well as all other Arctic convoys during the war. Readers will also appreciate the author's efforts to reconstruct the war experiences of PQ18 convoy. From chapter to chapter, McKay demonstrates the decision to send the convoy, and its intent, the German reaction, the action of the combatants, and their feelings and emotions. If all this is not enough, the author even explains some technical details, such as the limitation of Asdic. All these elements join and ensure a reader will not become bored while reading the book.

If there is anything in the book that may attract controversy, that might be the chapter titles. They are all named by dates, so the first chapter is "2-5 September 1942." However, considering the nature of the convoy and the actions taken during the journey by the 39 merchant vessels and their escorts, it makes sense that McKay divides the books this way. To conclude, McKay's *Arctic Convoy PQ18* is a worthwhile publication for those who are interested in the Second World War, especially those who are interested in the logistics of war. The book describes one of the most important convoys of the Second World War and is well-written and well arranged. It is a great tribute to the sailors and merchant mariners who fought and fell.

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John William Nelson. *Muddy Ground. Native Peoples, Chicago's Portage, and the Transformation of a Continent.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, www.uncpress.org, 2023. 275 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, index. US $99.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-4696-7519-0. (E-book available.)

Muddy Ground is an atypical maritime history focused on a sporadic swampland near Lake Michigan's southern end. Flowing south or southwest was a vast maze-like but shallow riverine highway or "murky waters covering muddy ground" that enabled people to reach the Mississippi River and eventually the Gulf of Mexico. Nelson presents an erudite work that steers his readers through an unusual maritime history of Chicago, which played an essential role in the development of much of the settlement of America's Great Plains area.

The book's second chapter is an identity guide to the native peoples who lived in the vicinity of Chicago's portage area. These Indigenous people inhabited this part-time aquatic land but also made portages and used lightweight birch bark canoes to travel over vast stretches of the American mid-west. They engaged in hunting the animals found in the area for pelt trade and occasionally used this quasi-maritime scheme to wage war against neighboring tribes. The most important was the Anishinaabe peoples, but

closely followed by the Dakota, Iroquois, Winnebago, Illinois, Kickapoo, Miami, Shawnee, Sauk, Osage, and Fox, among others, but also includes the Métis, a people of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere.

Chicago (*Shikaakwa*, *Checagoe, Chikagou*) was located at an ecological transition zone called an ecotone, an area between the tall prairie grass and the woodlands of the Great Lakes basin. It had a great variety of animals, but the most desirable for the fur trade were the American bison and beaver. The beaver functioned as nature's engineers by excavating, logging, and building landscapes that caused environmental changes. Their extensive dam network helped keep the marshland flooded. Native tribes competed for the region's natural resources, developed trading relationships with one another, and eventually with the colonists who ventured into this land. Initially the French moved west out of Canada and then, to a lesser extent, the Spanish ventured out of the south and southwest, followed by the British who established small settlements near the Great Lakes. The aftermath of the American Revolution largely resulted in Americans supplanting the British as an avalanche of settlers came looking for new land. The aftermath of War of 1812 became an expansion inflection point as it was thought necessary to construct forts to protect the settlements. The stretches used for portage improved by connecting new courses, thus drawing new traders to Chicago's nexus of wetland canoe routes. The Anishinaabeg tribes who largely controlled the area both opposed and facilitated the growth of Chicago as a portage focal point at various times. This portage site, along with its wetlands and nearby occasionally sodden prairie, held an advantage for the Indigenous people who knew how to exploit and protect the natural resources of the marshland environment better than the colonists.

The biggest transformative event was the 1825 opening of the Erie Canal connecting the waters of the Hudson River with Lake Erie. This circumvented the labor-intensive portage around Niagara Falls. It was surmised that by digging a canal at Chicago, the United States could prosper from an internal transportation network of uninterrupted waterways and a new wave of immigrants would follow the Erie Canal westward from Buffalo and then onto Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois, inhabiting and improving the land while demanding access to the eastern markets through these transportation improvements.

In late 1826, Illinois recorded 35 white male citizens (eligible voters) residing at Chicago. Fourteen owned taxable properties, mostly associated with fur trade storehouses. The newly arrived agrarian settlers, however, viewed the local environment with skepticism. Fur traders relied on seasonal flooding to facilitate their passage between the Chicago and the Des Plains Rivers

and learned to cope with annoying disruptions. The immigrating Americans, however, determined that the swamps were a dangerous impediment, a potential unhealthy ecosystem that allowed malarial mosquitoes to breed as well as inhibited agricultural development.

By 1830, there were alterations in Chicago's waterways that made the Chicago River a serious exit from and entry to Lake Michigan, plus a channel to help negotiate around the perennial sand-silting that the weather produced at the end of the lake. The revamping of the lakefront became increasingly more complex. Before long, the railways competed for the movement of goods, growing the city into the commercial center. Most of the Indigenous people departed; however, a remnant remains even today. Although a functional waterway was built and is still used, ironically Chicago became a national transportation hub for both rail and air traffic. There was a steep cost, however. The cityscape greatly changed the intricate natural ecosystems in this primal region. Chicago now faces several environmental crises that can be traced back to its beginnings, which were built upon fluctuating wetlands and intertwined rivers.

John Nelson's *Muddy Ground,* a scholarly and uncommon maritime history, delves deeply into the development of the heartland of the United States. Although the author's prose is at times somewhat academic, this unusual and significant work is one that I recommend to scholars who are interested in the development of middle America.

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William D. Riddell. *On the Waves of Empire: U.S. Imperialism and Merchant Sailors, 1872–1924.* Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, www.uillinois.edu, 2023. 240 pp., notes, bibliography, index. US $110.00, cloth; ISBN 978-0-252-04516-5. (E-book available.)

The period between 1872 and 1924 was filled with numerous innovations within the various industries of the United States, whose growth fueled the national expansion that would take the nation from Reconstruction to a fledging empire on the world stage. Crucial to these innovations, and this growth, were swarms of workers, both domestic and immigrant, who, as time progressed, would engage in resistance to and protest against their exploitation. While the growing field of labour history has done much to study those labourers toiling ashore and underground, less has been written about those whose work was done in the merchant marine. These merchant sailors, as William Riddell