remained weak. Settlement of Pennsylvania and Virginia's borders clarified lines of political authority, and "the flimsy frontier state began to gain traction" (157). Yet violence built through the 1780s as Virginia encouraged settlement in Kentucky and the Confederation Congress destabilized the region through policy and ineptitude. Harper concludes his study with the new government under the Constitution using its fiscal powers to fund military campaigns that seemed to certify its control of the region. Neglected in the final chapter is the influence of state building in Canada because Harper treats the "composite British empire" as having "collapsed" in 1776 rather than continuing to evolve (176).

To be clear, there is not much successful state building in this book. Many westerners sought "the backing of an effective state," but efforts to extend the power of states led to outcomes that "escaped the control" of state officials as westerners of all stripes "twisted official policies to serve their own ends" (127, 141, 146). The most successful state-building efforts seemingly came with institutional developments that are not a part of this study and only briefly summarized (156–57) and after ratification of the Constitution, which is addressed only briefly in the closing pages of the final chapter. In some respects, this fits with Harper's exploration of state building from below, how governments "cast a long shadow" even when they might appear to be "failed state[s]" (146, 178). But it's a bit unsatisfying because it falls short of bridging the gap between state-building failures and successes. Notwithstanding this critique, Harper's study is an admirable contribution to the historiography of American expansionism and early state building in the Ohio valley.

*Creating the Land of Lincoln: The History and Constitutions of Illinois, 1778–1870*, by Frank Cicero Jr. Urbana and Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2018. xv, 270 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. $29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Todd E. Pettys holds the H. Blair and Joan V. White Chair in Civil Litigation at the University of Iowa College of Law. He is the author of *The Iowa State Constitution* (2018).

Casting about for a new writing project, Frank Cicero Jr.—a partner at the Kirkland & Ellis law firm in Chicago—stumbled across a sentence in a century-old book about the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The sentence noted that, when seeking admission to the Union in 1818, Illinois initially was slated to have a northern boundary falling far south of the future Chicago. With further investigation, Cicero learned that one man—Nathaniel Pope, the Illinois Territory's delegate to Congress—single-handedly persuaded the country's political leaders to move the new

state's uppermost border much farther up. Those long-forgotten actions by Pope and a compliant Congress set the stage for Illinois to become a history-shaping, Lincoln-producing microcosm of the nation's nineteenth-century tensions between North and South. Cicero was hooked, and *Creating the Land of Lincoln* is the result.

After devoting the first chapter to Pope and other prominent individuals and events in Illinois's pre-statehood history, Cicero structures the book's narrative around Illinois's four nineteenth-century constitutional conventions and the three ratified constitutions they produced. The formula works well, because those conventions—held in 1818, 1847, 1862, and 1870—provided Illinoisans with periodic opportunities to assess their values, quarrel over their conflicts, and determine where compromise was and was not possible.

The conventions' delegates sparred over a host of issues, ranging from gubernatorial vetoes to non-citizen immigrants' right to vote. Just as in Iowa and many other states during that period, some of the most persistent conflicts came over issues of race. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 had banned slavery in the region, but slavery culture managed to take root in Illinois nevertheless. One way it did so (as Cicero compellingly explains) was through hereditary indentured servitude, a brutally enforced system of trafficking in coerced human labor, profiting from servants' offspring, and holding people to service for periods often reaching the full duration of their lives. As for free men and women of African descent, leaders in Illinois (like their counterparts in Iowa) denied them the vote and other core civil rights and even tried to bar them from settling there.

In Illinois, as elsewhere, the tide would not begin to turn against explicitly racist laws of this sort until Illinois's own Stephen Douglas provoked a national backlash in 1854 by shepherding the Kansas-Nebraska Act through Congress. That legislation repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and gave settlers in vast swaths of territory the power to decide whether to permit slavery within their borders. It was the Kansas-Nebraska Act that galvanized those who would establish the Republican Party and that revived Abraham Lincoln's own interest in politics, setting him on a course that would lead him through his historic debates with Douglas and, later, to the nation's presidency.

Cicero's carefully researched and engagingly written book deserves attention from novices and scholars alike. The book should especially appeal to those interested in the nineteenth-century politics of race in the Midwest, the forces that placed Douglas and Lincoln on the nation's political stage, and the early legal history of one of America's most populous states. For Iowans who know a bit about their own state's past,

reading *Creating the Land of Lincoln* is akin to touring a house that sits a block or two from your own: you become better sensitized to the hallmarks of homes in your neighborhood and to the range of options that their builders believed they possessed.

One area in which Cicero might have done more to help readers draw interjurisdictional comparisons is in his treatment of financial institutions. When discussing the 1848 convention, he describes Illinois Democrats' fierce opposition to banks. Their opposition is easier to fathom if one knows about the regional and national circumstances that helped provoke it. President Andrew Jackson, a Democrat, successfully blocked congressional efforts to extend the charter of the Second Bank of the United States beyond 1836 even though the bank's notes had provided the nation with a fairly reliable form of paper currency. After the bank closed its doors, state and private banks proliferated, flooding the market with notes—many of them worthless or of questionable value. In Iowa, Illinois, and other states, citizens heatedly debated whether banks brought them more evil than good.

When judged in light of what Cicero *has* put between his book's covers, however, this is a mere quibble. *Creating the Land of Lincoln* is wonderfully rewarding. And who knows? Some of its sentences might inspire at least a few readers to launch new writing projects of their own.

*Wired into Nature: The Telegraph and the North American Frontier,* by James Schwoch. The History of Communication Series. Urbana and Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2018. ix, 248 pp. Maps, illustrations, graphs, notes, bibliographical references, index. $99.00 hardcover, $24.95 paperback, $22.46 ebook.

Reviewer Roy Alden Atwood is Distinguished Professor and Vice Rector at Nehemiah Gateway University, Bucimas, Pogradec, Albania. He is the author of "Interlocking Newspapers and Telephone Directories in Iowa, 1900–1917" (*Annals of Iowa*, 1984) and "Routes of Rural Discontent: Rural Free Delivery in Southeastern Iowa, 1899–1917" (*Annals of Iowa*, 1986).

The ambiguous title of this ambitious history of the telegraph is intentional. It traces across five densely packed chapters the interwoven threads that linked the new electrical communication technology to its natural and social environments on the western frontier and the political, military, commercial, and cultural forces and fortunes that motivated it through nineteenth-century North America.

Drawing on nearly 100 years' worth of government documents and other primary sources, the author describes initially how the construction of the early telegraph networks "wired into nature" in the simple