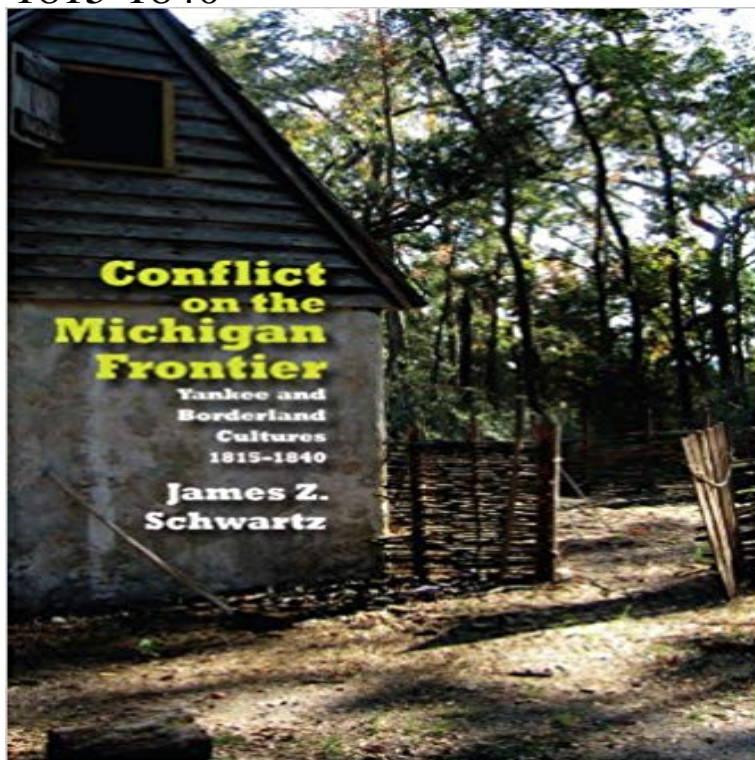


Conflict on the Michigan Frontier: Yankee and Borderland Cultures, 1815-1840



In the early 19th century, the pioneers who came from New England to the Northwest Territory envisioned themselves taming the wilderness. As they cleared the forests for their crops and livestock, these settlers also sought to transform the social landscape for the cultivation of their own moral values, political beliefs, and cultural institutions. Using Michigan as a case study, James Schwartz explains how settlers employed both legal tactics and moral suasion to impose their vision of a civilized society. Yankees were concerned not only with the barbarism of the Native Americans in Michigan but also with the savagery of the territory's white inhabitants who violated the norms of genteel society. Michigan leaders sought to eliminate this compound threat by establishing two kinds of boundaries: formal legal barriers and informal restraints. Combining these elements of civic culture allowed settlers to enact laws while also placing emphasis on families, schools, community groups, and print culture to reestablish social norms in a new environment. The elected legislature passed anti-vice laws to control drunks and gamblers while it debated ways in which to curb unscrupulous speculators and avaricious bankers. Meanwhile crusaders advocated religious instruction and education to civilize the state's youth. Conflict on the Michigan Frontier touches on one of the oldest debates in American history: whether westerners created new cultures or simply transplanted those in which they had been raised. Schwartz concludes that, while efforts to transform the physical and social landscape of the Northwest Territory generally succeeded, Michigan's settlers blended New England and the frontier, establishing a landscape that resembled, but was not identical to, that of the East. Despite the focus on Michigan, Schwartz's study sheds important new light on how settlers transplanted eastern culture not just to the

Midwest, but to the entire American frontier.

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