

In the end, their work provides a concise, yet comprehensive look at the fastest growing minority group in the United States.

The geographical center of this book is Aztlán, the legendary homeland of the Aztecs, traditionally believed to be north of the Valley of Mexico. Curiously, De Leon and del Castillo extend the reach of this homeland all the way to northern California. By including such a vast region in their scope of vision, the authors establish a somewhat controversial facet to their examination of the way Mexican society and culture has changed—and been changed by—life in the United States.

One key theme to which the authors repeatedly return is the group identity that provided stability to Mexican American culture in the United States. From the *barrios* and *colonias* of the territories lost to the United States in the “American conquest” to the creation of the “Mexican American Generation” in the 1930s and 1940s and the efforts of politically active organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens and the United Farm Workers, Mexican Americans have relied on a group identity to assist them in retaining their cultural heritage in the United States. Throughout the period covered in the book, the Mexican American family, and the manifest changes it faced in the modern era, has been the backbone of Chicano life in this country. One can see in the Chicano family a microcosm of the pressures and tensions within which the Mexican American community has endured from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.

For the teacher, this book provides a great deal of material for the classroom. The detailed analysis, particularly of both the struggle to preserve Chicano cultural heritage and of changes and evolution of the Mexican American family, brings new light to little-examined elements of Latino studies. Instructors of college and university survey courses in Mexican American History could well use this book as a general text, although the book’s breadth requires that such instructors supplement the book with more in-depth monographs on specific topics or eras.

*North to Aztlán* deserves a place on any Mexican American studies bookshelf, although it also has an ease of prose that would make it a popular book as well.

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**Joseph A. Conforti. *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Pp. 248. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 0-8018-8254-0.**

One of the many virtues of this compact, but multi-layered, survey of colonial New England is that it never forgets that the past had a past. A major theme of *Saints and Strangers* is how successive generations of colonial New Englanders located themselves in time and place through reinterpretations of the roles and deeds of their ancestors. Depending on developments in both North America and in the home

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country, New Englanders saw themselves either as a new strain with a special mission or as British, through and through, playing their part in the burgeoning empire.

In the process of reinterpreting their past, colonial New Englanders engendered a number of enduring myths that Conforti, whose previous works include books on Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Hopkins, and New England identity, takes great care to set right. His tone is not so much contrarian as corrective, in a balanced, professorial way: "No white-steeped meeting houses or manicured greens graced seventeenth-century New England towns. Even during the first generation, New England settlements were not as compact as is often assumed, nor were they quite the 'peaceable kingdoms' that later generations, including some historians, have imagined." Conforti historicizes the subsequent iconization of Plymouth Rock (initially so unrevered that a wharf was built around it in the 1740s), John Winthrop's "City on a Hill" trope (over two hundred years went by before the original sermon of 1630 was published), and Thanksgiving (rather than a Pilgrim-prim event, the first one was "disorderly, even raucous"). By doing so, he shows the birth of the American sentiment that, paraphrasing John F. Kennedy, "we are all New Englanders," a sentiment that still survives, if in much attenuated form.

*Saints and Strangers* is comprehensive in scope, although as a survey it must limit elaboration and detail in most areas. The main events and trends in the fields of political, economic, social, and intellectual history are covered through an organizational pattern that skillfully meshes chronological and topical sections. Major narrative threads, in addition to the competing claims of an American identity or a British identity, include developments in Calvinist and post-Calvinist theology and practice and the complex tensions between the founding quest for a model society and an increasingly secular and diverse region. There is also ample discussion of Native Americans, African Americans, and women. Northern New England, which is sometimes neglected in historical accounts, receives considerable space. Well-selected quotations and statistics support the text and Conforti has a good eye for the small telling fact, such as, "Even Native dogs succumbed to European canine microbes that the colonists' pets brought to the New World."

Better copy editing would have prevented a few miscues in a generally admirable work. In a single paragraph on page 27 there is a typo and a missing clause or sentence.

This valuable book, which includes an extensive bibliographical essay, belongs on the reference shelf of anyone teaching colonial history or the first half of the two semester American history survey. Written in a clear, straightforward style and jargon free, it is very accessible to students and could be one of the textbooks in either of these courses. It would be especially suitable in New England area colleges.

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