mands for "practical" education. While providing helpful historical data, Herbst fails to explain adequately the connections between the provisions and legacy of the Ordinance and these educational developments.

There is little that is genuinely new in this book, but its contributors furnish some perceptive material. Finkelman’s explanation of why southern congressmen supported Article VI is, for example, highly penetrating, as is Stewart’s comparison of the strategic importance of the Old Northwest with that of the present-day Middle East. Likewise, Bloch’s discussion of Congregationalist desires to spread "the true faith of the growing republic" (p. 42) suggests a fresh area of investigation for students of civil religion. In short, this slim volume demonstrates the historiographic value of academe’s celebration of “the other bicentennial.”


The American Backwoods Frontier is an exploration in historical geography that seeks to identify the ethnic and ecological origins of America's frontier woodland culture. Terry G. Jordan and Matti Kaups rely on diverse documentary sources as well as observations of remnant artifacts at original locations and in open air museums. Prior to beginning this book, Jordan believed that the structural skills and architectural concepts necessary for a rapidly advancing woodland frontier were to be found in the German lands of Central Europe. An absence of supportive field evidence in this area and subsequently encouraging observations in Scandinavia led to him to adopt a new hypothesis. He became convinced that log architecture and fencing, as well as other practices associated with America’s woodland frontier, originated among Finnish settlers who migrated from interior Sweden to the Delaware Valley. Jordan then invited Kaups, an expert on Finnish culture, to become a research collaborator.

The resulting book begins with a brief overview of the frontier way of life and a reminder that American woodland settlement advanced most rapidly beyond the Midland or Delaware Valley culture hearth. The second chapter presents the authors’ primary hypothesis: “the eastern, interior Finns of Karelian and Savoan background, bearers of a well-developed, beautifully preadapted forest colonization cultural complex, were the most significant
SAVO-KARELIAN LOG ARCHITECTURE

Story-and-a-half House from Norwegian Hedmark, a few miles from the Swedish Border

Log Double House from Taipalsaari in the Lake District of Southern Savo, Finland

Courtesy Terry G. Jordan.
shapers of the American backwoods way of life” (p. 36). The substantive chapters that follow offer various kinds of evidence to corroborate this thesis: reconstructing the Savo-Karelian frontier way of life and the rapidity with which it advanced through previously unsettled forests in Finland, Sweden, and the Delaware Valley; establishing the existence of nearly identical cultural traits among the first European settlers of America’s interior woodlands—the same farming, construction, folk architecture, and hunting and gathering practices; and presenting surname and place name occurrences that support early migration from the Delaware Valley into the midland interior.

Jordan’s and Kaups’s hypothesis that the colonial Savo-Karelian Finns of New Sweden are the primary contributors to America’s woodland frontier culture is more than plausible. Excellent graphics depicting the recurring presence of the same material culture traits in northern Europe and interior America effectively reinforce their argument. The Savo-Karelian immigrants are convincingly presented as an adaptable group of settlers with a venerable European woodland frontier heritage. Their early arrival in the Delaware Valley and rapid dispersal to isolated sites in the forest contrasted with the more gregarious, slowly advancing, conservative cultivators who first came to New England, Pennsylvania, and the Chesapeake from European lands where the forests were cleared long before.

The evidence presented by Jordan and Kaups, however, is not sufficient to convince every reader of the validity of their thesis. They admit that information describing frontier culture in and near the Delaware Valley is sketchy. They also acknowledge a dearth of concrete evidence that later arriving and considerably more numerous Scots-Irish frontiersmen willingly adopted a way of life followed by a few scattered Finns. Nor can essential prior borrowing of Delaware Indian traits by the Savo-Karelians be fully documented. Even with these shortcomings, this provocative and clearly written monograph will hold the attention of any reader who has an interest in American frontier history.

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Despite the flood of Reconstruction studies appearing over the past several decades and a substantial shelf of works already devoted to the enigmatic Andrew Johnson, historians have long needed a modern, balanced biography of the seventeenth president.