ABSTRACT: Travel narratives communicate a wealth of geographical information about the physical and cultural landscapes of the past, but cartographic representation of travelers’ perceptions is challenging. When a traveler’s journey is represented as a line on a map, the depth of the traveler’s geographical observations and judgments is obscured. This study employed a spatial history methodology to map the environmental and cultural perceptions evident in the 1818-1819 Arkansas travel narratives of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1793-1864) and Thomas Nuttall (1786-1859). The published journals of each traveler were coded to identify cultural and environmental observations. These observations were further coded as descriptive or subjective perceptions. The resulting maps and analysis contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural and environmental perceptions of these travelers than has been previously explored by scholars. The occasional cultural invectives present in the narratives have overshadowed predominantly positive environmental perceptions. The maps and analysis reveal the spatial patterns evident in these travelers’ perceptions and suggest a better sense of the places experienced rather than merely the spaces traversed by these travelers.

Traveling is at its essence a geographical act. To travel is to move through space and place over time. Since antiquity, humans have recorded and recounted their travels, often in writing. Travel narratives have been constructed for a variety of purposes, have spanned a variety of literary forms, and have engaged a variety of audiences. What travel narratives in their diverse forms share is that they convey geographical information through accounts of distant peoples and places, filtered through the eyes and mind of the traveler. As Carl Thompson has observed, “If all travel involves an encounter between self and other that is brought about by movement through space, all travel writing is at some level a record or product of this encounter, and of the negotiation between similarity and difference that it entailed.”¹ Tales of these encounters, particularly when they involved peoples and places considered exotic or dangerous to the traveler’s eye and the reader’s mind, enjoyed robust popularity among European readers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This popularity resulted in a publishing industry that sought to bring these tales into print for consumption by an eager, and increasingly literate, audience.² These published accounts are rich sources for historical geographers attempting to comprehend the ways in which travelers represented the geographies of the past for their readers. Yet these texts can be challenging to comprehend spatially, and travelers’ perceptions can be difficult to capture cartographically. The geography of travel is typically represented on maps as a simple line, perhaps with arrows indicating direction, that depict travelers’ routes. Where
a traveler traveled is important, but a more robust spatial visualization and analysis of travel narratives will require more innovative cartographic techniques.

The Arkansas travel narratives of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1793-1864) and Thomas Nuttall (1786-1859) provide useful case studies for the cartographic representation and analysis of the spatial perceptions of travelers. Both men traveled through portions of Arkansas territory in 1818 and 1819 when the region was in the midst of significant cultural change. Both men offered substantial commentary on both the cultural and the environmental characteristics of Arkansas. Yet neither journal has received substantive scholarly attention and the interpretations of the historical and geographical significance of these travel journals has tended toward the impressionistic rather than the analytic. In this study, I employ spatial history and GIS to analyze the content of the journals of Schoolcraft and Nuttall. My goals are: 1) to map the environmental and cultural perceptions evident in Schoolcraft’s and Nuttall’s journals, and 2) to analyze the spatial patterns that emerge from these maps to better understand the time spent in various locales and the nature of the travelers’ perceptions of the lands and the peoples encountered. My analysis demonstrates that both travelers were engaged in recording primarily descriptive, non-judgmental observations of the cultural and physical attributes of Arkansas, and that neither traveler expended much of his written word on cultural invectives. Although both men composed sensational broadsides about some of the people they encountered, they also penned statements of admiration of and appreciation for Arkansas residents. Unfortunately, the sporadic cultural criticisms of Nuttall and Schoolcraft have overshadowed the effusive acclaims that each man composed about the environmental endowments of Arkansas. This spatial history challenges impressionistic interpretations of travel narratives that privilege the sensational and the negative over the descriptive and the positive, and offers an approach to mapping the places experienced rather than merely the spaces traversed by travelers.

