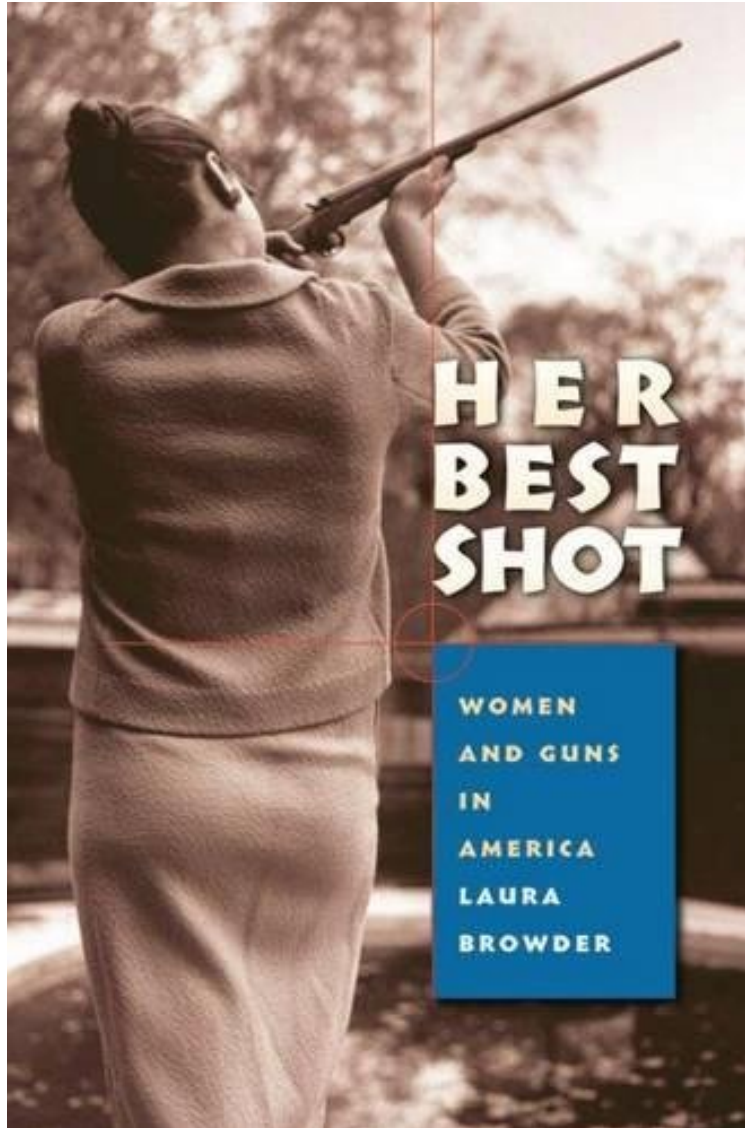


## Her Best Shot: Women and Guns in America

*Laura Browder*

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**Laura Browder : Her Best Shot: Women and Guns in America** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Her Best Shot: Women and Guns in America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Buy this book if you are interested in guns, women and America. Neither left nor right, it is greatBy Art SadinThis is a fascinating look at gun culture, women and American society in general. I would recommend it for anyone who has an interest in guns, the role of women in combat long before the changes being considered now by the Pentagon, the marketing of guns to women and the equalizing effect of an armed woman. This is all described in the context of America since Independence through the start of the 21st century. I

could not put it down which says a lot for the literary style and the author. I could go on but if you are interested in any of these topics listed above, and more, I would say buy it at your earliest opportunity. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Story driven, fascinating read. By sojourner8 I picked up Laura Browder's book at my library on a whim. I'm not a proponent of guns yet the premise of her book intrigued me - as did the included photographs. Browder's writing is lean without being sparse and the book itself only totals 287 pages so it makes for a quick read. Regarding the reviewer comment citing a need for more information on featured profiles of women with guns throughout US history, Browder cites all her sources and includes an expansive index for the reader. If you're looking for a comprehensive anthology of all notable female gun proponents in US history, this is not your book. I'm not sure if such a book even exists. However Browder creates a wonderful snapshot of the public perception of women and guns starting in the mid 1800's onwards through the 1999's. I found her book fascinating and a quick read - partly due to her subject matter and partly to her writing style. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating but flawed. By C. McCurdy Fascinating slice of history that needed a stronger-handed editor or coauthor. The best parts of the book deal with the relationship between women and firearms during the last 15 to 20 years, yet these are also the most problematic. For instance, Browder asserts that Sara Weaver became an object of fascination in the white supremacist community after the Ruby Ridge standoff, yet she fails to provide even slight textual support for this (were white power zines and websites running articles, photo spreads, and interviews gushing over her, or what?). Even worse, in the last chapter, during what feels like an extremely rushed-to-press discussion of the Iraq War, she writes that the only female soldier to become visible during this conflict was Lynndie England. Uh, Jessica Lynch anyone? How the hell did Browder and her editor miss that? Lynch's story conflates our concepts of "hero" and "victim"; while that's not exactly new or unique to her (the 9/11 mythos suffers from this conflation as well), her portrayal as both a hero and as a cute, blonde damsel-in-distress -- while her story fits neither categorization neatly -- is extremely relevant to a feminist discussion of arms and combat. I'm glad I checked this book out from the library rather than purchase it, but despite its lack of thoroughness, this is an extremely compelling read and a good starting point for anyone doing research in this area.

