

Meskwaki] were in keeping their culture alive and in forming the kinds of ties with the outside world that allowed them to continue their old ways." A Meskwaki speaker agreed. He said, "We have to fight to maintain the culture that makes us Indians." But the speaker was not referring to a static past because he continued, "I just want to say that there are beginnings and there are ends. Where there is a beginning there is an end. When we have found an end, then we must seek for a beginning" (Fred McTaggart, *Wolf That I Am* [1976], 188-89).

Frontier Swashbuckler: The Life and Legend of John Smith T, by Dick Steward. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000. x, 264 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Silvano Wueschner is associate professor of history at William Penn University. He is the author of *Ormanville: Life on the Iowa Frontier, 1850-1900* (1993).

The story of the frontier is frequently told from the perspective of a variety of colorful characters who often loom larger than life. Dick Steward has provided an account of one such man in his biography of Colonel John Smith T, a Tennessee transplant who emerged as one of early Missouri's most prominent men. Although Steward admits at the outset that Smith T never accomplished a single grand objective, his goal is to resurrect Smith T, the myths, legends, and lore that surrounded him. Rather than portraying Smith T as larger than life, Steward's objective is to relate his "checkered career" by detailing his successes and failures.

What emerges is the story of one man who migrated to Missouri to seek his fortune. He played a key role in Missouri's economic life. An associate of General James Wilkins and Aaron Burr and archrival of Moses Austin, Smith T was, by Steward's account, no Daniel Boone. While Steward claims that Smith T embodied the frontier pioneer life, he also states that Smith T did not explore, trap, or "hunt in the uncharted wilderness" (19). Instead, he formed the vanguard of the occupation stage, during which "the dialectic of civilization and barbarism often played out in desperate fashion" (19). Smith T proved to be the consummate opportunist who found a variety of ways to generate wealth. His myriad economic activities touched on river ways, turnpikes, slaves, lumber, lead, salt springs, land claims, and the overland trade. In achieving his objective to garner the riches promised by the frontier, he readily relied on the myths that developed about him and by and large operated somewhere between frontier common law, territorial and federal law, and stable government. In Missouri he was

appointed a lieutenant colonel of the local militia and also a judge at the Ste. Genevieve Court of Common Pleas, positions he employed in dispensing his own peculiar brand of justice and solidifying his various land claims. As a judge, he meted out justice with a rifle draped across his lap. After suffering a series of disappointments in Missouri, Smith T moved to Texas, where he fared no better: "the intrigue on the Southwestern frontier was complicated by shifting alliances, divided loyalties, conflicting policies, and uncontrollable policies" (131).

All in all, this is a well-documented work about an unscrupulous character on the early Missouri frontier. Steward has done an admirable job of separating the man from the legend, and he provides a fairly cogent narrative of the relationships Smith T developed with friend and foe on the Missouri frontier. Although the work satisfactorily portrays Smith T and his various roles in Missouri and other parts of the West, it would be stronger if Steward had availed himself of more of the secondary literature dealing with such topics as the land office business, and more recent scholarship dealing with the institution of slavery and its impact on the nascent capitalism of the trans-Mississippi West, especially since Smith T relied on slaves to provide the labor for his lead mines and related enterprises. Although it offers nothing new to our understanding of the trans-Mississippi West, Steward's biography of Smith T is nevertheless a welcome addition to the available biographical literature of the region.

The Wisconsin Frontier, by Mark Wyman. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998. History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier Series. vii, 336 pp. Maps, illustrations, essay on sources, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Paula M. Nelson is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. She is the author of *After the West Was Won: Homesteaders and Town-Builders in Western South Dakota, 1900-1917* and *The Prairie Winnows Out Its Own: The West River Country of South Dakota in the Years of Depression and Dust*.

Today, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, looks much like other American towns of 5,000 or so people. It has its strip of fast food restaurants and chain motels snaking along the major highway east of town, its faded downtown section a few blocks off the main drag, its signs saluting its high school sports teams and their championships over the years. But Prairie du Chien has something unique: its location near the mouth of the Wisconsin River, on the broad plain where the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers meet. Its location provides Prairie du Chien with a lovely geographic backdrop for its daily life and with a rich and di-

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