

and Indian War. They were able to hire themselves out as artisans or farm labor, so they, too, enjoyed considerable freedom. British prisoners had a propensity to escape to rejoin their comrades; Hessians were more inclined to remain where they were, even marching themselves to a new prison camp in Winchester, Virginia. They were also far more likely to stay in America after the peace.

Miller mentions in passing that American authorities routinely violated surrender agreements: "By 1779, frustrated by Congress' failure to liberate the Convention prisoners [taken at Saratoga] in accordance with the terms of their capitulation, the British command actively encouraged escapes" (171). Escaping British prisoners had a well-established route to New York, and, for a few months in 1777–78, to Philadelphia. Quakers and other pacifists often sheltered and guided them, and in the last years of the war were entrapped by Continental soldiers pretending to be fugitives.

In marshaling his extensive research to make a coherent argument about the impact of prisoners on their host communities, Miller has added an important chapter to the Pennsylvania story.

University of Florida

RICHARD K. MACMASTER

Revolutionary Medicine: The Founding Fathers and Mothers in Sickness and in Health. By JEANNE E. ABRAMS. (New York: New York University Press, 2013. 304 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.)

Yellow fever, smallpox, cholera, malaria, influenza, and countless other diseases swept through eighteenth-century North America with frightening regularity. As Jeanne E. Abrams makes clear, no one, not even the elite families of the founding fathers, was immune from the ravages of disease. Abrams provides an eminently readable account of the illnesses and health of the "founding fathers and mothers" that focuses on the Franklins, the Adamses, the Washingtons, and the Jeffersons. Piecing together letters, diaries, and other sources, Abrams recounts in vivid detail the founding families' frequent encounters with illness and death, arguing that these personal experiences directly influenced the development of early public health policies; however, the policy history frequently gets lost in the welter of personal history.

Asserting that "America's founders were among the small group of medical visionaries," Abrams tries to demonstrate that their "dramatic and often tragic personal encounters with disease and epidemics" made them typical of their era, if exceptional in their response (31, 7). In this book, which focuses primarily on the practice of domestic medicine, very few medical professionals make more than cameo appearances. In fact, professional medicine becomes a sort of bogeyman, exemplified by the heroic practices of Rush and his followers. In contrast, the

milder domestic practices of, primarily, the founding mothers shine. Abrams is at some pains to unsuccessfully explain away the many less than enlightened practices and beliefs of the founding parents themselves, including the frequent espousal of Rush's methods. For instance, Abrams pits Jefferson's "astute and forward thinking" against Rush's "frequent use of violent bleeding and purging," yet fails to account for the fact that the only medicine Jefferson sent with the Louis and Clark expedition was Rush's thunderbolts (Rush's patent laxative, a bolus made from jalap and mercury) (170, 174).

On the public health side, Abrams primarily focuses on two innovations: smallpox vaccination and the promotion of public hospitals and medical education. These founding families were all early advocates of smallpox inoculation, as evidenced by Franklin's early print promotions, Washington's command that all the troops receive inoculation during the Revolutionary War, and Jefferson's early advocacy of the Jenner method of cowpox vaccination. In addition, Franklin and Jefferson were both instrumental in promoting medical education in Pennsylvania and Virginia. Abrams makes the case that each founding father's personal experience with disease impacted his administration, but the evidence is largely circumstantial and diffuse. She addresses each family's encounter with the 1793 yellow fever epidemic, but other than the Seaman's Act (1798) and the expansion of quarantine, the impact on public policy is lost in the private experiences. One wishes she had focused more on the public health practices and policies and less on baroque personal detail.

Revolutionary Medicine offers fascinating insight into the personal histories of the founding families as they struggled to maintain health in the constant onslaught of epidemic disease, child mortality, and ineffective medical practices. Although the public health focus gets somewhat lost and the text borders on hagiography, Abrams's account is an engaging read that pieces together an intimate history of America's founding elite.

University of Minnesota Rochester

MARCIA D. NICHOLS

Law and Medicine in Revolutionary America: Dissecting the "Rush v. Cobbett" Trial, 1799. By LINDA MYRSIADES. (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press; Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012. 282 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$80.)

In 1797, Benjamin Rush sued William Cobbett for libel. Rush's decision to address in the courtroom the biting criticism "Porcupine" had leveled at "Sangrado" during the 1797 yellow fever epidemic was a highly risky strategy that ultimately proved a pyrrhic victory for the doctor. In 1798, the Alien and Sedition Acts made it possible for Rush's Republican legal team to turn the tables