Travel Narratives and the Historical Geography of Arkansas

The physical geography of Arkansas varies from the flat swamplands of the lower Mississippi River valley in the east to the rugged Ozark plateau in the northwest and the rolling Ouachita mountains in the west. The territory is bisected from northwest to southeast by the Arkansas River that flows from the Rocky Mountains in central Colorado to its confluence with the Mississippi River in southeast Arkansas. The indigenous peoples who occupied Arkansas were first encountered by Europeans during the 1541 Spanish expedition of Hernando de Soto. The encounter resulted in drastic native population decline, primarily due to the introduction of European diseases. In the 1680s, more than one hundred years after Soto’s expedition, French explorers René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle and Henri de Tonti established relationships with the Quapaws near the confluence of the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers. The French and Quapaw society of eighteenth-century Arkansas was characterized largely by cultural accommodation, miscegenation, and a sparse population. Though the land officially became Spanish territory in 1769, in the aftermath of the Seven Years’ War, a French-Quapaw society persisted. In 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte acquired the territory from Spain, but he quickly sold the French claim to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. In the first few decades following the American acquisition, a significant transformation occurred in the human geography of Arkansas. The cultural accommodation and relatively peaceful coexistence that had been practiced by the French settlers and the Quapaws of the Arkansas River valley yielded to a new American agricultural society that was less tolerant of Quapaw, Cherokee, Choctaw, and
Osage neighbors. Historian Morris S. Arnold explained of the Arkansas delta region: “When the American era dawned in Arkansas, it revealed a very small, mostly uneducated population of approximately four hundred Frenchmen and a Quapaw tribe so decimated by disease, alcohol, and warfare that it probably numbered no more than five hundred itself.” Then, as historian Jeannie Whayne explained, “Thousands of whites and Indians ... moved into the territory” following the American acquisition “and the nature of the relationship between them altered dramatically.” It is estimated that between 1810 and 1820, the non-native population of Arkansas increased from about 1000 to more than 14000. Much of this population growth is attributed to the migration of Anglo-American settlers during the second half of the decade following the war of 1812. Many of these new settlers aimed to extend the social, economic, and political structures of the American South to Arkansas, while others aimed to flee organized society for the perceived independence of the backcountry. Furthermore, the Indian removal schemes of the United States government forced the relocation of tribes from the southeastern United States, such as the Cherokees and Choctaws, to Arkansas. While the Quapaws of Arkansas generally sought peaceful accommodation with new arrivals, both native and white, the Osages in the region violently resisted the encroachment of Cherokees and Americans. In addition to the cultural upheaval posed by migration and population growth, the statehood petition of neighboring Missouri in 1819 brought the controversy over the extension of slavery to the fore. In the aftermath of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, Arkansas was established as a slave territory and the political and economic influence of southern plantation owners further transformed the region over subsequent decades.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft and Thomas Nuttall were two travelers who toured the region, independent of one another, in 1818 and 1819 during this moment of cultural transformation in Arkansas. Schoolcraft, a native of New York, studied mineralogy under the guidance of a professor at Middlebury College in Vermont while serving as director of the Vermont Glass Factory. His attempt to follow his father into the glass making business led to insolvency, and in early 1818, at age 25, he left New England for the promise of opportunities in the lead mining district of southeastern Missouri. After touring the mines of Missouri, Schoolcraft decided to inspect the Ozark plateau and the rivers to the southwest that straddle the current state line between Missouri and Arkansas. From November 1818 to February 1819, Schoolcraft and his friend Levi Pettibone trekked overland through the Ozark backcountry and via canoe on the White River of Arkansas.

Thomas Nuttall, a native of Yorkshire, England, immigrated to the United States in 1808 at age 22. In Philadelphia, he was tutored by the eminent American botanist Benjamin Smith Barton, and in 1810, on Barton’s recommendation, went on a tour to gather plant specimens along the Missouri River path of the Lewis and Clark expedition. By 1817, Nuttall had visited much of the eastern part of the United States and had become a recognized botanist in his own right, as evidenced by his election to the American Philosophical Society and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. Late in 1818, Nuttall departed Philadelphia on a planned excursion to the Rocky Mountains to study the flora of the southwest. After descending the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, Nuttall ascended the Arkansas River to Fort Smith. His dreams of reaching the Rocky Mountains were dashed when he contracted a nearly fatal case of malaria in present-day Oklahoma and returned to Philadelphia in 1820. In 1821, shortly after the conclusion of their tours, both Schoolcraft and Nuttall published their journals.

