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THE ORIGINS AND PROGRESS OF THE MIDWESTERN HISTORY ASSOCIATION, 2013-2016

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In the modern electronic din of emails and texts and tweets and instant messages it can be difficult to keep track of the long-term trajectory of day-to-day work and ongoing projects. With this difficulty in mind, and for the sake of giving some permanence to the memories of the past few years, I submit this chronicle about recent efforts to revive the field of Midwestern history via the creation of the Midwestern History Association. I hope this review and the commentary and recommendations included therein prove useful to the leaders in the field and the emerging scholars who are seeking to shape the field and make it their own.

The precise origins of the Midwestern History Association, or MHA, can be traced to a 2013 meeting at the 48th annual Northern Great Plains History Conference, which was held that year near the banks of the St. Croix River in Hudson, Wisconsin. More specifically, it can be traced to Buckster's Lounge in the Hudson House Grand Hotel, where, on September 27, 2013, at 4:00 pm, about thirty historians gathered to discuss the status of Midwestern history. Since I had a book about Midwestern history about to be released and several of us were already participating in a panel discussion about the field at the conference, I sent out an email to the broader group of

¹ Jon K. Lauck is the outgoing president of the Midwestern History Association.

conference goes inviting them to the bar for a drink to discuss these matters.² Attendance and interest was much higher than I expected and the discussion very fruitful. Many agreed with the need to bolster the field and understood the benefits of a new regionally-oriented journal to publish work on the Midwest. A decision was made to continue to have meetings about these issues at other conferences, to map out plans for a new journal, and to reconvene at the 2014 Northern Great Plains History Conference to make some final decisions on how to proceed. All of this was done under the auspices of what we called the Midwestern History Working Group.

In subsequent weeks, the Midwestern History Working Group convened another meeting at the Western History Association, which was being held in Tucson. On Friday October 11 at 4:00 pm in the Azul lounge at the Westin La Paloma Resort another thirty or so scholars participated in a lengthy discussion about how to bolster the field of Midwestern history. Long-time University of Nebraska historian John Wunder gave a particularly impassioned argument for rejuvenating the field.³ The following spring, the Midwestern History Working Group convened yet another panel at the Missouri Valley History Conference at the Embassy Suites in downtown Omaha to again discuss the state of the field and to seek input from more scholars.⁴ Given the strong responses to the listening sessions organized after the first meeting in Hudson, a vote was taken at the fall 2014 meeting of the Northern Great Plains History Conference in Sioux Falls to formally establish the Midwestern History Association.⁵ During a meeting at 8:00 am on October 11 in room Palisades III of the downtown Holiday Inn, after formally voting to create the MHA, votes were also taken to adopt by-laws and elect officers and board members.⁶

² The panel was entitled “The Current State of Midwestern History as a Field of Study: A Panel Discussion” and featured Kim M. Gruenwald (Kent State University) as chair and Michael Steiner (California State University-Fullerton), Zachary Michael Jack (North Central College), Genevieve G. McBride (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), James P. Leary (University of Wisconsin-Madison), and the author as panelists. My then forthcoming book was entitled *The Lost Region: Toward a Revival of Midwestern History* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013).

³ For more on Wunder’s interests in regionalism, see Jon K. Lauck, “Interview of John R. Wunder,” *Great Plains Quarterly* vol. 35, no. 3 (Summer 2015), 289-99.

⁴ Margery Beck, “Historians Want to Revive Study of the Midwest,” Associated Press, March 9, 2014. The Omaha panel was entitled “The State of Midwestern History” and featured Catherine Cocks (University of Iowa Press), Timothy Mahoney (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Kurt E. Leichtle (University of Wisconsin-River Falls), Kenneth H. Wheeler (Reinhardt University), John Miller (South Dakota State University), and Mike Allen (University of Washington-Tacoma) and was chaired by the author.

⁵ The motion to form the MHA was made by Joseph Fitzharris (St. Thomas University) and seconded by Lawrence Larsen (University of Missouri-Kansas City) and it passed unanimously.

