ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

Davy Crockett's Riproarious Shemales and Sentimental Sisters: Women's Tall Tales from the Crockett Almanacs (1835-1856)
Michael A. Lofaro, editor
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Who, at the tender age of one-hundred-forty-eight years, wouldn't love to be described by their son as an "all-scream-glorio[u]s gal[who] can jump a seven rail fence backwards… crack walnuts with her front teeth… laugh a horse blind… cut down a gum tree… and steer it across Salt River with her apron for a sail and her left leg for a rudder?" This is precisely the honor that Davy Crockett bestowed upon his mother, possibly the most outrageous of the sisters whose stories are included in the Davy Crockett Almanacs that were a popular part of the folklore history of the United States in the nineteenth century.

The Davy Crockett Almanacs included the unbelievable tales about this real-life frontiersman and statesman, as well as the exploits and adventures of his backwoods female counterparts. It was an intelligent marketing tool to offer these tidbits as a little something more than just the standard yearly weather and farming statistics. The riproarious females, however, are sprinkled throughout the regular Davy Crockett tall tales. Lofaro has gathered them here to be enjoyed in one fell swoop. His extensive footnotes are excellent for clues to further reading on the subject of strong women active in American history. Also helpful are his chronologies of the early nineteen century and his inclusion of some recipes and household hints from the almanacs. In his introduction, he discusses the similarities of these women to their mythological counterparts and dissolves some virulent stereotypes surrounding the outlandish expression of these women's emotional and, sometimes, financial independence. The shemales and sisters sometimes engaged in pursuits that might be construed as a bit too "manly" for proper women of the period, but their femaleness is never in doubt.

Crockett held company with the likes of Sal Fink, who "fought a duel once with a thunderbolt, and came off without a singe." And his aunt, who "chased a crocodile half a mile" on her wedding day. The hilarious and descriptive chapter titles entice even the most stoic reader to chuckle. While Crockett is ill and bedridden, his daughter and wife manage to save their house by participating in "A Tongariferous Fight with an Alligator!" It is obvious that

Crockett held both an amazing sense of humor as well as an enormous respect for women. No small feat for a man who supposedly rode an enormous alligator up Niagara Falls and drank the entire Mississippi River.

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