Neither Nuttall’s nor Schoolcraft’s Arkansas travel journals have been the subject of deep scholarly assessment. Nuttall’s biographer devotes one chapter to a description of the Arkansas
journey, but does not offer an assessment of its significance. Similarly, the Arkansas tour of Schoolcraft receives only a brief description in a biography focused on his later career as an Indian agent. In the introductions to published editions of each journal, neither editor provides much scholarly interpretation of the works. For example, of Schoolcraft’s journal, Milton D. Rafferty stated that,

> When placed within the context of his lifetime activities and accomplishments, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s three month Ozarks expedition in the winter of 1818-19 was a small episode, almost a youthful adventure. Even so, the notes he recorded and later organized and published as a journal preserved one of the few contemporary records of the natural setting and the manner of frontier settlement during its earliest stage of development.

This is a standard assessment of the value of both journals. When mentioned, the journals are referred to simply as a record of the human and physical geography of Arkansas during the early nineteenth century. This dearth of analysis of Nuttall’s and Schoolcraft’s journals has resulted in impressionistic interpretations of the historical geography of Arkansas in this period. For example, each of the journals contain scathing critiques of people and cultural attributes in Arkansas, and these vivid passages have been quoted frequently. Indeed, some Arkansas historians have traced the origin of persistent negative images of Arkansas to early nineteenth-century travelers in the region such as Schoolcraft, Nuttall, and George W. Featherstonhaugh. Yet a closer reading of the journals reveals that, though the men could be acerbic, they also recorded many positive impressions. Since the men were in motion, their commentary – positive, negative, or descriptive – may be mapped to better understand the spatial differences evident in their observations and perceptions. Thus, a more complete analysis of the journals must take space into account. A spatial analysis of these travel journals would address several important questions for historical geographers. To what degree were Schoolcraft and Nuttall disparaging of Arkansas residents? Are there spatial differences in the negative versus positive perceptions of the people they encountered? What perceptions of environmental characteristics are apparent in the journals? Are there spatial patterns to their environmental perceptions? This study attempts to respond to these questions through mapping and analysis of the content of Schoolcraft’s and Nuttall’s journals.

**A Spatial History of Travel Narratives**

Richard White, former director of the Spatial History Project at Stanford University, explained that spatial history is:

> … a means of doing research; it generates questions that might otherwise go unasked, it reveals historical relations that might otherwise go unnoticed, and it undermines, or substantiates, stories upon which we build our own versions of the past [emphasis in original].

Paul Carter, frequently credited with coining the term *spatial history* to define his approach to the study of settlement, dispossession, and place-naming in Australia, contended that spatial history allows for the use of “spatiality as a form of non-linear writing” that brings about “the process of transforming space into place.” Recent discussions point to an affirmation of the significance of place and space in the study of the past. Of note, historian Phillip J. Ethington advanced a provocative argument that
The past cannot exist in time: only in space. Histories representing the past represent the places (topoi) of human action. History is not an account of ‘change over time,’ as the cliché goes, but rather, change through space. Knowledge of the past, therefore, is literally cartographic: a mapping of the places of history indexed to the coordinates of spacetime. 

Although spatial history is neither new nor uncontested, the practice of spatial history has been accelerated and enriched in recent years by researchers who have explored the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for historical scholarship. 