⁶ Jennifer Schuessler, “A New Association for Midwestern History,” *New York Times*, October 23, 2014; “Historians Focus on Midwest History,” Associated Press, November 25, 2014. The founding board members of the MHA were Jon Butler (Yale University), Drew Cayton (Miami University of Ohio and later Ohio State University), Catherine Cocks (University of Iowa Press), John Hudson (Northwestern University), Zachary Michael Jack (North Central

The first important initiatives of the MHA were outreach and alliance building. In addition to building a website and assembling an email list of those who wanted to be informed of the MHA's activities, the MHA took advantage of social media to reach out to the broader world of historians and other scholars and interested parties. Twitter and Facebook allowed the MHA to consistently reach out to a broader universe of people at virtually no expense, which proved to be a highly advantageous organizing tool that pre-Internet efforts to organize or revive an academic field did not enjoy. From a couple of dozen or so followers in the fall of 2013, the MHA grew to having 1,700 Twitter followers, 1,600 Facebook friends, and 860 people on the MHA email distribution list by the fall of 2016. Younger MHA members and graduate students such as Ted Frantz, Jason Heppler, Maria Howe, Shannon Murray, Joe Otto, Paul Putz, Michael Skaggs, and Kelly Wenig were enormously important to the effort to build a digital infrastructure for the MHA.

This strong digital presence and robust social media activity helped the MHA to demonstrate a significant level of interest in Midwestern history that would allow the organization to build alliances with larger historical organizations. The MHA benefitted from the help of the Organization of American Historians, for example, because the OAH president in 2015 was Yale University historian Jon Butler, who grew up in rural Minnesota and was greatly interested in Midwestern history. The MHA had a special symbiosis with the OAH since the OAH had itself been founded as a Midwestern history organization and this early OAH emphasis, long-since abandoned, became part of the discussion over the later diminishment of Midwestern history. The MHA organized a panel for the 2015 OAH meeting in St. Louis entitled "Rediscovering the Lost World of Midwestern History."⁷ This panel featured presentations about Midwestern history and spread the word about the new organization to historians at a large conference who had not received the news. With the help of Professor Butler, the MHA was given two permanent slots on

College), Richard Jensen (University of Illinois-Chicago), James Madison (Indiana University), Melissa Marsh (*Great Plains Quarterly*), Paula Nelson (University of Wisconsin-Platteville), David Pichaske (Southwest Minnesota State University), Pamela Riney-Kehrberg (Iowa State University), James Seaton (Michigan State University), Michael Allen (University of Washington-Tacoma), Greg Schneider (Emporia State University), and Robert Wuthnow (Princeton University). When Melissa Marsh stepped down from the board in 2015, she was replaced by Kathy Borkowski of the Wisconsin Historical Society Press. The first officers were Jon Lauck (president), Pamela Riney-Kehrberg (president-elect), and Robert Morrissey (University of Illinois-Urbana)(treasurer). Joe Otto and then Ted Frantz (Secretary), Maria Howe (Communications Director), Kelly Wenig (Social Media Director), and Michael Skaggs (Webmaster) held the MHA's first appointed positions.

⁷ Panelists included Andrew Seal (Yale University)(substituting for Susan Gray of Arizona State University, who was not able to attend), Kristin Hoganson (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), and Annette Atkins (Saint John's University/College of Saint Benedict). The author served as chair.

the OAH program to fill with Midwestern history panels.⁸ The MHA also maintained its close connection to the Western History Association after the Tucson meeting and the MHA president served on the program committee for the 2016 WHA meeting in St. Paul with the assistance of WHA president Johnny Faragher, who had long maintained an interest in the Midwest's history, and incoming WHA president Stephen Aron, who had also written extensively about the early Midwest. The result was several panels related to Midwestern history on the program of the 2016 WHA, which was conveniently held in the Midwest in St. Paul and thus attracted many MHA members. There were several WHA members who thought of the Midwest as the "original West" and believed it fit nicely within the parameters of Western history and regretted that the New Western History had tended to view the West as starting at the 100th meridian. Finally, by working with the American Historical Association's Jim Grossman, who had long been associated with Chicago and the Newberry Library, the MHA was granted the status of an AHA affiliate organization in the fall of 2016. In January 2017, the AHA will feature a panel at its Denver conference entitled "The Future of Midwestern History."⁹

