



Frontiersman: Daniel Boone and the Making of America (Southern Biography)

Meredith Mason Brown

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The name Daniel Boone conjures up the image of an illiterate, coonskin cap-wearing patriot who settled Kentucky and killed countless Indians. The scarcity of surviving autobiographical material has allowed tellers of his story to fashion a Boone of their own liking, and his myth has evolved in countless stories, biographies, novels, poems, and paintings. In this welcome book, Meredith Mason Brown separates the real Daniel Boone from the many fables that surround him, revealing a man far more complex—and far more interesting—than his legend. Brown traces Boone's life from his Pennsylvania childhood to his experiences in the militia and his rise as an unexcelled woodsman, explorer, and backcountry leader. In the process, we meet the authentic Boone: he didn't wear coonskin caps; he read and wrote better than many frontiersmen; he was not the first to settle Kentucky; he took no pleasure in killing Indians. At once a loner and a leader, a Quaker who became a skilled frontier fighter, Boone is a study in contradictions. Devoted to his wife and children, he nevertheless embarked on long hunts that could keep him from home for two years or more. A captain in colonial Virginia's militia, Boone later fought against the British and their Indian allies in the Revolutionary War before he moved to Missouri when it was still Spanish territory and became a Spanish civil servant. Boone did indeed kill Indians during the bloody fighting for Kentucky, but he also respected Indians, became the adopted son of a Shawnee chief, and formed lasting friendships with many Shawnees who once held him captive. During Boone's lifetime (1734–1820), America evolved from a group of colonies with fewer than a million inhabitants clustered along the Atlantic Coast to an independent nation of close to ten million reaching well beyond the Mississippi River. *Frontiersman* is the first biography to explore Boone's crucial role in that transformation. Hundreds of thousands of settlers entered Kentucky on the road that Boone and his axemen blazed from the Cumberland Gap to the Kentucky River. Boone's leadership in the defense of Boonesborough during a sustained Indian attack in 1778 was instrumental in preventing white settlers from fleeing Kentucky during the bloody years of the Revolution. And Boone's move to Missouri in 1799 and his exploration up the Missouri River helped encourage a flood of settlers into that region. Through his colorful chronicle of Boone's experiences, Brown paints a rich portrayal of colonial and Revolutionary America, the relations between whites and Indians, the opening and settling of the Old West, and the birth of the American national identity. Supported with copious maps, illustrations, endnotes, and a detailed chronology of Boone's life, *Frontiersman* provides a fresh and accurate rendering of a man most people know only as a folk hero—and of the nation that has mythologized him for over two centuries.

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