Historical geographer Anne Kelly Knowles enumerated three areas of initial concentration for historical GIS scholarship. These included: 1) empirical studies of land use and spatial economies; 2) morphological and visualization studies of landscapes and built environments; and 3) digital collection projects aimed at making source materials more readily accessible. In his recent review of the historical GIS literature, geographer Ian Gregory identified bodies of research that have emerged in fields such as urban studies, environmental and agricultural history, demography, transport and mobility, economic and social history, and ancient and medieval history that are concomitant with advances in the construction of historical GIS databases, the expanding availability of Internet resources for historical GIS, and the creative application of new digital technologies that enable enhanced visualization and analytic techniques. 

A growing body of spatial history research has emerged in the past decade on diverse topics such as the North American Great Plains, the American iron industry, the urban geographies of Florence, Australian cultural landscapes, mass atrocities, the holocaust, and frontier trails. Furthermore, a few geographers have begun to explore methods for mapping literature and spatial perceptions, such as representations of the English Lake District, Dublin, and Lisbon that are evident in poetry and literature. Environmental historian Robert Schwartz adopted an approach to spatial history that is particularly relevant to the current study. Schwartz employed computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) and GIS to analyze and map the witness testimony contained in the ample textual record of the 1863 and 1893 investigations of sea fishing by the British Parliament. This technique allowed Schwartz to map perceptions of the increase, stability, or decline of fishing stocks and to compare these spatial perceptions with official reports to better understand the history of British industrial sea fishing.

This study employed the techniques of spatial history to map and analyze Nuttall’s and Schoolcraft’s Arkansas travel journals. A three-stage procedure was adopted to identify and map the environmental and cultural observations evident in the journals. First, the daily observations in each journal were geocoded interactively using Google Earth. The route of each traveler was reconstructed by reading the journal entries for locational clues, such as place names, physical features, and the confluences of rivers and streams. Each traveler frequently recorded estimates of the number of miles he traveled each day, and often in which direction. For this study, a sampling of the journals was made to focus attention on the Arkansas portion of each traveler’s journey. This spatial sample was selected to contribute to the historiography on Arkansas and to focus the exploration of spatial history methodology on a manageable number of geographical observations. The latitude and longitude of the sample locations and the dates of each observation were recorded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Second, the text of each journal was coded using the qualitative data analysis software program QDA Miner Lite. Multiple readings of the journals revealed that each traveler made both descriptive and subjective statements about the cultural and environmental characteristics he encountered. A descriptive statement was defined as one in which the traveler described a cultural or environmental feature without offering his opinion about the quality of that feature. A subjective statement was defined as one in which the traveler described a feature in a way that suggests a positive or a negative judgment about that feature. The resulting coding scheme, shown in Table 1, included six possible codes to be
assigned to the statements in each narrative. A statement ranged in length from a phrase within one sentence to several sentences describing the same object. To aid in the coding process, a PDF version of each journal was imported into the qualitative data analysis program QDA Miner Lite. Statements in each journal were highlighted and then assigned one of six codes: descriptive cultural; subjective cultural positive; subjective cultural negative; descriptive environmental; subjective environmental positive; or subjective environmental negative. Statements that did not fit into one of these categories, such as the date and the distance traveled, were not coded. As each journal was coded, the Excel spreadsheet was updated manually with the codes and frequencies for each location and date. For example, on a particular date at a particular location, Thomas Nuttall may have made three descriptive cultural observations and four negative environmental

