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Neal O. Hammon, ed. *My Father, Daniel Boone: The Draper Interviews with Nathan Boone.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012. xi + 180 pp. $17.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8131-3465-9; $50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8131-2103-1.

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Commissioned by Richard C. Smoot

Lyman C. Draper is easily one of the most prolific collectors of documentary and oral history that America has ever produced. As secretary of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Draper spent nearly forty years as a diligent archivist amassing one of the most extensive collections in the world of materials relating to trans-Appalachian frontier history. Long before any historian had ever heard the term "frontier history," he was compiling oral histories and collecting family records in an attempt to preserve the heroic exploits of the early West that he found so fascinating. In doing so, he established a standard for historical conservation and preserved a window into a time in the American past that has profoundly shaped American identity. Thus, the publication of Draper's interviews with Nathan and Olive Boone highlights the lives of two great pioneers: one a frontiersman who led American settlers into the territory of hostile Native Americans, wrested from them the land of Kentucky, and became a legend in his own lifetime; the other a far lesser-known figure, "frail, scarcely five feet tall, weighing around one hundred pounds" and suffering from "a number of health problems, some real some imagined," but a visionary nonetheless–a frontiersman of the past and a pioneer of historical record keeping (p. 2).

During the 1830s, Draper began to correspond with a number of survivors or relatives of survivors of the early trans-Appalachian West with the intention of writing biographies of the great frontiersmen. In 1840, after many descendants complained of errors in existing publications, he set out to write the first–a biography of Daniel Boone. In 1851, just prior to receiving his appointment at the Wisconsin Historical Society, Draper interviewed the youngest son of Boone, Nathan Boone, and his wife Olive, the last surviving son and daughter-in-law of the famous pioneer. Draper compiled more than three hundred pages of notes, comments, and dialogue in this interview alone. Though Draper's Boone biography was never completed (the incomplete manuscript was published in 1998), the resources that he collected enabled numerous later scholars, most recently, John Mack Faragher (*Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer* [1992]), Michael Lofaro (*Daniel Boone: An American Life* [2003]), Robert Morgan (*Boone: A Biography* [2007]), and Meredith Mason Brown (*Frontiersman: Daniel Boone and the Making of America* [2008]), to put together well-informed and extensively detailed biographies. And by editing and publishing these interviews, these scholars would no doubt agree, Neal O. Hammon has performed an important service. Prior to the 1999 publication of these interviews in hardback, these valuable accounts were available only in manuscript form or on microfilm. Now rereleased in paperback, Hammon's engaging presentation of this ihistorical account is even more accessible to students, scholars, and the general public interested in the history of the early West and the life and times of this remarkable historical figure.

Draper's record constitutes the clearest window that we have into the personal character, motives, and personality of Daniel Boone, which makes it invaluable for historians of the early West. Moreover, anyone who has used the Draper manuscripts will recognize and appreciate the effort that went into this publication. Hammon's organization condenses Draper's three hundred pages of narrative dialogue, annotated with extensive margin notes, corrections, and personal opinions, into a chronological and highly readable document that reads more like a narrative history of Boone's life than an oral interview with his seventy-year-old son and sixty-eight-year-old daughter-in-law. What is more, the profound level of detail that the Boones were able to recall about Daniel Boone's life attests to the vitality of their oral tradition. Thus, Draper's record of the family history preserved by that oral tradition makes this publication valuable not only for the details that it makes available regarding Boone's life, but also for the window it provides into the importance and value of oral evidence.

Hammon's representation of this material is honest and interesting, and the tact with which he organizes the information, complete with relevant and informative contextual footnotes, may have even met the expectations of the meticulous Draper. Hammon does, however, take some liberties for the sake of readability that could prove troubling for historical researchers. For example, he alters Draper's third person voice to an imagined first person so that the dialogue reads like a verbatim transcription of the interview. While not particularly problematic with regard to the content, this editorial choice, as reviewers of the hardback edition have suggested, undermines the integrity of the text for purposes of quotation in historical writing, though Hammon does cite the page numbers of Draper's notes so that it is easier to correlate with the original. Moreover, there are a few factual, or perhaps typographical, errors in the text that Hammon fails to mention in the footnotes. For example, Dr. Thomas Walker visited Kentucky in 1750, not 1760, and Nathan Boone acted as guide for William Clark in 1805, not 1808 (pp. 15, 126). But such concerns are minor in relation to the value and expediency of having such a notable source in an inexpensive format. As an example of both historical research and the difficulties of doing history, as well as presenting the history of westward expansion and frontier life, this book would be an excellent addition to an American history survey course, a possibility made more feasible with the publication of a paperback edition.

This edition also includes genealogical information on the Boone, Bryan, Calloway, and Van Bibber families, and incorporates a revealing postscript that discusses some of the discrepancies in the Boones's accounts, which are as revealing as they are intriguing. For example, it appears that Nathan Boone intentionally skewed some details of his account in order to disguise his own less than honest attempt to profit from his father's name. Filled with great insight into pioneer life in the trans-Appalachian West, this book certainly fires one's imagination. The history of this famous individual's life and the times and places in which he lived strikes a nostalgic chord, which makes the unfortunate loss of Daniel Boone's own dictated memoir in a canoeing accident in 1813, and the subsequent disappearance of its replacement in 1842, all the more regrettable. Nevertheless, it is these losses that make Draper's interview with the Boones even more gripping and important. Thus, we are indeed fortunate to have such a highly readable account of this valuable interview in such a convenient and accessible format.

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