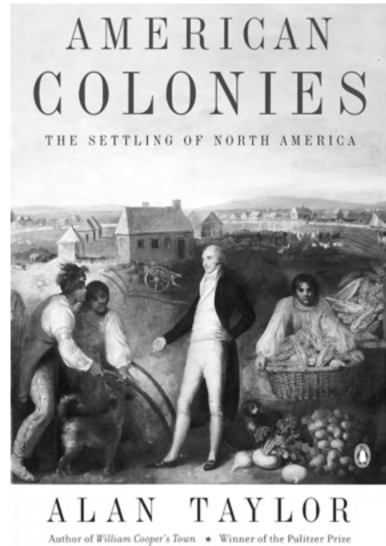
Book Reviews

***American Colonies: The Settling of North America*. By Alan Taylor. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2001. 526 pages. $20.00 (trade paperback).**



American Colonies: The Settling of North America presents a survey history of North America dating from the beginnings of human habitation up to and including the eighteenth century. This description may give pause to some readers, as survey histories can prove to be dull reading. Fortunately, this book avoids the common pitfalls of many survey histories by being so well written and chock-full of fascinating new facts, ideas, and anecdotes that the reader is enthralled with the emerging storyline.

In addition to his extensive examination of French, Spanish, and English colonizers, Taylor pays much more than typical lip service to a wide range of additional players, including groups that are often overlooked or slighted by conventional histories. Russians, Dutch, Swiss, Germans, Africans, and others played important roles that are closely examined. The author also examines Native American history and culture far more extensively than is common for books on North American colonization, which tend to be Eurocentric.

The stories of the Hohokam and Anasazi Indians in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries present some possible parallels for today's world concerning the probable, calamitous effects of climate change. Both cultures built thousands of acres of extensive irrigation systems for farming in what is now the Southwestern United States. This allowed multiple communities of thousands of inhabitants to build permanent adobe dwellings and forgo the nomadic wanderings of many hunter/gatherer societies. Unfortunately, they did not realize that their principal crop, maize, depletes the soil of the nutrients it needs to grow future crops (English colonists would later learn this about tobacco as well). Combined with a series of devastating droughts, this led to internal competition and violence, and the eventual decline and

abandonment of their communities. The surviving inhabitants broke up into smaller groups and departed to other areas, where they reverted back to hunting and gathering to survive. All of this happened before the advent of the European "invasion" of the continent.

And an invasion it was. It is now common knowledge that the colonists brought invasive germs to the continent. But the vast scale of decimation accompanying this phenomenon may be lesser known. These germs eventually killed millions of Native Americans, causing a much greater proportion of deaths than the plague in Europe or the Spanish Flu of 1918. Also, the Indians were powerless to stop the destruction of their unfenced crops by invasive farm animals brought to their shores. The colonists' cattle, pigs, chicken, and sheep were free to roam as they pleased, eating everything in their path. Any Indian who killed one in defense of his crops could expect swift and disproportionate "justice" from his Caucasian neighbors. The violence caused by misunderstanding, greed, and racism led to the near eradication of cultures and people that had flourished for centuries, all due to the impact of the most dangerous invasive species of all—white men.

For the time and place, the Dutch were model colonists compared to the English and Spanish. Their main area of settlement was New Amsterdam (later to become New York City) and the Hudson River Valley to the North. The Dutch (they were Europeans after all) could be severe to the native population, especially those close to New Amsterdam. But many of their dealings with Indians were aboveboard and honest, drawing a sharp contrast with their European competitors. Also, the Dutch practiced genuine religious toleration, unlike the English settlers, who were often as intolerant as the mother country they escaped. This toleration extended to Jews as well, which is one of the factors that led to such a high percentage of Jews migrating to New York. The Netherlands was a small, prosperous country, with a relatively contented population. They didn't have starving masses of poor and discontented on the same scale as the English. Consequently, their New World possession was thinly populated and ripe for the English to steal from them during one of the numerous commercial wars between the two rival powers. They forfeited their colony but bequeathed a legacy of religious and social toleration to New York and the surrounding areas.

No modern discussion of colonial history can escape a frank dialogue about the evils and impact of slavery. As early as Columbus, the natives of the Caribbean were forced into a slavery that marked them as a society for rapid decline and eventual ruin. As it turned out, Indians were often "not suited" to slavery, and often quickly died when forced into it. This didn't keep the Spaniards from trying, until virtually all of the native Caribbean

populations were wiped from the face of the earth due to slavery and disease. A compounding factor was the degree and severity of slavery in the Caribbean (and later Mississippi and Alabama). No form of slavery is ever good for the enslaved, but the Caribbean version was more in tune with Nazi Germany than with the mythical *Gone with the Wind*. Slaves were often treated like Jews in "working" concentration camps, where the slave was an expendable commodity that was worked to death and then replaced with another, and so on. Slave owners reasoned that it was a more cost-effective system for the type of backbreaking work being done. Also, a starving, weakened, underfed slave would have less chance or ability to revolt than a well-fed, healthy counterpart.

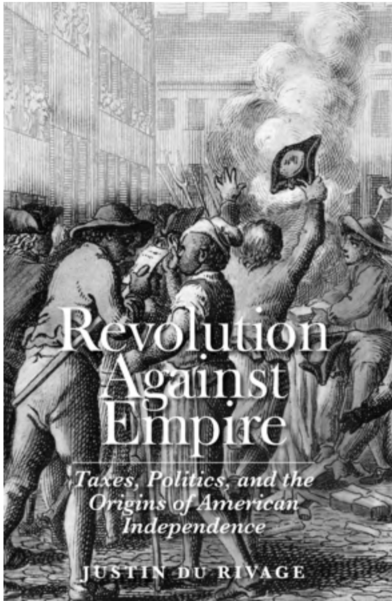
Taylor examines the horrors of the Atlantic Middle Passage, where slaves were packed into filthy, unsanitary, and dangerous holds which led to extremely high rates of disease and death. He explains that slavery was common in the Northern colonies, and that Northern shipping and business profited handsomely from slavery. The book also explores the lives and restrictions of free Blacks, North and South, describing how the word "Free" is a relative description.

This review has only scratched the surface of all of the topics and ethnic groups that are discussed in this fascinating and highly informative book. *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* is an enjoyable read about the early history of this country.

Stephen Donnelly is a consultant for the life insurance industry and a Westfield State College alumnus.

***Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence*. By Justin Du Rivage. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017. 371 pages. $40.00 (hardcover).**

For generations Americans have been taught that they fought a revolution against Britain due to taxation without representation. Colonists were taxed but had no voice in Parliament. The rationale for taxes was that the mother country needed to recoup revenue expended to protect the colonies from the French and Indians during the Seven Years' War. Britain concluded a long, expensive world war, defeating the French and gaining Canada in the bargain. Indian deprivations against the colonists continued after the war ended, requiring more soldiers and forts. As a result of the war, England's finances were in shambles, and it seemed only just that the colonists pay a portion of the bill. The rationale was that the money was spent in defense



of the colonies; therefore, the colonies should contribute some money towards that defense. Who could argue?

This scenario is accurate at the surface level, but a deeper dive into English politics at the time shows us that the debate was part of a much larger discussion about the British Empire and its colonies that went on for decades. Disagreements within parties led to a fracturing of party loyalty, with proponents of each loose faction existing across party affiliation. The author divides them into three ideological camps, with adherents on both sides of the Atlantic.

Establishment Whigs believed in a commercial empire funded by excise taxes and public debt, and that the mother country had a constitutional right to tax the colonies. They also believed in a professional military and that the country and the Empire should continue to be governed by a small elite. Members in this group believed in the primacy of Britain within the Empire, but were less inclined to the use of military means than the Authoritarian reformers. Before the troubles with America became an overarching issue, most British and American subjects were firmly in this camp.

Authoritarian reformers believed in the primacy of government authority and elites and in fiscal austerity, and therefore clearly believed that the government had an obligation to tax the colonies in order to keep itself on a solid fiscal footing. They held a hard line towards the colonies, expecting them to fall into line with coercive measures if necessary. King George III and his closest followers adopted this philosophy as the American crisis deepened.

Radical Whigs believed in individual freedom and checks on government power. They also believed, in an early manifestation of today's attacks on the one percent, in the leveling of society. They contended that the British constitution provided for the well-being of its citizens as well as the protection of property from unjust taxation. They were more inclined to believe that the Empire should be a loose confederation of equals, with prosperity resulting from amity and free trade rather than mercantile restrictions.

The American Revolution became far more likely, if not inevitable, as George III moved into the authoritarian reformers camp, and much of

America adopted the views of the radical Whigs. An America-centric view of the Revolution often misses or ignores the fact that a continuous raging debate about these issues was a constant staple of British politics. And the discussions were not confined to the thirteen colonies alone. India and a host of lesser colonies were included in the discussion as well. But the American colonies were unique in the sense that most of the inhabitants or their progenitors were British born. Does an American colonist born in Britain have fewer rights than a citizen who resides in England? And if so, how and why do their rights differ? Does an American colonist have similar rights to a "native" subject born in India?

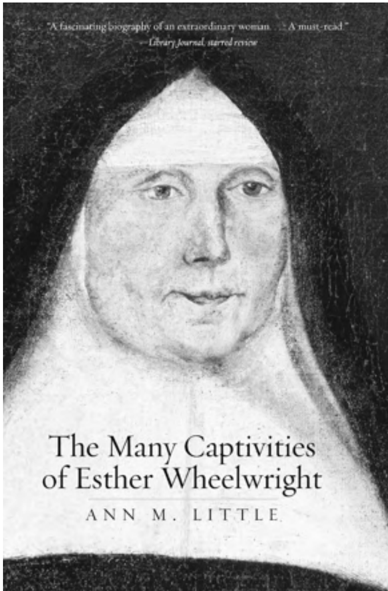
The rights and duties of governments to assess and collect taxes in an equitable manner, and of citizens to pay such taxes, was the central point of disagreement between Britain and the colonies. Society can be formed and shaped by how taxes are assessed. They can be used to reward supporters and punish enemies. Britain looked upon colonial taxation as a way to equitably offset the huge expenses it was generating through wars and the Empire. The colonists viewed taxation as a means of control, and as a way for the British to economically exploit the colonies. This was the unbridgeable chasm that eventually led to rupture.

The taxation issue was an integral part of a much broader issue—what was the true relationship between the "parent" and the fast-growing colonial "child"? Should the colony be totally subservient to Britain, taxed and controlled with an eye to giving every advantage to the mother country? Or should the colonies be encouraged to grow more independent, trading with Britain out of mutual advantage and friendship rather than coercion, in a kind of eighteenth-century British Commonwealth?

With hindsight, we now know how these questions were resolved and the ultimate effect they had on Britain, America, and the world. But like almost any other historical issue, this debate could have gone a different way entirely. The author of *Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence* does an excellent job explaining how and why these decisions dominated debate in Parliament for years, and eventually helped lead to American independence. Du Rivage provides a fresh rationale for why events happened the way that they did, and opens up a new page in the Revolutionary saga for any historian that has concentrated only on the American side of the Atlantic during this struggle.

Stephen Donnelly is a consultant for the life insurance industry and a Westfield State College alumnus.

The Many Captivities of Esther Wheelwright. **By Ann M. Little. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. 304 pages. $30.00 (paperback).**



Ann M. Little, currently a professor of history at Colorado State University, has written extensively on the history of colonial New England. Her first book, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England*, explored the relationship between ideas about gender and family life and people's experiences of cross-cultural warfare. *The Many Captivities of Esther Wheelwright* continues her analysis of war, gender, and family. Born to an Anglo family in Wells, Massachusetts, Esther Wheelwright was captured by the Wabanaki Native Americans at age seven and, several years later, was taken by the French to Montreal, where she entered the Ursuline convent. She was by all accounts an extraordinary woman, and her story is also "the story of whole communities of women, and how they lived and worked, and suffered and thrived in early America" (2).

Esther's life illustrates the important work women performed in New England and highlights similarities in women's lives among three different cultures—English, Wabanaki, and French. Little adopts a chronological approach throughout the volume and notes in the beginning that some areas of Esther's life are better documented. A typical biography usually focuses on the subject's adulthood, often to the detriment of other times of life. This book, however, spends far more time on Esther's childhood and old age. This is due to a lack of documentation for large portions of Esther's life and the fact that the extant sources do not reveal much about her inner life. Nevertheless, Little skillfully employs the sources she has to paint a rich and vivid picture of Esther Wheelwright's life and world.

