the text. Maybe I'll have to read Parkman to get the details...

I decided to read *The Upper Country: French Enterprise in the Colonial Great Lakes* because part of my husband's family is French Canadian. The earliest of his family group came to Canada from Rouen, France around 1650. I was curious to know what was going on west of the Appalachians before the French and Indian War when George Washington stepped into history. Having been educated in the U.S., I had learned almost nothing about Canadian history but because I grew up in the Pacific Northwest, I was curious about fur trade and how it affected the

east coast. Claiborne Skinner's book enlightened me on these topics and many others like the people of the First Nation and their use of agriculture, the struggles of the fur trading economy and other extractive pursuits, politics and the attitude toward colonial North America and other ideas that had never occurred to me. When I first reviewed the book I was pretty sure it would not be just a military history but there are many military skirmishes and battles detailed in the book which are to me tedious and confusing. Still, there are enough interesting, well written chapters about the people and how they lived to hold my interest.

FRENCH DID WELL WITH NATIVES, SUPERIOR TO THE ENGLISH.

The title implies Lake Superior - Lake Winnipeg and the subtitle says Great Lakes. In fact, the book is mostly about the French on the Mississippi. The coverage is spotty. He is very good in some places where he has done research or found a good source. His bibliography implies that there is no good academic study of the region. There are a number of other popular studies which I have not read. This is a good popular history and a good source for obscure things like the Fox wars and the Chickasaw Wars.

For my Wife this is about her relatives.

Interesting book but an abbreviated "read". Worth the price and time.

I originally read this because I had taken a class taught by the writer. I'm not a history guy by any stretch, but I just enjoyed his class a lot and was curious what his book would be like. I wasn't disappointed. The book's narrative like structure pulled me in. As an Illinoisan, this is part of my local history I was not really aware of, and I'm glad to have read it. The number of to be verbs per page is also very appropriate for this caliber of writing. Truly some pithy erudition.

Excellent.

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