Table 1. Qualitative Coding Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Cultural</td>
<td>A description of cultural characteristics without judgment.</td>
<td>“Blanket capeaus, mocassins, and overalls of the same materials, are here, as in Canada, the prevailing dress; and men and women commonly wear a handkerchief on the head in place of hats and bonnets.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Environmental</td>
<td>A description of environmental characteristics without judgment.</td>
<td>“From hence also the prairies or grassy plains begin to be prevalent, and the trees to decrease in number and magnitude.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Cultural Positive</td>
<td>Cultural descriptions that include a positive judgment.</td>
<td>“Upon the whole, he appeared to live in great ease and independence, surrounded by a numerous family of sons and daughters, all grown up; received us with cordiality, gave us plenty to eat, and bid us welcome as long as we pleased to stay.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Cultural Negative</td>
<td>Cultural descriptions that include a negative judgment.</td>
<td>“An insignificant village, containing three stores, destitute even of a hatter, a shoe-maker, and a tailor, and containing about 20 houses, after an existence of near a century, scarcely deserved geographical notice, and will never probably flatter the industry of the French emigrants, whose habits, at least those of the Canadians, are generally opposed to improvement and regular industry.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Environmental Positive</td>
<td>Environmental descriptions that include a positive judgment</td>
<td>“We stood a moment to contemplate the sublime and beautiful scene before us, which was such an assemblage of rocks and water—of hill and valley—of verdant woods and naked peaks—of native fertility and barren magnificence, as to surpass the boldest conceptions, and most happy executions of the painter’s pencil, or the poet’s pen.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Environmental Negative</td>
<td>Environmental descriptions that include a negative judgment</td>
<td>“The whole surrounding country still continues a desolate wilderness, abandoned to inundation, presenting impenetrable cane brakes and gloomy forests: none of the trees, however, attain that enormous magnitude, which they so frequently present along the borders of the Ohio.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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observations. These frequency data were entered into the spreadsheet by date and location. Finally, the data were imported into ArcGIS and maps were constructed to analyze the spatial patterns evident in the data.

**Cultural Invectives Reassessed and Environmental Acclaims Revealed**

The descriptive observations of each traveler were mapped using proportional dot symbology. The resulting spatial patterns of the travelers’ descriptive commentary are depicted in Figures 1 and 2. These maps provide a useful visualization of the places where each traveler encountered cultural or physical attributes he believed were worthy of comment, as well as a sense of the time spent across these spaces. For example, Thomas Nuttall spent more time ascending the Arkansas River than he did on his descent of the Mississippi River. This temporal dimension is captured in the clusters and magnitudes of observations – both cultural and environmental – along these rivers. Nuttall also encountered less human settlement along the Mississippi River than he did in Arkansas, and thus there are fewer cultural observations along the Mississippi River. The clusters of observations in southeast Arkansas, where Nuttall spent one month near the settlement of Arkansas Post, as well as along the course of the Arkansas River, where he encountered numerous small settlements near Pine Bluff, Little Rock, Cadron, and Dardanelle, depict the temporal and spatial patterns of his interactions with people. A cluster of descriptive cultural observations is also evident in Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s journal in the areas where he spent time with white settlers along the White River and in the backcountry along the current state line dividing Arkansas and Missouri. Schoolcraft’s explanation of the trading economy of the backcountry hunters provides an example of the descriptive statements present in his journal:

> Vast quantities of beaver, otter, raccoon, deer, and bear skins, are annually caught. These skins are carefully collected and preserved during the summer and fall, and taken down the river in canoes to the mouth of the Great North Fork of White River, or to the mouth of Black River, where traders regularly come up with large boats to receive them. They also take down some wild honey, bear’s bacon, and buffaloe-beef [sic], and receive in return, salt, iron-pots, axes, blankets, knives, rifles, and other articles of first importance in their mode of life.³⁰

The subjective perceptions of each traveler were also mapped using proportional dot symbols that represent both the type – positive or negative – and the frequencies evident in each journal. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate positive and negative cultural perceptions, while figures 5 and 6 illustrate the positive and negative environmental perceptions of each traveler. The maps reveal spatial patterns in the perceptions of each of the travelers regarding the peoples and environments encountered. Nuttall was particularly negative about the people he encountered along the Mississippi River where he met with boatmen who deceived and cheated him, hunters and Indians eager to trade beaver for whiskey despite their lack of bread and vegetables, and “worthless and drunken scoundrels” who refused difficult work despite being paid to help. Nuttall’s one month stay near Arkansas Post allowed him time to record both positive and negative impressions of cultural and environmental attributes. This temporal dimension to the maps reveals how a sense of place, with its positive and negative implications, can emerge in the mind of a traveler. The cultural perception maps also reveal that Nuttall was often complimentary of the people he met along the Arkansas River. While his cultural commentary in Arkansas was mixed with disapproving judgments, he praised the Cherokees and some Quapaws for what he perceived as their progress toward civilization, as well as the industry and manners of the whites with whom he interacted. Spatial patterns are evident in the cultural perceptions of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft as well. Schoolcraft experienced negative exchanges with some of the backcountry
Figure 1. Descriptive Cultural Observations of Nuttall and Schoolcraft