The book begins with Esther's early years in Wells, then Massachusetts, now Maine, and provides readers with excellent analyses of the contours of Esther's home life and the tasks she would have been expected to perform. Women's work tended to be exhausting and endless, although Esther was too young to contribute much productive labor to the household. The

Wheelwright home was also a tavern. Consequently, the family catered to a diverse array of visitors and customers which, in turn, entailed extra income and extra work. Wells was a frontier and Anglo colonists lived in fear of Native American attacks and wars with the French. Violence touched the community on August 10, 1703, when a Wabanaki war party captured Esther and another child. Frustratingly, "the most dramatic event in the lives of the people of Wells at the turn of the eighteenth century is unrecorded in any significant detail" (45). Even so, Little delves deeply into the life of a captive and the similarities between Anglo and Wabanaki households. Wabanaki women had a powerful impact on Esther during and after her process of becoming Wabanaki. As she aged, Esther drew away from the faith of her Puritan family in Wells and embraced Wabanaki Catholicism. Esther Wheelwright thus became Mali, a Catholic Wabanaki.

In 1708, Mali was "taken from her family or encouraged to leave it behind in Norridgewock or Odanak and to travel to Québec" (81). As with other periods of her life, men provided transportation to a new place, but women "educated and cared for her, just as her Wabanaki and New England mothers and sisters had looked after her before them" (87). Crossing borders required yet another cultural transformation, and Mali soon became Esther Anglaise. She initially lodged in the home of Governor General Vandreuil and was later enrolled in the Ursuline convent school. Unsurprisingly, the Ursulines whitened Esther in their records and emphasized her English, not her Wabanaki, origins—hence her new name. Father Vincent Bigot provided a dowry so that Esther could enter the convent as a choir nun. She took the veil on January 3, 1713, and remained in the convent for the rest of her life. Here her final transformation occurred—her name changed to Sister Marie-Joseph de l'Enfant Jésus. At this point, Little comments, "a curtain now descends to prevent us from seeing clearly the details of her life as an individual for several decades" (164).

About the time the curtain rises and readers regain sight of Esther, war had broken out in America. Experiencing the British bombardment of Québec during the Seven Years' War and having to flee the convent to seek shelter elsewhere undoubtedly proved traumatic for many of the nuns. Still, the British decision to use part of the convent for a hospital and to quarter soldiers helped the sisters in a difficult time because it meant they received some assistance from the British. Interestingly, "as Québec was conquered by the British, the Ursuline monastery would elevate its only foreign-born nun to mother superior" (165-166).

In sum, at a moment of grave crisis, the nuns chose Esther to lead them. On the one hand, this was not a great surprise. Esther became part of the

leadership structure in 1735 and served in many different leadership roles for the following forty years. Furthermore, the convent valued the experiences of age and tended to elevate older women to the role of mother superior. Nevertheless, Esther was the only foreign-born mother superior, and some nuns grumbled about her election and felt resentful, perhaps because they remembered her humble origins. That said, Esther clearly had the confidence of a clear majority of the nuns and her leadership yielded net positive results: "By the end of her third term as superior in 1772, the convent was more secure under her leadership with more students, more novices, and more money than they could have hoped for in the dark hours of 1759 and 1760" (200). Even to the end, after finishing her third term as mother superior, Esther played a role in the convent leadership until her death in 1780, which represented for many nuns the passing of an era. Little concludes on an ironic note, by observing that "the aspect of Mother Esther's life that made her remarkable in her lifetime—her transnationalism as a New England-born Catholic nun in New France—is the very thing that probably doomed her to obscurity in both U.S. American and Canadian national histories" (226).

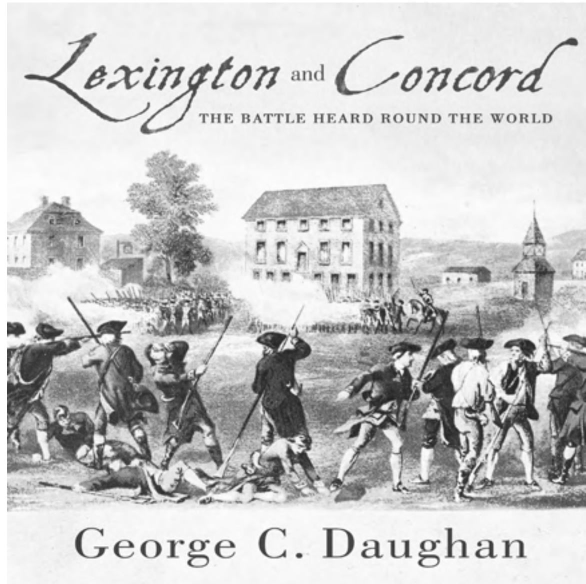
The Many Captivities of Esther Wheelwright is eminently readable, thoroughly researched, and models how a good historian can use scattered and limited sources to paint a compelling story of a remarkable woman and her times. This is a book that will appeal to anyone interested in religion, race, gender, ethnicity, and warfare in the Colonial North American borderlands.

Evan C. Rothera is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith.

Lexington and Concord: The Battle Heard Round the World. By George C. Daughan. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018. Illustrations. 349 pages. $27.95 (hardcover).

Lexington and Concord: The Battle Heard Round the World offers clear and concise descriptions of the events leading to this pivotal battle, and provides factual analysis that reflects the author's meticulous research and ability to present little-known details about the battle and its aftermath. With thirty-nine short but information-packed chapters, the book outlines the mistakes made by Great Britain as that colonial power sought to increase and tighten controls over the valuable American colonies. According to Daughan, the British vastly underestimated both the ability of Americans to fight and their resolve to resist what they saw as tyranny on the part of Britain. Captain W. Glanville Evelyn condemned all provincials as cowards and believed the

rebels had only been "making preparations as if to frighten us" (4). Actually, though many colonists were reluctant to engage with or fight against the British, they were determined not to succumb to London's rule unchecked and feared that their standard of living was threatened if their economic and political freedoms were restricted. With the highest standard of living in the world, Massachusetts in particular was loath to accept dictates from England that would surely "reduce them to penury" (5) and transform a society of middle-class farmers and artisans into a peasantry like that in Ireland and other parts of Europe. Daughan outlines how, while Britain was the most advanced democracy in the world, there were still "flagrant inequities in English society" (9).