Another crucial alliance developed in 2014 between the MHA and the Hauenstein Center at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. The director of the Hauenstein Center, Gleaves Whitney, was taken with the idea of the need to revive Midwestern history and agreed to work with the MHA to promote and host a conference dedicated to Midwestern history in 2015.¹⁰ The result was the "Finding the Lost Region" conference of June 2015, which led to a book contract with University of Nebraska Press to publish the essays of many of the conference's speakers. Another "Finding the Lost Region" conference was held in June 2016 and featured an even larger number of speakers. Another such conference is planned for June 2017. Having a conference specifically focused on Midwestern history allows scholars to have a prominent platform, to hear about each other's work, to hear serious commentary and criticism, and to generally build the field. Most of the lectures from the Hauenstein Center's Midwest conferences were also posted on Youtube and thus accessible to anyone who might be interested but not able to attend. The generally central

⁸ The OAH blog *Process* also gave space to a piece about the new MHA: <http://www.processhistory.org/jon-lauck-on-the-midwestern-history-association/>

⁹ The panelists will include Jenny Barker-Devine (Illinois College), Paul Stone (University of Minnesota), Stephen Warren (University of Iowa), Bob Morrissey (University of Illinois-Urbana), Andrew Seal (Yale University), and the author as chair.

¹⁰ Kathleen Lavey, "'Flyover States'? No! Midwest, MI are More," *Lansing State Journal*, April 28, 2015.

location of Grand Rapids, Michigan helped to attract historians from smaller schools in the Midwest with limited travel budgets who were interested in Midwestern history, as did the Hauenstein Center's generous decision not to charge admission, and thus Whitney and the Hauenstein Center staff, especially program director Joe Hogan, were essential to fostering a scholarly discourse about the Midwest's history during the MHA's early years.

While the annual Michigan conferences have been critical to the growth of the MHA, the MHA's activities in other venues have also been used to spread word of the organization. The MHA made the decision in its early years to move around its annual organizational meeting (a formal annual meeting is required in the bylaws) to allow for maximum exposure of the organization and to benefit from coordination and overlap with the meetings of existing historical organizations. The first formal meeting was in Sioux Falls in 2014 as part of the Northern Great Plains History Conference; the next was in St. Louis in 2015 in conjunction with the Organization of American Historians; and the 2016 meeting will be held in St. Paul as part of the Western History Association meeting. Whether the MHA wants to continue to piggy back on other historical meetings when it holds its annual meeting or whether it wants to develop a more permanent home will be decided by the MHA leaders in coming years. Whatever is decided, the assistance of other historical organizations in the early stages of the development of the MHA was crucial and these organizations deserve to be thanked and remembered.

In another effort to reach out to and collaborate with related organizations, it should be noted, the MHA added ex-officio representatives for the fields of Midwestern literature and geography and for the world of Midwestern history journals. These representatives were, respectively, Sara Kosiba of the Society for the Study of Midwestern History, geographer Anne Mosher of Syracuse University's Maxwell School, and Virgil Dean, editor of *Kansas History*. I also gave talks to the Mellon-funded Humanities Without Walls project and the Newberry Library, both in Chicago and both potential collaboration partners for MHA activities in future years. Other potential partners include the many non-Midwestern centers which exist to study American regions. The Center for Western Studies at Augustana University, for example, has launched a book project focused on mapping out the borderlands between the Great Plains and the Midwest which will be of great interest to Midwestern historians and to those interested in regionalism more generally.

In order to promote more scholarly publishing about the Midwest and to recognize the work that is already being done, the MHA also felt it was important to develop annual scholarly prizes.

The most important prize created was for the best book on Midwestern history written during a calendar year. At the suggestion of Jon Butler, this prize was named the Jon Gjerde Prize, after the Iowan Jon Gjerde, who received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Minnesota and went on to a successful career at the University of California-Berkeley and wrote important books about the Midwest.¹¹ The first Gjerde Prize, awarded in 2014 for the best book about Midwestern history published in 2013, was given to Aaron Shapiro of the University of North Carolina-Charlotte for *The Lure of the North Woods: Cultivating Tourism in the Upper Midwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), a chronicle of the growth of the tourism industry in northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. The Gjerde Prize for a book published in 2014 was awarded to Brenda Child, an American Studies professor at the University of Minnesota, for *My Grandfather's Walking Sticks: Ojibwe Family Life and Labor on the Reservation* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press). This year's award, for a book published in 2015, went to University of California-Riverside art history professor Jason Weems for *Barnstorming the Midwest: How Aerial Vision Shaped the Midwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). In memory of the long-time Iowa State University history professor Dorothy Schwieder, the MHA also established the Schwieder Prize for best article about Midwestern history during a calendar year.¹² In order to honor a career's work in Midwestern history, the MHA also established the Frederick Jackson Turner Award, named after the first prominent historian the Midwest.¹³ The first three winners of the Turner Award for lifetime achievement in the field of Midwestern history were Margaret Bogue of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, John E. Miller of South Dakota State University, and James Madison of Indiana University.

¹¹ Butler to MHA Board, October 14, 2014. For examples of Gjerde's work on the Midwest, see *The Minds of the West: The Ethnocultural Evolution of the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) and *From Peasants to Farmers: The Migration from Balestrand, Norway, to the Upper Middle West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). The Gjerde Prize committee was chaired by Joseph Fitzharris (St. Thomas University) in 2014, by Andrew Cayton in 2015, and by Annette Atkins in 2016.

¹² The Schwieder Prize committee was chaired by Catherine Cocks in 2014 and 2015 and by Lisa Ossian (Des Moines Area Community College) in 2016. The winner of the 2014 prize for an article published in 2013 was Tiya Miles for "'Shall Woman's Voice Be Hushed?' Laura Smith Haviland in Abolitionist Women's History," *Michigan Historical Review* vol. 39, no. 2 (2013). The winner of the 2015 prize for an article published in 2014 was Doug Kiel for "Untaming the Mild Frontier: In Search of New Midwestern Histories," *Middle West Review* vol. 1, no. 1 (2014). The winner of the 2015 prize for an article published in 2014 was Brie Swenson Arnold of Coe College for "An Opportunity to Challenge the 'Color Line': Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Women's Labor Activism in Late Nineteenth-Century Cedar Rapids, Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* vol. 74 (Spring 2015), 101-82.

¹³ Pamela Riney-Kehrberg chaired all three Turner Prize committees.

Given the warm reception to these first three prizes, in 2015 the MHA decided to expand its prizes in recognition of the crucial role played by public history in the Midwest and in recognition of the need to publish work for a broader audience. The result was the creation of the Alice Smith Prize for Midwestern public history projects, which was named for the long-time director of research at the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Hamlin Garland Prize for popular historical writing about the Midwest, which was named after the prominent early twentieth-century author who grew up in Wisconsin, Iowa, and South Dakota and won the Pulitzer Prize for his writing about Midwestern life.¹⁴ The 2015 Smith Prize for a 2014 public history project was awarded to the “Historyapolis Project” created by Augsburg College scholars and focused on the history of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The 2016 Smith Prize for a 2015 public history project was awarded to the Elgin History Museum for its work on the African American history of Elgin, Illinois. The 2015 Garland Prize for a 2014 publication was awarded to James Sherow and John Charlton for *Railroad Empire Across the Heartland: Rephotographing Alexander Gardner’s Westward Journey* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press) and the 2016 prize for a 2015 publication was awarded to Jeff Manuel for *Taconite Dreams: The Struggle to Maintain Mining on Minnesota’s Iron Range* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Another exciting development for Midwestern history in recent years is the development of new publishing outlets for work on the Midwest. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, just as Indiana University Press was winding down its well-known series on the Midwest and other university presses in the region were experiencing great stress (the University of Missouri Press almost closed, for example), the University of Iowa Press launched its series “Iowa and the Midwest Experience,” which created a critical dynamic space for the publication of books about the Midwest. The service of University of Iowa Press editor Catherine Cocks on the board and committees of the MHA and her participation on various Midwestern history panels has also given the series a higher profile among Midwestern historians. In another sign of growing momentum for the field, Ohio University Press has recently launched the “New Approaches to Midwestern Studies” series with its first book set to be released in December 2016. The Ohio State University Press has also launched a new imprint entitled Trillium (the name is derived from the official state wildflower of Ohio) which will focus on books about Ohio and the Midwest. Truman State University

¹⁴ The Smith Prize committee was chaired by Aaron Shapiro in 2015 and 2016 and the Garland Prize committee was chaired by Kristin Mapel Bloomberg (Hamline University) in 2015 and David Grabitske (Minnesota Historical Society) in 2016. Pamela Riney-Kehrberg suggested the name for the Smith Award.

Press in Missouri has also launched its “American Midwest” series and Hastings College Press in Nebraska has launched the “Rediscovering the American Midwest” series. Indiana University Press has also launched a new imprint entitled Quarry Books focused on Indiana and the Midwest. Rust Belt Chic Press, now Belt Publishing, has also started publishing anthologies about Cleveland, Akron, Youngstown, Detroit, Flint, and other Midwestern industrial cities. These new publication options for Midwestern historians are major leaps forward for the field and will lead to a renaissance of Midwestern history book publishing.

On the journal front, many scholars interested in Midwestern history were very happy to see a long-discussed Midwest-focused journal finally come to fruition when the first issue of *Middle West Review*, a peer-reviewed print journal published by the University of Nebraska Press, rolled off the press during the fall of 2014.¹⁵ This was welcome news indeed after the death of Midwestern history journals in recent decades such as *Mid-America*, *Midwest Review*, *Western Illinois Regional Studies*, and *Upper Midwest History*. The MHA also launched its own online journal entitled *Studies in Midwestern History* in 2015. *Studies* was developed to create a space for articles focused specifically on the mechanics of the field of Midwestern history, for shorter think pieces, and for other work on the Midwest that needed a home. Other, more-literary journals such *Old Northwest Review*, *The New Territory*, *Belt Magazine*, and *Midwest Gothic* have also come on the scene in the past few years. It is safe to say, I think, that we are now experiencing a significant upsurge in interest in Midwestern studies and a corollary increase in writing and publications about the Midwest.¹⁶

The MHA is, I think, an important part of this upsurge. The MHA has made solid progress in its first few years by uniting disparate scholars in a common effort, by reaching out to and collaborating with existing organizations, by continuing to stoke the debate about reviving the field of Midwestern history, by promoting maximum possible accessibility by embracing social media and other electronic resources, and by organizing and promoting many venues in which to discuss work in the field. The launch of the new MHA podcast should allow an additional group of scholars and others interested in the Midwest to learn more about the MHA’s activities and the Midwest’s history. The recent completion of the MHA’s application for non-profit status, made possible by

¹⁵ Margery Beck, “Journal Aims to Stoke Interest in Midwest History,” Associated Press, September 20, 2014.

¹⁶ See Lauck, “Regionalist Stirrings in the Midwest,” *The New Territory: The Magazine of the Lower Midwest* no. 1 (April 2016), 15-17; Andrew Cayton, “Historiography,” in Phil Greasley (ed), *The Dictionary of Midwestern Literature vol. 2: Dimensions of the Midwestern Literary Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 294.

the generous support of former University of Minnesota history department chairman David Good, will hopefully allow the MHA to generate additional income by way of tax-free donations.

Challenges do remain, however. Perhaps the greatest impediment to the growth of the field of Midwestern history is the general atmosphere of gloom in many history departments, which are increasingly under stress due to the loss of history majors, the burgeoning of STEM priorities on many university campuses, adjunctification, and the broader consequences of the decline of tax dollars dedicated to state-funded higher education.¹⁷ Even in a more neutral or advantageous budget environment, however, Midwestern history would still face stiff competition from those seeking additional academic lines for other fields of historical inquiry, which is why historians of the Midwest must continue to make the case for the importance of their field and to note how much their field has been neglected in the past. Midwestern history also continues to suffer from long-standing and persistent skepticism of the field as retrograde and dull and as deserving of its treatment as an intellectual flyover not worthy of the attention of the academy's best minds.

Despite the difficulties that lie ahead, it is good to be ambitious and to set forth some goals that could indicate future success. It would be a great advancement for the field, for example, if the MHA was able to establish some historians of the Midwest at some prominent Ph.D.-granting institutions who will work with graduate students wanting to write dissertations in the field. It is not too much to ask, for example, that prominent institutions such as the University of Minnesota and the University of Michigan have faculty members who specialize in Midwestern history and are able to guide graduate students in the study of the region and to tap the archival resources available at their institutions. Howard Lamar once explained to me how, after the history department at Yale University hired a historian of the American West, a field which had long been dismissed and denigrated by many in academia finally gained some needed respect.¹⁸ Perhaps this too can happen to Midwestern history some day and Midwestern history might be as big and as booming of a field as Western history now is. Another critical step would be the establishment of a serious center for the study of the Midwest which is comparable to the dozens of centers which already exist to study the American West, South, and Great Plains. The conditions now seem ideal for an ambitious university to seize this opportunity. The publication of a series of prominent

¹⁷ Julia Brookins, "New Data Show Large Drop in History Bachelor's Degrees," *Perspectives on History: The Newsmagazine of the American Historical Association* (March 2016).

¹⁸ Jon Lauck, "The Old Roots of the New West: Howard Lamar and the Intellectual Origins of *Dakota Territory*," *Western Historical Quarterly* vol. 39, no. 3 (Autumn 2008), 262.

books (including a standard narrative history of the region which could be used in undergraduate courses) which shape the parameters of the field of Midwestern history is also important and, indeed, is an achievable goal given the new book series being launched which focus on Midwestern history. Tighter cooperation between the MHA and public historians in the Midwest seems like it could also be fruitful given the increasingly active and prominent network of museums and parks in the region.

While all of these steps require long-term planning and the commitment of at least some financial resources, thinking through an intellectual agenda is much less financially burdensome but nonetheless critical to future success. Many would agree, it seems to me, that as a general matter we want to support the organic growth and flowering of the field of Midwestern history and let the work of future scholars ramify in multiple directions. It seems wise to avoid a specific and quasi-codified research agenda for the field, similar to the directives associated with the early New Western History, and instead let a thousand flowers bloom and many voices be heard and varied agendas pursued.¹⁹ This is not a rigid principle, however, and a few exceptions spring to mind. There are a few general topics that should be embraced and wrestled with and made central to the field. First, it is good to discuss the history and process by which the field was laid so low in recent decades as a method of understanding how to build it back up. From this declension story can come many insights into revival, or at least the recovery of Midwestern stories that we are not even aware we have forgotten. Second, while recognizing that there are many legitimate categories of analysis, we might give an extra boost to spatiality, the “sense of situatedness in space,” or the view that life does not unfold in a vacuum but is instead shaped by space and a longing for or a detestation of a place or some feeling in between.²⁰ When studying the Midwest, or any other region, the particular bundle of peculiarities of that place matter. Third, we should take the next step and

¹⁹ The phrase “New Western History” was “born” in September 1989 at a National Endowment for the Humanities-funded meeting of the Santa Fe Trail Association, a meeting that led to the publication of *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 1991), edited by Clyde A. Milner II, Patricia Nelson Limerick, and Charles E. Rankin. Derek Kreck, “Showdown in the New West,” *Denver Post Magazine* (March 21, 1993). Prior to the conference, Patricia Limerick “supplied a useful one-page outline of the [New Western History] movement’s major themes.” Richard Etulain, *Re-Imagining the Modern West: A Century of Fiction, History, and Art* (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1996), 179. The outline is reprinted in Limerick, “What on Earth Is the New Western History?” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* vol. 40, no. 3 (Summer 1990), 62-63. At the Santa Fe conference, Etulain designated Limerick, Richard White, Bill Cronon, and Donald Worster as the New Western History’s “Gang of Four” but recognized Limerick as the movement’s “cheerleader and promoter.” Etulain to Jon Lauck, August 29, 2012.

²⁰ Robert T. Tally Jr., *Spatiality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 14.

recognize that there is indeed some social value in the process of seeking and finding and exploring a place and helping others to do the same.²¹ Fourth, during and after such searches it is fine to concede that spaces and places around the world are distinct, or, in this case, that American regions are varied and that in these variances one can find great “counterhegemonic potential,” or a resistance to the modern mass culture of the metropole.²² Fifth, it is a fine thing to push back against the continuing dismissals of the Midwest as an empty flyover with no history or culture and few economic prospects, a stereotype most recently invoked by Stanford University, which now offers to for pay for MBAs for those who will work in the Midwest, which it designates an “underserved region.”²³ Finally, historians should draw on these suggestions and analyze the formation and evolution of Midwestern identity, a form of analysis which has expanded enormously in recent years and awaits extension to the Midwest.²⁴ These are suggested exceptions to the general rule, I hasten to add, but hardly onerous, it seems to me, and ones that are the basis of broad consensus. The general rule of promoting an atmosphere supportive of all sorts of research on and interpretations of the history of the Midwest remains the highest priority. I am anxious to see it in action in coming years as we seek to perpetuate the revival of interest in the history of the Midwest and forge a new Midwestern history.

²¹ Jon K. Lauck, “Finding the Rural West,” in David Danbom (ed), *Bridging the Distance: Common Issues of the Rural West* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015), 7-34.

²² Philip Joseph, *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2007), 16.

²³ Jeff Charis-Carlson, “Stanford: We’ll Pay Tuition for MBAs Who Promise to Move to the Midwest,” *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, September 30, 2016.

²⁴ Gerald Izenberg, *Identity: The Necessity of a Modern Idea* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).