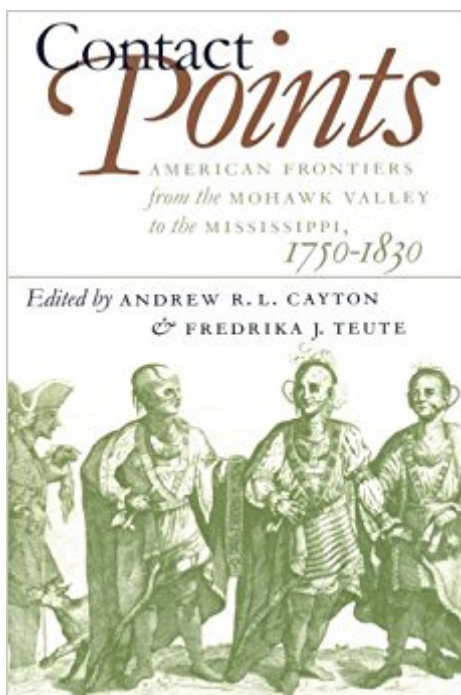


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# Contact Points: American Frontiers From The Mohawk Valley To The Mississippi, 1750-1830 (Published By The Omohundro Institute Of Early American ... And The University Of North Carolina Press)



## Synopsis

The eleven essays in this volume probe multicultural interactions between Indians, Europeans, and Africans in eastern North America's frontier zones from the late colonial era to the end of the early republic. Focusing on contact points between these groups, they construct frontiers as creative arenas that produced new forms of social and political organization. Contributors to the volume offer fresh perspectives on a succession of frontier encounters from the era of the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania, New York, and South Carolina to the Revolutionary period in the Ohio Valley to the Mississippi basin in the early national era. Drawing on ethnography, cultural and literary criticism, border studies, gender theory, and African American studies, they open new ways of looking at intercultural contact in creating American identities. Collectively, the essays in *Contact Points* challenge ideas of either acculturation or conquest, highlighting instead the complexity of various frontiers while demonstrating their formative influence in American history. The contributors are Stephen Aron, Andrew R. L. Cayton, Gregory E. Dowd, John Mack Faragher, William B. Hart, Jill Lepore, James H. Merrell, Jane T. Merritt, Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, Elizabeth A. Perkins, Claudio Saunt, and Fredrika J. Teute.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

[An] excellent volume."Journal of Southern History"  
"This is a must read for those with interests in new perspectives on Native cultures."  
"Journal of the West"  
"One of the best collections to date on the

history of early American frontiers and Indian-white relations."Wisconsin Magazine of History"A major contribution to the historiography of early North America. Their theoretical insights will enrich cultural history."Journal of American History"An impressive sampling of a fresh wave of scholarly investigation into the first transmontane expansion of American society."Journal of the Early Republic"An excellent volume."Journal of Southern History"

A major contribution to the historiography of early North America. Their theoretical insights will enrich cultural history in general and help conceptually remake the term 'frontier.'--Journal of American HistoryAn impressive sampling of a fresh wave of scholarly investigation into the first transmontane expansion of American society.--Journal of the Early RepublicThe essays provide a good example of the current scholarship on North American frontiers. The book would be an excellent addition to any course on western, early American, Native American, or ethnic history and should be an important voice in the continuing debates on the nature of the frontier(s) in North American history.--North Carolina Historical ReviewContact Points provides compelling evidence that the most interesting things often happen on the borders. This volume is a wonderful guide not only to the convergence of peoples on the frontiers of North America but also to the convergence of several interesting strands of contemporary historical scholarship.--Richard White, University of WashingtonOne of the best collections to date on the history of early American frontiers and Indian-white relations.--Wisconsin Magazine of HistoryAt a time when historians of the trans-Mississippi West have been asserting that nothing good can come from studying frontier history any longer, historians of the cis-Mississippi East have been quietly proving the contrary: one cannot hope to understand the colonial and early national history of the United States without paying close attention to the backcountry. Cayton and Teute's Contact Points is an indispensable guide to an exciting and pathbreaking body of scholarly work that is rapidly redefining the way we think about the frontier in American history.--William Cronon, University of Wisconsin-MadisonThis is a must read for those with interests in new perspectives on Native cultures.--Journal of the WestStimulating reading for those interested in race relations and the early American West.--William & Mary Quarterly[An] excellent volume.--Journal of Southern HistoryThis collection represents some of the best recent work on colonial frontiers in the eastern half of what is now the United States. . . . All of these thought-provoking essays, whether focused on conflict, negotiation, exclusion, or exchange, describe the frontier as a complex and contested process. This book will intrigue both new students and seasoned scholars of early America.--Western Historical QuarterlyFrontiers, zones of interaction, are now central in early American history. This collection is essential reading

on the world of fluid boundaries and negotiated identities that historians are finding in these culturally complex and contested spaces.--Karen Ordahl Kupperman, New York University

Collection of essays from various historians. Essays themselves should be reviewed on a case by case basis, but the book is helpful as a whole. My only complaint is that I feel a book comprised of various essays should start each chapter with an abstract, which this does not.