The book opens with the British reaction to the Boston Tea Party, which occurred on December 16, 1773, and resulted in the loss of some 342 chests of East India Company tea, worth around 92,000 pounds. Read as lawlessness by the king and Parliament, the reaction was swift and harsh. Outlining the next steps with detailed discussions of the conversations between the king, political and military leaders, and Benjamin Franklin, who was in London representing the colonists interests, Daughan paints a picture of miscommunication and missteps as the ability to negotiate and compromise disappeared, culminating with the passage of the Coercive Acts (known as the Intolerable Acts by the colonists) in March 1774. Of course, many colonists, particularly those in Massachusetts, felt these restrictions were tantamount to a declaration of war, and rather than force America to accede to British control, had the effect of uniting the colonies against a common enemy.

The author proceeds to lay out in short, concise chapters, the slow buildup of antagonism and mistrust in Massachusetts leading up to the pivotal battles

in those small New England communities. Daughan outlines in detail the colonial strategies, the major players, and the traitorous actions of Dr. Benjamin Church, while outlining the hardening attitude of the king and the British military toward the situation in Boston. As the crisis deepened, the British experienced difficulties communicating and coordinating military action; their logistics were hampered by the distance and length of time it took for information to cross the Atlantic. Further complicating the situation was the apparent willful disregard for accurate assessments of the situation in Boston by General Gage and others, who continually advised London that the situation was dire, the colonists would fight, and an increased military presence was urgently needed.

As discontent spread throughout the colonies, General Gage became increasingly concerned, but his efforts to explain the situation on the ground were essentially ignored in London. King George was determined to bring the colonists to their knees and refused to acknowledge the warnings he received from America. Daughan's exceptionally detailed narrative of the British correspondence back and forth illuminates the complexity of the decision-making process and the lack of comprehension by British officials. The creation of the Continental Congress was a pivotal event in the developing crisis, bringing colonial leaders together to form a relatively cohesive unit. According to the author, Dr. Joseph Warren's Suffolk Resolves "were an elegant statement of the grievances felt by Massachusetts, coupled with a clear plan of action" (94). By expressing a strong preference for a peaceful settlement and downplaying the push for independence, the Resolves provided a path for Britain to compromise, but were completely rejected by the king. As the chronological narrative continues, the chapter on slaves seems somewhat incongruous, yet provides some context on the clear dichotomy between the colonists refusal to submit to tyranny and their characterization of the British as attempting to enslave them with the morally repugnant institution that existed so prolifically in the American colonies (105).

As the situation deteriorated, militias were organized, a communication network was established, and colonists began to stockpile weapons and ammunition. The author lays out the process in detail, reporting in turn the efforts of the colonists counterposed with the actions taken by the British military, as the economic impact of the Coercive Acts began to take hold. Throughout the colonies, from North to South, these restrictions "imperiled the planters as much as they did the farmers in Massachusetts. A sudden closing of ports, discarding old charters, and drastic changes in methods of governance all indicated that London was bent on gaining a degree of political

dominance that would inevitably affect every other aspect of society" (158). The threat to the prosperity of the colonies worked to unite them.

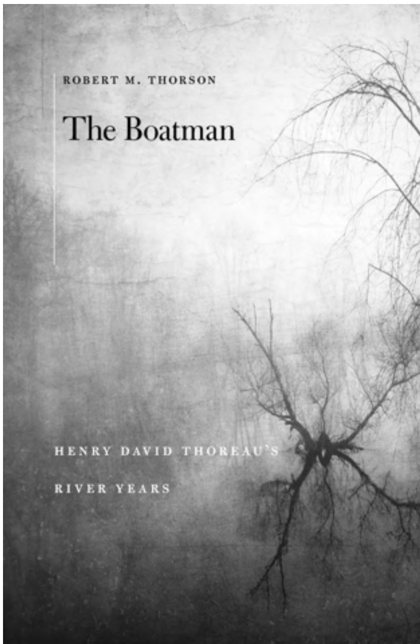
As Daughan moves closer to the events of April 1775, he details how the orders from London to go on the offensive led to the disastrous decisions that resulted in the battles at Lexington and Concord. Gage's planned excursion to Concord to retrieve the cache of weapons stored there depended on speed and secrecy, both of which were compromised at the outset. With the countryside alarmed and ready to mobilize and fight, in opposition to the British belief that the provincials would stand down in the face of the regulars, the explosion of violence was unavoidable. The author provides interesting insights into many of the actors on the field, as well as the behind-the-scenes decisions, delays, and miscommunications that led to disaster for the British troops. *Lexington and Concord: The Battle Heard Round the World* ends with the withdrawal of the British to the city proper, and the beginning of the Siege of Boston.

George C. Daughan has produced a well-researched and thoughtfully written and detailed account of how and why the British Empire clashed with their American colonies in two small communities in Massachusetts, setting off the American Revolution and ultimate independence of those valuable colonies. He is an accomplished and award-winning author, and a graduate of Harvard University. Daughan won the Samuel Eliot Morrison Award for Naval Literature in 2008 and has been honored for his work in naval scholarship.

Ann M. Becker is an Associate Professor in historical studies at SUNY Empire State College.

***The Boatman: Henry David Thoreau's River Years.* By Robert M. Thorson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. 315 pages. $29.95 (hardcover).**

The bicentennial of American author and naturalist Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) was well celebrated in 2017, and publishers prepared for the high demand. Some took the opportunity to re-release editions of *Walden*, his most famous title. Cambridge University Press offered two new academic anthologies: *Henry David Thoreau in Context* (edited by James S. Finley) and *Thoreau at 200: Essays and Reassessments* (edited by Kristen Case and K. P. Van Anglen). The publishing highlight of the year, however, was the arrival of the long-awaited biography by Notre Dame professor Laura Dassow Walls, *Henry David Thoreau: A Life* (University of Chicago Press, 2017). Her meticulous and ground-breaking research quickly put the book ahead



of the two traditional biographies of the past: Walter Harding's *The Days of Henry Thoreau* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1965) and Robert D. Richardson's *Henry Thoreau: A Life of the Mind* (University of California Press, 1986). Walls' work overshadows all of these other publications.

Standing in the shade is Robert M. Thorson's *The Boatman: Henry David Thoreau's River Years*, which was also released for the bicentennial. This text is a specialized study of Henry Thoreau's interactions with the three rivers of his hometown of Concord, Massachusetts. Popular thought links Thoreau with "Life in the Woods," the original subtitle of *Walden*. Thorson shows conversely that Thoreau spent far more time on the water than in the forest. In fact, he spent an entire year analyzing the Concord River watershed—initially, to gather data for a legal battle involving local farmers; and then, to collect more details for his own greater understanding. "Thoreau made a conscious decision to go deep into nature instead of broad" (130), the author tells us. He too follows this strategy and goes deep to bring the naturalist's water-work to the surface.

