

The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal

By David M Wrobel

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A lucid and rewarding synthesis of cultural and western history. -- Richard W. Etulain, author of Writing Western History. Wrobel makes a fine contribution to the study of myth by analyzing the anxiety, or angst, Americans felt about the frontier in the half-century after 1890. This is an excellent book on a big subject, executed with much skill. -- Western Historical Quarterly. Direct, admirably brief, and crisply written. -- Journal of American History.

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Editorial Review

Review
"A landmark in the debate over the significance of the frontier in American history." -- *Kansas History*

"A stimulating and valuable contribution to American intellectual history and to the history of the American West as well." -- *Nebraska History*

"An excellent book on a big subject, executed with much skill." -- *Western Historical Quarterly*

"An indispensable analysis of an essential part of the national psyche." -- *American Studies*

"One of the most important books of recent years in the history of American ideas." -- *Journal of Arizona History*

"Wrobel writes with clarity and richness and uses abundant examples." -- *Great Plains Quarterly*

From the Back Cover
The American frontier was officially closed, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1890. Yet more homesteads were settled in the first few decades of the twentieth century than in the entire nineteenth century. "Frontier anxiety", then, really was caused, not by the closing of the frontier, but by the perception that the frontier was closing, argues David Wrobel. As early as the 1870s and through the 1930s, many Americans believed an important era had ended and worried about how this closure would affect society and democracy. In this book, Wrobel illustrates more than just how the perceived demise of the frontier brought about a longing for wilderness and the pioneer spirit. He emphasizes how it influenced debate on public land and immigration policy, expansionism, and the merits of individualistic and cooperative political systems. In addition, he relates how it affected and was affected by such diverse social and political issues as racism, industrialization, irrigation, tenant farming, class struggle, government intervention, and the naturalist movement. Wrobel doesn't focus rigidly on Frederick Jackson Turner or question the originality of Turner's thesis - that the frontier molded the nation's character - as historians have done in the past. Instead he suggests that the writings of Turner and other intellectuals were symptomatic of a frontier anxiety that began to take hold in the 1870s. Concentrating on the notions of these intellectuals over several decades, Wrobel shows how their reactions to the perceived ending of American exceptionalism - created by a unique frontier experience - helped shape the nation's cultural and political future.

About the Author
David M. Wrobel holds the Merrick Chair in Western History at the University of Oklahoma. He is also the author of The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal and Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West.

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