Figure 2. Descriptive Environmental Observations of Nuttall and Schoolcraft
hunners he encountered. In one caustic remark, he concluded that “in manners, morals, customs, dress, contempt of labor and hospitality, the state of society is not essentially different from that which exists among the savages.” Yet, toward the end of his travels as he canoed down the White River, Schoolcraft was more complimentary overall of the culture of generosity and independence that he experienced. For example, on January 19, 1819, he remarked,

It is due to the hardy, frank, and independent hunters, through whose territories we have travelled [sic], and with whom we have from time to time sojourned, to say, that we have been uniformly received at their cabins with a blunt welcome, and experienced the most hospitable and generous treatment.

Spatial differences in the travelers’ perceptions of the environmental attributes of the region are also evident. Nuttall was quite negative about the ferocious Mississippi River and its environs, while he praised the fertile land and beauty that surrounded most of the Arkansas River. For example, along the Arkansas River northwest of Little Rock, Nuttall recorded:

It is almost impossible to describe the pleasure which these romantic prospects again afforded me. Who can be insensible to the beauty of the verdant hill and valley, to the sublimity of the clouded mountain, the fearful precipice, or the torrent of the cataract. Even bald and moss-grown rocks, without the aid of sculpture, forcibly inspire us with that veneration which we justly owe to the high antiquity of nature, and which appears to arise no less from a solemn and intuitive reflection.
on their vast capacity for duration, contrasted with that transient scene in which we ourselves only appear to act a momentary part.\textsuperscript{33}

Schoolcraft was critical of highland prairies and timber lands that he labeled “rough,” “sterile,” or “barren,” but he was astonished by the beauty of several sublime landscapes that he encountered throughout the Ozarks and along the rivers, including water so clear that he was deceived by its depth and caverns that provoked sentimentalist reflections. For example, on January 15, 1819, Schoolcraft offered the following assessment of the environment along the White River near the present-day town of Norfork in Baxter County Arkansas.

A diligent search of the whole river could not in all probability have afforded a point uniting, in the circle of a few miles, so many objects calculated to please the eye, or to instruct the understanding. To a geographical situation, the most important in the whole course of the river, it united scenery the most bold and enchanting, and embracing so many objects calculated to awaken and invite attention, that the inquiring traveller [sic] could scarcely be disappointed, be his studies or pursuits what they might. Here were beautiful views for the landscape-painter, rocks for the geologist, minerals and fossils for the mineralogist, trees and plants for the botanist, soil for the agriculturalists, an advantageous situation for the man of business, and a gratifying view for the patriot, who contemplates with pleasure the increasing settlement, and prospective improvements of our country.\textsuperscript{34}
The spatial history approach adopted for this study provides an opportunity for a deeper analysis of the perceptions of Nuttall and Schoolcraft than appears in much of the literature on the historical geography of Arkansas. Through mapping the cultural and environmental perceptions of these travelers, spatial patterns are revealed that provide insight into the time spent in differing locales and the nature of their perceptions of the land and the people they encountered. The resulting maps challenge impressionistic interpretations of Nuttall’s and Schoolcraft’s journals that tend to overemphasize negative commentary about Arkansas society, while neglecting the frequently positive commentary about the physical environment and the predominantly descriptive nature of the journals. There has been good reason for the focus on travelers’ invectives on backcountry culture in Arkansas. As historian Brooks Blevins has chronicled, the image of Arkansas in the American consciousness has been shaped by negative stereotypes and caricatures. From the southwestern humorists of the nineteenth century to the popular 1960s television comedy *The Beverly Hillbillies*, this image has been constructed through literary and comedic tropes that have portrayed Arkansas residents as backward, ignorant, lazy, drunken, violent, and quick-tempered. While these tropes are common to the rest of the American South – as well as to other backcountry, poverty-stricken, and othered locales – Blevins argued that Arkansas may well be the most caricatured state in America. My coding and mapping of the journals of Nuttall and Schoolcraft, however, suggests that neither man expended much of