As a geology professor at the University of Connecticut, Thorson is no stranger to Walden Pond or to Thoreau studies. His previous books include *Beyond Walden: The Hidden History of America's Kettle Lakes and Ponds* (Walker & Company, 2009) and *Walden's Shore: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Science* (Harvard University Press, 2014). For many years, he has accompanied class trips to Concord, led by fellow UConn professor of early American history, Robert A. Gross. Thorson expanded his glacial geology notes and student handouts in order to create *The Guide to Walden Pond* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018). Now with *The Boatman*, he has two main objectives—to trace Thoreau's intersections with the Concord River and its feeders, the Assabet and the Sudbury; and to document the man's research and contributions regarding the "flowage controversy" of the 1850s.

Thorson scoured and indexed the full 26-year run of Thoreau's journal entries (1837–1861), looking for watery references. He found that the interest began early. "For the first time it occurred to me this afternoon what a piece of wonder a river is," Thoreau wrote on September 5, 1838 (Vol. I, 58). He continued:

> A huge volume of matter ceaselessly rolling through the fields and meadows of this substantial earth making haste from the high places, by stable dwellings of men and Egyptian pyramids, to its restless reservoir. One would think that, by a very natural impulse, the dwellers upon the headwaters of the Mississippi and Amazon would follow in the trail of their waters to see the end of the matter.

Inspired to follow his own waterways, Thoreau learned that they offered something unique to see on any given day, in any given season. If he went boating, he noted the direction he took. "Up Assabet" became one of his most repeated phrases. He gained a reputation for his knowledge of these rivers. Thorson reports that on June 4, 1859, Thoreau was hired by the River Meadow Association, a seven-town coalition of farmers demanding removal of the downstream factory dam in Billerica. They claimed it was back-flooding up to fifteen thousand acres of their rich alluvial valley and ruining their agricultural economy, which was based on meadow hay, and to a lesser extent, cranberries. (xiv)

The dam at Billerica was first built to power a gristmill in 1710. It was strengthened and raised in 1798, then replaced by a larger and taller dam in 1828. Every water regulation made by the dam, every tampering with its structure, and every heavy rain or period of drought affected the conditions of the farmland upriver. Farmers in Concord and its neighboring towns protested through the court system. Henry Thoreau did five days of paid background work for the group, compiling statistics mostly about bridges, to aid their side of the case in this ongoing "flowage controversy."

He was even more hooked himself, though. He studied the rivers' nuances further on his own, filling his journal pages with more data. Yet, why have past biographers given little attention to Thoreau's exhaustive, scientific river analysis? Two circumstances have served as previous barriers. One was a choice of terminology. To say that Thoreau made a "survey" of the river was to imply that, as a professional property surveyor, he had used his tripod and compass to establish coordinates. Instead, what he took on was a more intensive study, a scrutinization of the waterway, its patterns, and the man-

made barriers that affected and altered it. His was a "survey" in a much broader sense.

The second barrier dates to 1906, when Houghton Mifflin published the twenty-volume set of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*. Fourteen of the volumes contained most of Thoreau's journal entries. These books became the standard journal text for readers and researchers across the decades. However, the editors had made a deliberate decision to excise much of Thoreau's river observations from 1859. "Such details could be of no interest to the general reader," they wrote. "The editors are assured on expert authority that they are now without scientific value. Most of them are therefore omitted, enough being retained to show something of the method of the work and the painstaking spirit in which it was carried on" (Volume XII, 219). We can shake our heads now at this omission, especially since other observations made by Henry Thoreau are being used today to illustrate climate change. (See Richard B. Primack, *Walden Warming: Climate Change Comes to Thoreau's Woods*, University of Chicago Press, 2014). But Houghton Mifflin set the trend that most people followed. And Henry Thoreau's examination of his hometown rivers faded out of public view. Professor Thorson returned to the journal manuscripts and brought it back.

When something is two centuries old, it can be too easy to assume that all of its aspects have been studied. Hasn't every portion of Henry David Thoreau's life already been scrutinized by now? In a word: No. Even Dr. Walls' detailed biography devotes only five paragraphs to Thoreau's work for the farmers in 1859. The full story is much larger and longer, and it reveals not only the dynamics of Thoreau's home landscape, but also his enduring relationship with it.

Just as Patrick Chura's *Thoreau the Land Surveyor* (University Press of Florida, 2010) adds another dimension to this familiar figure, so *The Boatman* offers another perspective of the complex life of Henry Thoreau. "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately," Thoreau tells us in *Walden*. Professor Thorson reveals in *The Boatman* that Thoreau more often went to the rivers, even more deliberately. This book is a joy to read and conveys much new information. A sole improvement could have been the inclusion of a distinct timeline to track the many Billerica dam-related constructions, court cases, and outcomes. The farmers never won.

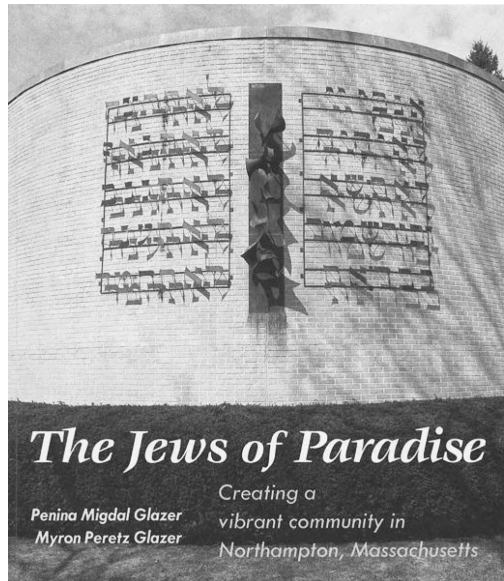
The Boatman: Henry David Thoreau's River Years deserves a wider audience than one simply consisting of Thoreau fans and scholars. It is a must-read for naturalists and environmentalists since it covers New England natural history and the legalities of the landscape. Readers should also include anyone who lives in the Concord River watershed, especially those located upriver of the

Billerica dam—which still adversely affects water levels elsewhere—or those who live near any river, for that matter. This story can serve as a cautionary tale for others. Why must every environmental challenge eventually become a political one? Read about a prime nineteenth-century example here.

Corinne H. Smith is a Thoreau scholar and former academic and public librarian.

***The Jews of Paradise: Creating a Vibrant Community in Northampton, Massachusetts.* By Penina Migdal Glazer and Myron Peretz Glazer. Northampton, MA: 350th Anniversary Committee, 2004. 122 pages. $18.00 (paperback).**

First, a disclosure: when I was a student at Smith College in the early 1980s, I had the opportunity to take a class with Mickey Glazer, one of the authors of this book, which is short in pages but long in history. That long-ago class was one whose impact has stayed with me in many ways. So when the opportunity to read and review this book came along, I was happy to say yes.



Penina Migdal Glazer and Myron Peretz Glazer, historian and sociologist, respectively, have trained their academic skills on a topic of deep personal importance to them—documenting the history and impact of the Jewish community in Northampton, MA. Though Jews began arriving in Northampton sometime in the mid-nineteenth century, it wasn't until 1904 that the city had its first organized synagogue. The centenary of that synagogue, B'nai Israel, coincided with the 350th anniversary of Northampton as well as the 350th anniversary of the arrival of Jewish settlers in North America. The convergence inspired the Glazers to commence with this project.

The authors pair historical information with interviews throughout the book, making for compelling documentation. We read about big trends but

come to understand them through individual voices. The Glazers are very successful in utilizing their interviewees to document a sense of community.

The book covers the development of two synagogues, a Jewish preschool, and a Jewish day school in Northampton, as well as the role of Jews in local businesses, local colleges, the institution of academic programs of Jewish studies, and the internationally known Yiddish Book Center in nearby Amherst. Along the way, the Glazers discuss issues of diversity (how local Jewish communities embraced so-called "Jews of Choice" or converts to Judaism, interfaith couples, same sex couples, and different forms of Judaism), and social action (the ways in which Jewish communities worked with refugees and embraced other social justice issues).

The authors do not shy away from controversy. Notably, the Glazers observe the ups and downs of attendance at formal services at the synagogue and the concern about what might happen to the Jewish community as different ways of practicing and expressing Judaism began to flourish in the Pioneer Valley.

One of the most fascinating parts of the book is the chapter about how many Northamptonites, in and outside of the Jewish community, confronted the Holocaust. William Allan Neilson, president of Smith College from 1917 to 1939, played a leading role as a spokesman for anti-fascism and was active with the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Germans. Neilson led a dedicated committee that sought to bring refugee children to Northampton during the war. It's clear that Northampton's contemporary reputation as a city with a progressive population and many activists has a long history.

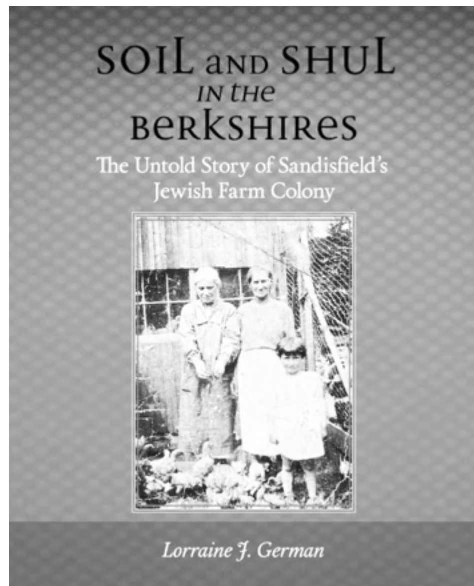
The Jews of Paradise: Creating a Vibrant Community in Northampton, Massachusetts is richly illustrated with black and white photos. Though parts of the book might be read as a "who's who" of Jewish Northampton, the Glazers make this book much more than that through their lucid prose and ability to contextualize the stories they tell. And in capturing so well a community of which they are a part, Penina and Mickey Glazer have indeed done a *mitzvah*—a good deed—from which we all can benefit.

Julie Dobrow is Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies and a faculty member in the Department of Child Study and Human Development at Tufts University.

***Soil and Shul in the Berkshires: The Untold Story of Sandisfield's Jewish Farm Colony.* By Lorraine J. German. Published by the author, 2018. 259 pages, $25.00 (hardcover).**

Soil and Shul: The Untold Story of Sandisfield's Jewish Farm Colony tells the story of the first Jewish immigrant families to settle in the Berkshire town of Sandisfield, Massachusetts. The Sandisfield Jewish community was part of a plan developed by the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Society to remove Eastern European Jews from the sweatshops and tenements of New York City, and settle them in a farm colony in the Berkshires. The author follows the progress of this "farm colony" from its origins in 1902 to 1996 when the members of the Sandisfield Jewish Community turned its synagogue over to the Sandisfield Arts and Restoration Committee for use as an arts center. The Sandisfield farm "colony" was not limited to Sandisfield but extended to farm families settled in neighboring Otis, Monterey, and New Marlborough as well.

The diversity within this rural Jewish farm community is revealed in the series of family histories provided by the author in an extensive chapter entitled, "I Want That My Family Should Remember" and "Sandisfield Memories." Detailed narratives of the major families of the community chronicle the origins, challenges, and successes of this remarkable Western Massachusetts community. The histories and photographs of the following families can be found on pages 139–197: the Kaplan, Jensky, Baranoff, Cohen, Pinsky, Lipsitz, Dryansky, and Pyenson families from Romanov Russia; the Sandler family from Poland; The Kleiner and Linder families from Austria; and the Lazarowitz family from Romania. Immigrating to America to escape poverty, oppression, violent pogroms, and the Holocaust, these intrepid survivors came to Sandisfield to build a new life for themselves and opportunity for succeeding generations. Among these successful survivors is Sandisfield's Sandler family, most of whom had been killed in the October 12, 1941 "Blutsonntag"



massacre of between 8,000 and 12,000 Jews living in the town of Stanislawow, Poland, by the Nazi-allied Hungarian Army.