Contact Points provides an excellent collection of essays from top ethno historians including James Axtell, Jane Merritt, Claudio Saunt, and many more. Their topics cover a wide range of years and areas all over the eastern seaboard and out into Missouri and the Great Lakes. The general idea of the book is to examine the "frontier" that has been defined in a variety of ways throughout this scholarship. In this case the frontier is defined as a nebulous area where two or more cultures come together. The original frontier thesis proposed by Frederick Jackson Turner is in need of revision and this book seeks to offer an explanation. While no one book provides the answer this one does show a reasonable account for defining that frontier. There are strong and weak essays in this book and some don't follow the theme of the frontier as closely as they could but overall it is an excellent survey. This combines many of the top minds on various tribes and explores how the Native Americans and Euroamerican interacted in the colonial and postcolonial world. Some of the topics included: A look at the Delaware, Iroquois and Moravian interactions at Shamokin; A look at the Delaware interactions with the Proprietors and Quakers in Bethlehem; The changing role of women in Creek society; The role race played in interactions between slaves, whites and Indians; How memory is affected by the events of the colonial era; and many more.

Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, now over a century old, continues to spark debate on the concept of frontier to America, particularly in Early America. The editors of this compilation point out that the contributors to the volume are challenging Turner's view as too narrow in scope; instead, desiring to expand what constitutes "frontier," based on numerous issues such as conflict, race and environment. The essayists in this volume attempt to expand the, "...fundamentally flawed [thesis] in its ethnocentrism, triumphalism, gender bias, and linearity," that Turner presented in his paper. "Revisionist" history, by the editors own admission, seeking to expand the concept of "frontier" by exploring what the term meant to different groups. The very first question raised came on the very first page of the essay when the editors of this work discuss the use of the term "frontier." They argue that the term "frontier" became significant only after the American Revolution. Prior to the

revolution, "backcountry" was used most often and that the concepts changed in the change in terminology. This made me wonder, is it true that the concept changed at this point, or it is merely a change of terminology while the concept is largely the same for both terms? Another point that I questioned is found a few pages later. The editors wrote, "Elites extended their control into border areas by relying on the labor of lower-status whites to occupy, defend, and clear the land." I believe, goes against the greater part of the historiography written about frontier settlers. As Edmund Morgan pointed out in *The Birth of the Republic: 1763-89* (3rd Ed.), the colonists were always distrustful of government intervention, which is one of the root causes of the American Revolution. Gary Nash, in his latest work, *The Unknown Revolution*, gave numerous illustrations on how those on the frontier resisted government interference, in a myriad of different forms, for a myriad of different reasons. Thus, I find myself wondering if the elites so in control on the frontier or if, as is the general trend, those on the frontier wanted to be left alone and fought against intervention by elites. Onto the actual essays. The essayists contained within tackle the concept of "frontier" from different perspectives, including cultural and social history, political and diplomatic history, linguistic theory, and women's history. All of the essayists tackle primary source extensively to get to the root nature of perceptions and relationships between Native Americans and Colonists. Some essays are better than others. James H. Merrell's essay, "Shamokin, 'the very seat of the Prince of Darkness': Unsettling the Early American Frontier, stands out as one of the better essays, with William B. Hart, "Black 'Go-Betweens' and the Mutability of 'Race' Status, and Identity on New York's Pre-Revolutionary Frontier" being the weakest of the volume. Why? Well, Merrell points out all the differing cultures that could meet up in a given locale and shows how the clash of those many cultures could affect the perspective of those living in that region. It could be, to say the least, a very disconcerting experience. In Hart's essay, I find myself in slight disagreement with the author on the statement, "Grant's inability to find 'genuine Indians' at Johnson Hall indicates that she perceived the world in racial terms." (94) I find myself in slight disagreement because I wonder if she did not perceive the world in cultural terms. She went to see "genuine Indians," who, she imagined, would be dressed up in traditional native garb. She found them dressed much like her host, Sir William Johnson. It is my belief that she wanted to see the culture, not the race of the Indians. As the race of the Indians could not disappear because of the color of their skin, their clothing could change. In Grant's mind - the clothing was the identity of the natives, thus the reason Grant was disappointed. Cayton's own essay within the book is one where he is imposing his own modern political viewpoints onto the Treaty of Grenville and the early leaders of America. From his wording, he makes the government of our early nation seem sinister and aristocratic, almost seemingly to

operate without the consent of the government, so red flags in his essay resound. So, the three star rating does represent the overall presentations contained within the book. Some are good, others, weak. However, you should get a great deal out of this book if you have a basic understanding into Early American history.

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