![Figure 5. Positive Environmental Perceptions of Nuttall and Schoolcraft](image)
his prose berating the local populations. As shown in Table 2, 13 percent of Schoolcraft’s and eight percent of Nuttall’s observations included negative cultural judgments. Given that Nuttall devoted 62 percent and Schoolcraft 65 percent of his narrative about Arkansas to descriptive statements that cast no particular judgment on the people or the land, the journals should not be represented as diatribes against the people the men encountered.

One explanation for the instinct to emphasize Schoolcraft’s and Nuttall’s derogatory commentaries about Arkansas cultures is what Blevins referred to as an inferiority complex and hyper-defensiveness among Arkansans toward criticism and humor directed at the state and its people. Nurtured during the twentieth-century “heyday of the hillbilly,” Blevins explained that “we have for generations magnified our defamations and overreacted to the ribbing of our detractors, all the while ignoring or misreading the pronouncements of those enamored of the Arkansawyer.”

Blevins contended that “the portrayals of the Arkansawyer have been positive ones as often as not” in that the “Arkansawyer becomes the nonconformist who consciously or unconsciously rejects the tenets of [the] American narrative” of exceptionalism and “blind faith in progress.” While Schoolcraft and Nuttall indeed penned acerbic commentary about the primitive dwellings, dirty clothing, and lack of education and religion among some of the people they encountered, they also found much to admire and appreciate about these people that has been overshadowed by their occasionally caustic pens.
The positive perceptions of these men about the physical environments of Arkansas has also been overshadowed in readings of these journals. While generations of Arkansans have endured negative cultural stereotypes and humor at their expense, the diverse physical environments in the state have often been the subject of praise and wonder. Much of Thomas Nuttall’s travel narrative is about the physical landscapes he witnessed. The coding data reveal that thirty-eight percent of his observations were descriptive statements about landforms, hydrographic features, flora, fauna, and soils. Overall, Nuttall was almost equally split in his positive versus negative subjective commentary about the physical environment, yet the perception maps reveal a spatial pattern. Nuttall’s negative perceptions occurred almost exclusively during his journey on the Mississippi River. As he traveled through the heart of Arkansas, his environmental perceptions are mostly positive as he remarked on the quality of the soils and the beauty of blooming plants and scenic mountains. Likewise, Schoolcraft’s descriptive observations on the physical environment outnumbered his subjective commentaries, and he tended to be positive when he offered an opinion on what he viewed in Arkansas. Less spatial variation is evident in Schoolcraft’s environmental perceptions than Nuttall’s, but some distinctions can be drawn. Many of Schoolcraft’s negative perceptions are associated with lands that he characterized as barren, stony, or sterile. Schoolcraft’s cluster of negative environmental perceptions along the Arkansas-Missouri state line, coincide with his travels through a highland prairie where he saw neither interesting landforms nor fertile soil. In one particularly snide remark, he suggested that the United States overpaid France in the Louisiana Purchase for this tract of land.