The gun-toting woman holds enormous symbolic significance in American culture. For over two centuries, women who pick up guns have disrupted the popular association of guns and masculinity, spurring debates about women's capabilities for violence as well as their capacity for full citizenship. In *Her Best Shot*, Laura Browder examines the relationship between women and guns and the ways in which the figure of the armed woman has served as a lightning rod for cultural issues. Utilizing autobiographies, advertising, journalism, novels, and political tracts, among other sources, Browder traces appearances of the armed woman across a chronological spectrum from the American Revolution to the present and an ideological spectrum ranging from the Black Panthers to right-wing militias. Among the colorful characters presented here are Deborah Sampson, who disguised herself as a man to fight in the American Revolution; Pauline Cushman, who posed as a Confederate to spy for Union forces during the Civil War; Wild West sure-shot Annie Oakley; African explorer Osa Johnson; 1930s gangsters Ma Barker and Bonnie Parker; and Patty Hearst, the hostage-turned-revolutionary-turned-victim. With her entertaining and provocative analysis, Browder demonstrates that armed women both challenge and reinforce the easy equation that links guns, manhood, and American identity.

From Publishers Weekly The "thriving gun culture" of the South took Browder by surprise when the New Englander moved to Virginia. Now Browder (*Rousing the Nation: Radical Culture in Depression America*), an associate professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University, explores the social meanings of armed womanhood in a culture where violence is associated with masculinity. Browder traces the phenomenon from Civil War cross-dressing spies to the present-day National Rifle Association's female-oriented marketing strategies, demonstrating how public discussions of gun-toting women find each successive era revealing its particular anxieties about women's sexuality and role as citizens. Browder discusses a series of "armed celebrities" from Wild West stars like Annie Oakley and Calamity Jane to outlaws such as Bonnie Parker (of Bonnie and Clyde fame) and Patty Hearst and examines the contradictory views about women soldiers, the gun-slinging pioneer mother "lioness" protecting her family, women at the turn of the 20th century who wielded their weapons to uphold white rights and the women radical activists, both black and white, of the 1960s and 1970s who "used the gun as a bid for equal power within their often sexist movements." Browder packs her dense yet jargon-free study with salient examples drawn from contemporary print and visual sources. 34 illus. (Oct. 16) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Browder's book is far-ranging. It is filled with provocative observations on class dynamics and on the biological essentialism that is--and long has been--used to define women with guns.--*Journal of Southern History* An enjoyable book. A well-written, thought-provoking history of images of women with guns. . . . A fascinating tour through American history.--*Winterthur Portfolio* Fascinating. . . . Lucidly written and clearly argued. . . . Illuminat[es] a culture of violence through the study of popular culture, media representations, and political spectacle.--*Journal of Interdisciplinary History* A rich story.--*Journal of Social History* Browder's study makes clear that the portrayal of a

woman with a gun has many shades of meaning bound up with race and class as well as gender.--Roanoke Times[An] engaging and readable history. . . . Browder adeptly weaves the complex and multilayered viewpoints that plague both the status of women and of guns in this country.--BUST[Her Best Shot] explores the social meanings of armed womanhood in a culture where violence is associated with masculinity. Browder traces the phenomenon from Civil War cross-dressing spies to the present-day National Rifle Association's female-oriented marketing strategies, demonstrating how public discussions of gun-toting women find each successive era revealing its particular anxieties about women's sexuality and role as citizens.--Publishers WeeklyProvides fascinating insights into a feminized gun culture perhaps little known to academic readers. . . . An impressive account of women and guns in America.--Journal of American HistoryHer Best Shot has a terrific premise, a why-hasn't-it-been-done-before exploration of gun-toting women in American history, society's attempts to either quash or domesticate them, and the various ways such women have challenged and . . . shot down traditional gender roles along the way.--BitchDeftly explores one facet of the relationship between women and guns in American history: that most manifest in literary expression and advertising.--Pacific Northwest QuarterlyThe work is appealingly written, satisfyingly illustrated, and well researched.--CHOICEDeftly analyzes the figure of the armed woman as both cultural hero and villain.--American Historical Filled with fascinating history that has largely been lost or ignored--until now.--Field and StreamThere is a lot of fascinating historical information in Her Best Shot, but its most attractive feature is the well-written narrative. . . . It deserves to . . . make the best seller list and would add to both the understanding of, and the continuing debate about, women gunowners.--Women Guns In Her Best Shot Laura Browder poses an increasingly cogent question: how do women and guns go together in American popular culture? With wide-ranging instances culled from public and private sources, the book tells compelling stories and asks serious questions about changing meanings of gender, citizenship, and violence. Stunning in detail and wise in judgment, the book speaks urgently to the confusion between fantasy and reality that often endangers American life.--Alan Trachtenberg, Yale UniversityLaura Browder thinks like a historian and writes like a novelist. With memorable characters appearing in every chapter, her book looks at the relationship between women and guns from the American Revolution to the present and poses questions about violence, citizenship, and gender that are as relevant as today's news.--Joy S. Kasson, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill