

Along the Maysville Road
The Early Republic in the Trans-Appalachian West
 By Craig Thompson Friend

(Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005. Pp. 378. Figures, maps, appendix, notes, index. \$42.00.)

Most undergraduates in the U.S. history survey briefly encounter the Maysville Road when they study Jacksonian-era battles over federal support for internal improvements. For those who want to know more about how this backcountry road became the center of a national controversy, Craig Thompson Friend's *Along the Maysville Road* takes readers back to the Revolutionary era, making the sixty-five-mile route through north-central Kentucky the organizing principle for a social history of the state during the early republic.

Thompson describes his approach as a "biography of a road" and readers will certainly learn about the physical and environmental changes in the thoroughfare, from its earliest history as a buffalo trace to the turnpike era, when locals and tourists alike finally experienced travel on a relatively smooth, paved surface. But this is not primarily a book about the transportation revolution. It is a more broadly conceived social history of the towns and communities that grew up along the Maysville Road from the 1770s to the 1830s. Using a diverse array of sources ranging from travel accounts, newspapers, census data, manuscripts, and maps to architectural and landscape evidence, Friend traces the evolution of communities along the road from

their origins in a period of ethnically diverse pioneering migrations, through the emergence of an agricultural gentry, to what he calls the triumph of an entrepreneurial middle class. Women and slaves appear periodically, but the focus of the book remains on the "men of commerce" who, Friend argues, ultimately controlled "the form and direction of cultural development in this early American West" (p. 4).

In the period from 1800 to 1825, debt, drought, war, and revivalism reshaped the road and the communities it linked. The state assembly began to pay greater attention to road construction beginning in 1810; Friend argues that the decision signaled a shifting political culture in central Kentucky, from a society organized around traditional communities transplanted by the eastern gentry to one shaped by the triumph of middle-class commercial interests. Though political debate was often contentious, the limits of turnpike investment and the symbiotic relationship between agricultural and commercial interests suggest that a common class interest produced more consensus than conflict among the commercial elites at the heart of Friend's story.

Friend's initial assertion that "this beaten path was one of the most

exceptional roads of the Early American Republic, serving as the spine of the most dynamic region of the American West,” overreaches the evidence, which primarily documents the role of Maysville Road as a local route connecting a “Village West” rather than as a migration highway (p. 2). Nevertheless, scholars of the trans-Appalachian west in the early republic will find much useful information in this microhistory of social change in a region where revivalism, patriotism,

and entrepreneurial ambition helped to define a new American identity. Friend’s narrative writing style will also appeal to a broader public audience interested in the history of Kentucky and western migration.

LISA C. TOLBERT is associate professor of American history at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and author of *Constructing Townscapes: Space and Society in Antebellum Tennessee* (1999).



Confronting Race

Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1815-1915

By Glenda Riley

(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004. Pp. ix, 326. Illustrations, notes, index. Clothbound, \$39.95; paperbound, \$21.95.)

Glenda Riley, Alexander M. Bracken professor emeritus of history at Ball State University, has contributed substantially to the field of women’s history throughout her remarkably productive career. Historically speaking, she is largely responsible for putting midwestern women on the map. In *Confronting Race*, Riley examines white-Indian relations and the racial prejudices of nineteenth-century, trans-Mississippi migrating women, many of whom had midwestern roots. She contends that, as a result of proscribed gender roles, white women interacted with American Indians and demonstrated changing attitudes toward them in ways that white men did not. Even so, she concludes, white women remained “solidly colonialist”

in their opinions about other groups (p. 2). Riley’s analysis is based primarily upon a range of women’s private writings including diaries, journals, and daybooks, along with a number of public accounts, records, and cultural sources such as novels. This study speaks to the need to investigate the role of gender in the legacies of white expansionism in the West.

Confronting Race is a revised version of a 1984 publication into which Riley has integrated newer findings and at least one major theoretical argument to engage in the larger conversation about race and colonialism. Western frontiers are identified as geographical zones wherein groups of people met and where one group