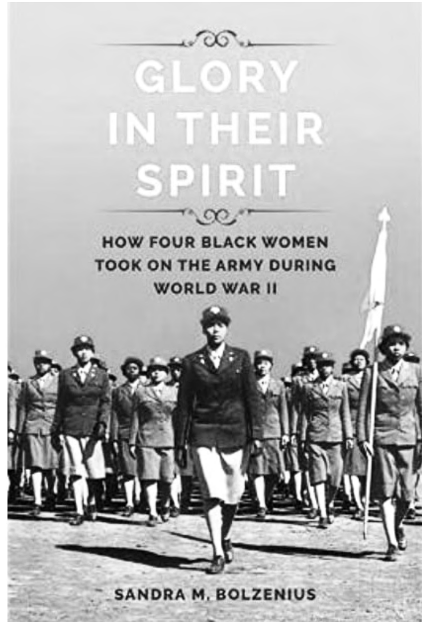
Although these immigrant families left European anti-Semitism behind, they were soon confronted with anti-Semitism in their new American home. In the 1920s, editorials in the *Berkshire Evening Eagle* and the *Springfield Republican* made disparaging comments on Jewish immigration and at times specifically noted the Sandisfield community in a negative manner. Jews in Berkshire County in those years still "faced social exclusion and were barred from many hotels and boarding houses," as documented by the author. In fact, during the resurgence of Ku Klux Klan activities targeting Jews and other immigrants in Western Massachusetts during the 1920s, the Sandisfield Jewish Colony was threatened with domestic terror and intimidation tactics. In May 1926, "at midnight, a large explosion jolted awake the residents of Monterey . . . they were greeted by the sight of a burning cross lighting up the night sky on a hill behind the schoolhouse in the center of town."

The book describes the development of the farms and the daily farm life in this colony. There is also an interesting chapter entitled, "Rooms Rented for the Season," which describes Sandisfield's success as a Jewish summer resort, sometimes referred to as "The Catskills of the Berkshires." The Berkshire Hill Farm House owned by Samuel Kahn, the Berkshire Hills Maplewood Farm owned by Nathan Pinsky and David Pollock, and the Montville Summer Resort owned by Max Linder attracted "hundreds of Jewish visitors from Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx [who] flocked to Sandisfield between June and Labor Day" to escape the hot city summers. Generally, their guests fell into one of two groups: roomers who rented a room for a whole summer and cooked their own meals, and boarders who came up for a week or two and ate prepared meals.

A well-written history of a little-known Western Massachusetts Jewish community, *Soil and Shul: The Untold Story of Sandisfield's Jewish Farm Colony* adds to our growing knowledge of the diversity of the people of this region. The author used a wide variety of source material, including government documents regarding regional agriculture, extensive use of Western Massachusetts newspapers, Jewish periodicals and newspapers, U.S. Census records, Southern Berkshire Registry of Deeds records, U.S. Naturalization and Immigration records, and oral history interviews and correspondence. The book lacks an index; however, it does contain 50 pages of bibliographic references keyed to each chapter. This volume is recommended to anyone interested in the story of immigrant communities in New England, Jewish-American history and genealogy, and in Berkshire County and Western Massachusetts local history.

Joseph Carvalho III is co-editor of The Republican Heritage Books in Springfield, MA, and Retired Executive Director of the Springfield Museums.

Glory in Their Spirit: How Four Black Women Took On the Army During World War II. **By Sandra M. Bolzenius. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2018. 256 pages. $19.95 (paperback).**



Sandra Bolzenius is an army veteran and former instructor at Ohio State University. She herself was a WAC (a member of the Women's Army Corps, or WAC) in the days before the army finally disbanded the unit with its separate induction centers and training units and accepted women as equal soldiers. Thus, she takes the study of four African American WAC members in the World War II WAC personally. Despite this, she detaches herself more than adequately and addresses the story through the lenses of archival work and oral history. The approach is highly professional and the result is solid history.

During World War II, four women—Mary Green, Johnnie Murphy, Alice Young, and Anna Morrison—all volunteered, as did 6,500 other Black women, to serve in the recently formed Women's Army Corps. Their motivation varied, as was the case for African American men in service and white women in the WAC. Patriotism was a driver, but additionally they volunteered in hope of personal and economic improvement.

The WAC was a new creation of the war, among the experiments made necessary by wartime shortages of able male bodies to fill the defense workforce. New openings for women proliferated, including Rosie the Riveter in the numerous defense factories and the female auxiliary pilots who ferried military aircraft and dragged targets through the air during gunnery practice. Women thereby freed men for combat roles; similarly, the war expanded opportunity for Black men in military and civilian life. Similar to other experiments, the WAC was controversial, not thoroughly thought through, and fraught with difficulties for those who became members.

Inclusion of Black men and white women in the war effort was challenging enough. Black women fared worse because neither arrangements for women nor arrangements for Blacks dealt with the needs of Black women. Women in the WAC were white and Blacks were men. Black women were neither, and they were few in comparison with the total mobilization for war, so they tended to be ignored.

The four female privates who chose court-martial were a diverse group: Morrison, a former maid from Kentucky; Green, a former maid from a small town in Texas; Murphy, a northerner with a previous court-martial for alcohol in the barracks and profanity; and Young, the oldest at twenty-three, a government employee from Washington, D.C. with a year of nursing training. None joined the WAC to be orderlies; all enlisted in the expectation of receiving training and serving as hospital aides. Many volunteers, including the four treated in this study, found that their military experience meant merely more of the same discrimination that characterized their civilian lives.

Assigned to a military hospital near Boston where the discrimination of segregated duties was no different than what they experienced in aide school and civilian life, these African American women came to realize that they might be in the same occupational category as white aides but were not given the same duties. As in civilian life, they ended up with the lowest and most demeaning jobs. The cause seemed to be racism within the unit as well as throughout the WAC and the broader society—racism that resisted the inclusion of African Americans in general, accompanied by a societal sexism that put pressure on the WAC to prove its worth to a skeptical public.

Six chapters suffice for Bolzenius to tell this story. The first chapter sets the context, dealing with the status of African Americans in the Jim Crow society before the war. Separate but equal was still the law of the land, and institutions as well as individuals emphasized separate over equal. The initial chapter also covers the 1942 establishment of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Renamed the WAC, the corps was created as a sociological experiment, the first-ever serious attempt to incorporate women into the traditionally male military. The chapter also explains the Jim Crow military and explores the more subtle but equally insidious racism of the leadership of the WAC. Neither is surprising given that, historically, the South has been overrepresented in the American armed forces, particularly in an officer corps that internalized a belief that white Southerners were better qualified than Northerners to deal with Black people, enlisted or otherwise. The author puts the Black WAC experiment into context as a poor fit in both the new white female organization and the traditional white male one. Neither the

white female nor the Black male sociological experiment accommodated the unique status of African American women.

