



Frontier Seaport: Detroit's Transformation into an Atlantic Entrepôt (American Beginnings, 1500-1900)

Catherine Cangany

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Detroit's industrial health has long been crucial to the American economy. Today's troubles notwithstanding, Detroit has experienced multiple periods of prosperity, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the city was the center of the thriving fur trade. Its proximity to the West as well as its access to the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River positioned this new metropolis at the intersection of the fur-rich frontier and the Atlantic trade routes.

In *Frontier Seaport*, Catherine Cangany details this seldom-discussed chapter of Detroit's history. She argues that by the time of the American Revolution, Detroit functioned much like a coastal town as a result of the prosperous fur trade, serving as a critical link in a commercial chain that stretched all the way to Russia and China—thus opening Detroit's shores for eastern merchants and other transplants. This influx of newcomers brought its own transatlantic networks and fed residents' desires for popular culture and manufactured merchandise. Detroit began to be both a frontier town and seaport city—a mixed identity, Cangany argues, that hindered it from becoming a thoroughly “American” metropolis.

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