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Anders Bo Rasmussen, a historian at the University of Southern Denmark, uses a transnational approach to explore larger themes of citizenship and identity among Scandinavian immigrants during the US Civil War. While German and Irish immigrants occupy a substantial space in Civil War historiography, Scandinavians remain absent. *Civil War Settlers: Scandinavians, Citizenship, and American Empire, 1848-1870* works to finally close this gap as the first extensive study on the topic. Rasmussen explores the formation of the pan-Scandinavian American identity while also looking broadly at the immigrants’ interactions with other ethnic groups in the United States and how ideas about land ownership influenced by the “threshold principle” contributed to Scandinavian understandings of citizenship. During this period, the United States embraced the threshold principle, which held that population growth and territorial expansion were necessary for a country to survive.

Three questions guide Rasmussen’s study: how Old World ideology about land ownership guided Scandinavians in the New World, why Scandinavians differed from Irish and Germans in their overwhelming support for the Republican Party, and how “implicit and explicit American definitions of citizenship” influenced Scandinavian American ideas about belonging (p. 10). The answers to these questions engage with both Danish and US historiography and span three parts. Rasmussen’s three-part structure provides the reader enough context to follow his sophisticated conceptualization of citizenship.

As part of a growing historiography, *Civil War Settlers* contributes to a conversation about mid-nineteenth-century citizenship that extends beyond interethnic relations. Land expansion and ownership, including the threshold principle, also contributed to how Scandinavian Americans viewed US citizenship. The federal governments of both the United States and Denmark engaged in *Grosstaatenbildung* (large state building), maintaining that land ownership and expansion ensured “national greatness” (p. 5). Defining who could own land—or more importantly, who could
not—guided how Scandinavian Americans understood US citizenship. The United States had forcibly removed Native Americans from their land to expand westward and allow for Anglo-Americans and white immigrants to occupy the land since the country's founding.

First, Rasmussen traces the Scandinavians’ origins to their homelands beginning with the Revolutions of 1848. Even before 1848, Scandinavians seeking freedom of speech had left for the United States. Freedom of speech and press, socioeconomic mobility, and the possibility of owning land influenced a continuing wave of immigration from Scandinavia. Aware of these opportunities, most Scandinavians also recognized that the United States relied on slavery and embraced white superiority. The end of part 1 transitions to center on Scandinavians’ support of the Republican Party as the number of Scandinavian immigrants increased dramatically. By 1850, the Scandinavian press appeared across Scandinavian communities in the United States, predominately in the Midwest. Regardless of political party affiliation, the Scandinavian press published antislavery arguments. Their antislavery arguments and almost complete alignment with the Republican Party through the latter’s “free soil, free labor, and free men” ideology, distinguished Scandinavian Americans from their Irish and German counterparts (p. 66).

Part 2 discusses how pan-Scandinavian identity formed as the American Civil War began. The heated debate about slavery and draft (the 1862 Militia Act) complicated Scandinavians’ idea of belonging. The draft assumed they were citizens, whereas most Scandinavian Americans viewed the draft as anti-American since the concept violated the liberties that had originally drawn Scandinavians to the country. Nonetheless, Scandinavian Union units did form and travel to the South to fight. When Scandinavian Americans encountered the southern slaveholding class, they compared it to the Old World nobility they had left.

As part 3 shows, Scandinavian Americans, who embraced Grosssenstaatbildung and the connection between citizenship and land ownership, remained quiet in conversations about land redistribution in the South following the war. The attempt of the United States to expand to the Danish West Indies further connects territorial expansion, citizenship, and state building. Likewise, the Republican Party’s advocacy for the purchase of Alaska subsequently attracted a large faction of Scandinavian American support.

Although the Scandinavian contribution the Civil War remained small, the connections the immigrants made within the Republican Party propelled them to support Anglo-Americans in their party during Reconstruction, according to Rasmussen. Following the war however, as more Scandinavian communities formed across the Midwest, their support for racial equality wavered. Scandinavian Americans now had their own place among the larger Anglo-American society as white, Protestant farmers and businessmen.

Civil War Settlers utilizes sources from across Scandinavia and the United States. Ethnic newspapers like the Danish-language Emigranten and immigration propaganda illuminate how Scandinavian immigrants viewed the US both as outsiders and citizens. Immigration literature created transnational ideas of liberty, equality, and the connection between freedom and land ownership. Rasmussen’s use of draft records and personal letters and diaries reflects a micro approach to provide insight to the lives of Scandinavian immigrants. His reliance on different source pools helps craft a transnational history that still centers on the American Civil War and contributes to a large historiography.