

BOOK REVIEWS

The Road to Black Ned's Forge: A Story of Race, Sex, and Trade on the Colonial American Frontier. By TURK McCLESKEY. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014. Maps, illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. 324 pp. \$29.95.)

The Road to Black Ned's Forge is a compelling economic history of the colonial frontier told through the life of Edward Tarr, an enslaved Pennsylvania ironworker who purchased his own freedom and moved to Virginia in 1752. Through a meticulous study of financial and court records, McCleskey gives his "tale of unpaid bills" in the colonial backcountry a coherent narrative drive (58). While the story seems to flow effortlessly, McCleskey's painstaking research is demonstrated by over fifty pages of appendices for readers who wish to pick up the archival trail.

Part 1, "The Yeoman's Dilemma," traces the economic life of Thomas Shute, Edward Tarr's last owner, and the generational economic struggles at the heart of colonial life. Part 2, "The Safety Valve," recounts Tarr's education and the remarkable accomplishments of his first years of freedom: his move to the Virginia frontier, his marriage to a white woman, and his community status, which was established by his landholdings, blacksmith shop, and church membership. But a decade of frontier wars disrupted his life and that of his community, and in part 3, "Individuals and Social Change," McCleskey traces the expansion of slavery on the frontier and how the consequent racial dynamics complicated Tarr's status as a free man of color.

The dramatic events purported to be at the center of the book—the attempt to fraudulently re-enslave Edward Tarr—seem anticlimactic when they finally occur. The entire episode, while no doubt harrowing for Tarr, takes only a few pages; Tarr brought his legal documentation to court, the man claiming to own him failed to appear, and Tarr left court with further legal certification of his freedom.

Tarr's personal life also became a subject for the courts. Ann Moore, a white woman who lived in his household, was charged with engaging in adultery with Tarr. Tarr himself was not accused; because his "uncomplaining wife" lived in the house, an adultery charge against him could not be sustained (146). Moore forfeited judgment by not appearing in court, so we do not have her testimony. There is little exploration of whether Moore was indeed guilty of adultery or if the charges were an attempt to control an unruly woman guilty of disturbing the

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peace; the charge may also have been an attempt to undermine an unconventional interracial household. McCleskey does the best he can with the information available, but the book would have benefitted from a more sustained exploration of these questions. The book's abrupt conclusion that Tarr's failure as a "prominent free black role model" may have hurt the status of other free blacks seems speculative and unsupported (169–70). While McCleskey does cite classic texts by Ira Berlin, Kathleen Brown, and Winthrop Jordan, the book would have benefitted from an immersion in the scholarship on interracial intimacies and intermarriage bans, including work by such authors as Martha Hodes, Peggy Pascoe, and Joshua Rothman.

In all, at its best, *The Road to Black Ned's Forge* balances historical precision with strong storytelling about the colonial frontier. Edward Tarr and his community are worth getting to know, and this book changes our understanding of frontier societies and lays a strong foundation for future scholarship.

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KAREN WOODS WEIERMAN

Governed by a Spirit of Opposition: The Origins of American Political Practice in Colonial Philadelphia. By JESSICA CHOPPIN RONEY. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. 252 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$59.95.)

At least since Alexis de Tocqueville's 1832 tour of the United States, students of the early American republic have described that period as one in which private voluntary organizations proliferated. Jessica Choppin Roney's *Governed by a Spirit of Opposition* locates the origins of American voluntary culture, and thus of widespread civic participation, in an earlier period.

The book begins as a study of colonial Pennsylvania government, in which Roney's key argument is that, because Penn's colony had no established church and its capital only very limited government, churches stepped in to do the work—establishing schools and organizing poor relief, for example—that was elsewhere done by the formal state. However, churches were limited by their inability to hold property in common, and thus Philadelphians turned early in the eighteenth century to what Roney terms a "new civic technology"—the voluntary organization.

Roney identifies three distinct stages of associational life before 1776. First, she writes, Philadelphia's white men banded together to provide services that neither unincorporated churches nor a weak city government could provide, such as fire protection. By the 1740s, Roney finds, associationalism had entered a new stage, wherein Philadelphians began to establish narrower, more controversial, and more explicitly political voluntary organizations. An association to erect a structure in which itinerant minister George Whitefield could preach and a Defense Association were new forms of voluntary organization because they explicitly