When the Edinburgh Reviewer estimated that Louisiana only cost three cents per acre, on the average of the whole number of square miles in the territory, he probably had no idea that there was any part of it which could be considered dear at that price. Yet, I think it would be money dearly expended in the purchase of such lands as we have this day traversed.38

Schoolcraft’s positive environmental commentary tended to coincide with moments when he journeyed through primeval forests, streams, and caverns. One such instance was the portion of the journey along the James River in southwestern Missouri near present-day Branson and Springfield. Here the young man was enthusiastic about the soil, minerals, timber, wildlife, caverns, and vistas that he witnessed. Indeed, during the twentieth century the State of Arkansas decided to capitalize on the natural beauty of the state by adopting the slogan and nickname “The Natural State” for promotional purposes, and outdoor tourism in the form of camping, canoeing, and hiking is significant to the state economy two hundred years after Schoolcraft stumbled through the Ozarks.
Conclusion

Three conclusions may be drawn from this spatial history of the Arkansas travel journals of Thomas Nuttall and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. First, a better understanding of travel journals is achieved when they are mapped than when they are simply read. Readers are drawn to travel literature, in part, by a writer’s use of dramatic imagery, provocative epithets, and anecdotes filled with conflict and hyperbole. While these literary devices are valuable to the narrative, they can result in impressionistic geographical understandings in which some scenes are privileged over others in the spatial memory of the reader. Although both Nuttall and Schoolcraft could be abusive in their critiques of Arkansas society, this spatial history reveals that neither traveler devoted much of his narrative to titillating epithets. Second, this study brings place to the fore. It is to be expected that each of these men would praise lands that they found appealing either visually or for commercial use. Similarly, one would expect a traveler to respond positively when encountering people who espouse similar cultural values and behaviors. But where the men recorded their perceptions is as important – if not more so – than that they recorded these perceptions. The maps produced for this study reveal the spatial patterns evident in these travelers’ perceptions, and thus allow the reader a better sense of the places experienced rather than merely the spaces traversed. Finally, refinement of spatial history as a methodology for analyzing travel writing is needed. This study provides one, perhaps the first, attempt at employing spatial history to unveil previously obscured spatial patterns and relationships in travel literature. Additional research is needed to explore how history can be unveiled through cartography and how the spaces travelers traversed can be understood as the places they experienced.

NOTES

6. Ibid.
8. Ibid.; Whayne, “The Turbulent Path to Statehood.”
11. Ibid.
12. Schoolcraft’s journal was issued by the London publishing house of Sir Richard Phillips and Company with the title, “Journal of a Tour into the Interior of Missouri and Arkansaw, from Potosi, or Mine a Burton, in Missouri Territory, in a South-West Direction, toward the Rocky Mountains; Performed in the Years 1818 and 1819.” Nuttall’s journal was published by the Philadelphia house of Thomas H. Palmer as “A Journal of Travels into the Arkansa Territory, during the year 1819 with Occasional Observations on the Manners of the Aborigines.”


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28. The sample of Thomas Nuttall’s journey was that from below New Madrid, Missouri, on the Mississippi River on 22 December 1818 to Fort Smith, Arkansas, on the Arkansas River on 9 May 1819. The coding and mapping of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s trek was limited to 24 November 1818 to 24 January 1819 during the portion of his overland journey through the Ozarks, including some portions of the neighboring state of Missouri, and his canoeing experience on the White River in northern Arkansas.

29. Thomas Nuttall’s locations were easier to determine since he was on or near major rivers during most of his journey, but, due to the naturally changing course of rivers and the human modifications to the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers over the past two hundred years, many locations and distances along the rivers had to be estimated. The exact route of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s overland journey was more difficult to map, but was aided by the field work of geographer Milton Rafferty who included an appendix in his book with a description of the modern landscape along Schoolcraft’s route.

30. Schoolcraft, Rude Pursuits and Rugged Peaks, 64.
31. Ibid., 63.
32. Ibid., 113.
33. Nuttall, Travels into the Arkansas Territory, 117.
34. Schoolcraft, Rude Pursuits and Rugged Peaks, 103.
35. Blevins, Arkansas/Arkansaw How Bear Hunters, Hillbillies, and Good Ol’ Boys Defined a State.
37. Ibid.
38. Schoolcraft, Rude Pursuits and Rugged Peaks, 38.