

conomic thought. Although his witticisms are widely known and repeated (e.g., “A penny saved is a penny earned”), his insights about politics and economics, in Houston’s words, remain “virtually invisible” and “obscured” (219–20). This book sheds light on these underappreciated ideas. Although not a comprehensive biography, it is nevertheless a meticulously researched theoretical-historical work that selectively examines Franklin’s views on political economy, public associations, slavery, and population. Overall, Houston’s *Benjamin Franklin and the Politics of Improvement* contributes significantly to the growing literature on the life and writings of an extraordinary American founder who we could only wish would reappear “[i]n a new and more perfect Edition” (70).

*Pennsylvania State University-Hazleton*

SHANE RALSTON

*Frontiersman: Daniel Boone and the Making of America.* By MEREDITH MASON BROWN. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008. 424 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical note, index. \$34.95.)

Few men from the American past have captivated historians as much as Daniel Boone. Explorer, Indian fighter, Indian lover, scout, expert woodsman, revolutionary, pioneering long hunter—Boone’s protean character seems the perfect embodiment of the restless, ambitious American temperament.

While recent notable Boone biographers, such as John Mack Faragher and Robert Morgan, have deftly deciphered the elusive, legendary image of Boone the American icon, Meredith Mason Brown focuses on a more prosaic, practical Boone, an historical figure who helped transform the precarious world of the Kentucky frontier. Indeed, Brown’s Boone, though a conflicted man with sometimes divided loyalties between native and white, served as an important agent of change to the American west. Boone’s example, we are told, propelled massive migration in Kentucky and Missouri, a movement of people that not only decimated game and weakened Indian power in the area, but one that also spurred the growth of slavery and contributed significantly to the growing sense of American national identity.

Generally well-researched and carried by an often vivid narrative, *Frontiersman* offers good, evocative details of life on the frontier, from discussions of over-killing of game in Kentucky to the filth and squalor of settlers “forted up” in crowded places like Forts Boonesborough and Harrodsburg. A descendant of one of Boone’s fellow long hunters, Brown is at his best when detailing the drama and excitement of the many violent conflicts and skirmishes in which Boone often found himself. The book effectively explores the close-range fighting with tomahawks, knives, and clubbed rifles that uniquely characterized frontier warfare during the American Revolution. And Brown knows how to convey a

colorful anecdote: particularly memorable is the story about British lieutenant governor Henry Hamilton, who commanded the Detroit garrison, and the scalp-buying allegation that prompted American settlers to refer to him as “Hair-Buyer” Hamilton (96). Brown also offers a lucid explanation for the three-cornered battleground, filled with conflicted aims and disparate groups that characterized the Americans, Indians, and British in the Ohio Valley of the 1760s and 1770s. A marvelously detailed chapter on the siege of Boonesborough—and Boone’s notorious court martial for apparent disloyalty—stands as one of the book’s highlights.

Amid all the bloodshed and fighting, Boone sometimes gets lost in the details, as Brown occasionally closes a chapter devoted mainly to frontier clashes by simply reasserting—without truly developing—his theme that “Boone played a key role in the fighting in Kentucky” (103). Much of Brown’s story about the wide mix of settlers and conflicting goals on the frontier cries out for deeper treatment of class and ethnic conflict in the middle ground of frontier Kentucky, but the narrative rarely stops to examine such issues. In a largely carefully researched biography, a few missteps stand out: drawing on outdated notions of historical demography, Brown mistakenly suggests that Boone’s very youthful marriage and large family were, in fact, the norm among British colonists. The narrative occasionally lapses into odd, folksy language—“there were weddings aplenty,” he tells us, in Boone’s Yadkin Valley neighborhood (21). More troublesome is Brown’s tendency to see Boone as pivotal for nearly every critical theme in the trans-Appalachian West: “the entire way of life in Kentucky and Missouri” was undergoing fundamental change, and Boone, he asserts, was at the center of it. There’s more than a little overreach in some of these claims—Boone’s pivotal role in these movements is largely asserted rather than proven—but readers will still profit from this lively new take on Daniel Boone.

*University of Kentucky, Emeritus*

DANIEL BLAKE SMITH

*Gentlewomen and Learned Ladies: Women and Elite Formation in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia.* By SARAH FATHERLY. (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2008. 244 pp. Notes, selected bibliography, index. \$47.50.)

In an article published in this very journal in 2004, Sarah Fatherly introduced us to the learned women of eighteenth-century Philadelphia. “‘The Sweet Recourse of Reason’: Elite Women’s Education in Colonial Philadelphia” identified a British model of schooling adopted by the city’s privileged families. Daughters in these families accumulated the cultural capital encoded in history, natural philosophy, literature, and the classics. They took lessons from British prescriptive literature, which circulated widely in colonial America. *The Female*