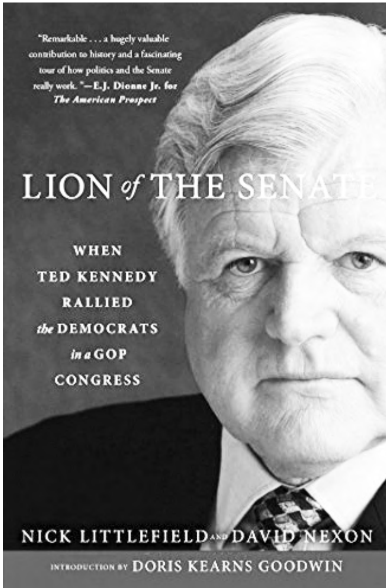
The next chapters focus on the four WAC nurses' aides. Chapter two deals with their immediate setting, a recently formed unit at the army hospital at Fort Devens, outside Boston. Segregation and discrimination were not simply the domain of southerners. The four women arrived from training in Iowa in 1944 and quickly realized that Massachusetts was little different from Iowa or their home states. Given the lowest assignments, those of orderlies rather than aides, they protested then rebelled by either refusing to go to work or by going to the hospital but refusing to work. That is the strike detailed in chapter three. The trial occurs in chapter four, and the civilian reaction to the verdict is the topic of chapter five. Chapter six deals with the military's effort to back away from the outraged outcry by those already demanding the Double V. This chapter also deals with the attempt to undo the verdicts despite military protocol that made a smooth retreat difficult but not impossible.

The military was reluctant to create unfavorable publicity so the trials were close to perfunctory, the punishments light. And because the courts refused to allow the defendants to raise the issue of racism, in the end the strike accomplished little in the way of improvement. A concluding chapter places the affair in the context of the sociological experiment. The final chapter also outlines the four African American soldiers' lives after the war.

Glory in their Spirit: How Four Black Women Took on the Army During World War II tells a significant story. It brings to light and life a forgotten episode in Massachusetts history, reminding us that the "Greatest Generation" was by no means above reproach, perhaps condemnation, and by showing the pervasive prejudice of the mid-twentieth-century United States, illustrates how far we have come toward providing equal access. That point is notable, even as we recognize how far we have yet to go. The book is physically well structured, with a cast of characters, timeline, and list of acronyms as well as the customary illustrations and other academic appurtenances. It is well fitted to the publisher's Women, Gender, and Sexuality in American History series.

John H. Barnhill, Ph.D., is a retired federal civil servant and occasional historian residing in Houston, Texas.

Lion of the Senate: When Ted Kennedy Rallied the Democrats in a GOP Congress. **By Nick Littlefield and David Nexon. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2015. 505 pages. $35.00 (hardcover).**



Lion of the Senate: When Ted Kennedy Rallied the Democrats in a GOP Congress brilliantly documents Kennedy's resuscitation of a demoralized, shell-shocked Democratic party after the crushing 1994 midterm elections. The Gingrich Revolution shattered Democrats' confidence, tipping fifty-four House of Representatives seats and eight Senate seats to the GOP, giving them possession of both houses of Congress. The arch-conservative "Contract with America" was passed in its entirety by the House, with Democratic Representatives steamrolled in a chamber running on majority rule and by opponents unwilling to compromise. President Clinton leaned toward conciliation, seemingly ready to negotiate away many core Democratic values in a misguided effort to "triangulate" with the insurgents to save his own political fate.

Into the breach stepped Ted Kennedy, adding a glorious chapter to an uneven, checkered political career. Whatever you may think about Kennedy, this book will convince you of his mastery of the Senate, his capacity for hard work and preparation, his pitch-perfect use of personal relations to advance a cause, his organizational ability, and his effectiveness as a communicator. These characteristics helped enable him to thwart a seemingly unstoppable juggernaut, and performed a political miracle that no one could have foreseen when most Democrats were searching for compromise and just hoping to survive the next election.

Not a biography of Ted Kennedy, this book presents the two years of his life where he overcame tremendous odds to shut down the Republican Revolution and pass three major pieces of liberal legislation that no one thought possible at the time. Many people remember the "Contract with America," the government shutdowns, the crash and burn of Clinton Health Care, and the early stirrings of the pre-Tea Party archconservatism. But how many people recall that during this fraught timeframe Kennedy ushered a

minimum wage increase, a major health care reform bill, and the CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) through a reluctant Congress and onto a grateful president's desk?

In some ways, this book is similar to Robert Caro's fantastic biography, *Master of the Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson*. Both show how each protagonist used their knowledge of personality and human relationships to obtain their objectives. Unlike Kennedy, Johnson was personally predisposed to use the stick more often than the carrot, but both Kennedy and Johnson used their uncanny insights into human nature to influence and persuade. This book focuses much more than the Caro book on the use of arcane Senate rules to reach otherwise unobtainable objectives. The knowledge and manipulations of amendments and "amendment trees," the tactics of attaching a bill to a bigger bill, the use of "sense of the Senate votes," and the knowledge of when it's best to hold and when to strike are explained so that the reader learns, yet the narrative flow does not suffer.

Kennedy's efforts in the Senate during this period had major political ramifications. He helped to torpedo the "Contract with America" in the Senate and led the effort to raise wages and bring health insurance to millions of the most vulnerable Americans. In the process, he seriously hampered Bob Dole's presidential campaign. Dole, the Majority Leader, was running on his record of being a master of the Senate, an image badly tarnished by Kennedy's efforts, which were all strenuously opposed by Dole and yet all passed under his watch. Dole had to spend so much time on these issues rather than campaigning, and he lost so badly on them that he resigned from the Senate to campaign in a quixotic move that could not stem his impending presidential defeat. This situation had the opposite effect for President Clinton, who rode to victory on the tails of these legislative accomplishments. And of course, Newt Gingrich was the ultimate loser, a victim of hubris and overreach who was eventually driven from the House by scandal after seeing his once invincible revolution crumble into dust.

Lion of the Senate: When Ted Kennedy Rallied the Democrats in a GOP Congress will appeal to various audiences. For Kennedy fans, it's a must. Readers who want a painless, enjoyable way to learn about the intricacies of the Senate without reading a dry tome should read this book. And anyone interested in an inspirational story of a statesman overcoming daunting odds in the service of his country and his constituents will enjoy this book immensely.

Stephen Donnelly is a consultant for the life insurance industry and a Westfield State College alumnus.