natural disaster, or the end of a war. It is not an entirely innocent expression of grief, Doss suggests. It is a sign of the nation hard at work.

Pointedly, then, Doss does not conclude her text with the debates over a memorial at "Ground Zero," with their general anti-Muslim sentiment and strident adherence to the language of national mourning for "heroes." She ends, instead, by exposing a vigorous argument in California about a memorial to the open border—an argument staged, in the midst of a debate over Mexican immigration, about walls and restrictions, in which calls for a free and fair exchange of ideas, and a passionate commitment to democracy first won the day. Maybe, just maybe, the anger of memorial mania, she suggests at the end, can lay the foundation for its opposite. Let's hope she is right.

MATTHEW PRATT GUTERL is Professor of Africana Studies and American Studies at Brown University. Most recently, he is the author of *Seeing Race in Modern America* (2013).

Touching America's History
From the Pequot War to WWII
By Meredith Mason Brown

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. Pp. xiii, 271. Maps, illustrations, charts, bibliography, index. $30.00.)

Historians have grown increasingly interested in the tangible relics of history, and studies using material culture as pathways to the past are ever more common. *Touching America's History* is a popular work that seeks to bring the idea of history through objects to a general readership. Meredith Mason Brown uses ten objects from his own family collections to tell stories of different moments in American history from 1600 to World War II. The author describes his "reliquary approach" to American history as the study of "things left behind, things we can touch, that may not be extraordinary in themselves, but that bring powerfully to mind what was here before, the way a sock or an undershirt can put a bloodhound on the scent of a man on the run" (p. 1).

Such passages not only showcase Brown's approachable and engaging writing style, but also aptly represent the relationship between objects and narrative history put forth in his book. The author chooses not to analyze his selected objects as they might be in a more scholarly material culture study, and they are not the focal point of each chapter. Rather, each object becomes a point of departure for a historical narrative shaped and bounded by the object itself. These

well- written, well-researched narratives combine history on many scales, from the personal to the global. Chapter 10, for example, begins with the presentation of a western novel and a fragment of a toilet bowl: a fascinating pairing of objects that symbolize, for the author, the Allied invasion of Normandy and the liberation of Nazi Europe. Brown weaves these unlikely artifacts into a compelling narrative of global events entwined with his father's war experiences.

Touching America's History makes for an entertaining read, but it is not without its shortcomings. Perhaps most notably, the author fails to explain why he chose these ten particular items, other than that they are family heirlooms to which he has access. Brown notes the selected objects skew heavily towards weaponry and warfare, with nine if not ten of them being directly tied to war. I would disagree with the author that a history of America's wars "fairly reflects the history of the United States" (p. 226). Even if we accept that war has been a consistent part of our history and is integral to the American narrative, war is much more than the weapons and relics of those who fought. A truer, more complex "reliquary approach" to war would include objects from the home front, relics of women and children, and the material culture of workers who supported the war effort from afar. The stories and objects in this book are compelling, but they do not represent America's history as completely as the title suggests.

On a recent trip to Valparaiso, I had the pleasure of touring the excellent Porter County Museum, and noted to my companion that a very high percentage of the donated collections were mementos of war. It seems that Indiana families, like others elsewhere, cherish these types of objects and understand their historical importance, whether kept at home or donated to a public repository. This book will resonate well with individuals who value the objects of their own family history, and it will serve as inspiration for people wishing to uncover the stories their family's "relics" can tell.

JANE EVA BAXTER is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at DePaul University in Chicago. She is a historical archaeologist working in the Midwest and Caribbean, and teaches courses on American material culture.