

BOOK REVIEWS

Alfred Procter James and Charles Morse Stotz. *Drums in the Forest: Decision at the Forks, Defense in the Wilderness*. [Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005. Pp. i, 227, bibliography, footnotes, index. Paper \$18.95]

Originally published in 1958 by the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania to commemorate the bicentennial of the founding of Pittsburgh, *Drums in the Forest* includes two separate yet connected essays. In the first essay of fifty-four pages, Dr. Alfred Proctor, then a University of Pittsburgh history professor emeritus, presents a broad overview of the historical background of the contest for ownership, from American Indian occupation to the capture of Fort Duquesne by British forces led by General Forbes in 1758, of the point of land where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers meet to form the Ohio. The second and longer essay (134 pages) by Charles Morse Stotz, then a practicing architect and architectural historian, explains

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY: A JOURNAL OF MID-ATLANTIC STUDIES, VOL. 73, NO. 2, 2006.
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"Defense in the Wilderness" in terms of the establishment and demise of the five forts, constructed between 1754 and 1815, located at the site of present day Pittsburgh.

In their foreword to the new paperback edition, published in conjunction with an artifacts and documents exhibition entitled "Clash of Empires: The British, French, & Indian War; 1754–1763" at the Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center, the President and the Director of the Library and Archives of the center claims that "*Drums in the Forest* remains good history" and that it is a "standard source on the seminal events of the French and Indian War." On the whole *Drums in the Forest* does remain "good history." It is accurate, readable, and provides an informative broad overview of military and political history of the period. Proctor's contribution, which traces the Anglo-French Rivalry, focuses on the Ohio River Valley and the events of the Seven Years War (1754–1766). His essay also briefly surveys land speculation, military campaigns, the actions of George Washington and the capitulation of Fort Necessity, and the role of Fort Duquesne. Stotz's essay, on the other hand, is filled with details about the construction, use, and occupants of the forts at the Forks of the Ohio.

While Proctor remarks that "Pittsburgh is very properly named" for British imperial success was "determined" by William Pitt's efforts as British prime minister, he credits General John Forbes for the successful 1758 military campaign against Fort Duquesne, and for the famous road which Forbes constructed. This new road opened the area to communication and commerce from Philadelphia. These are significant historic events, clearly though briefly explained. But they are not left alone for the author places them in the light of the 1958 bicentennial hoopla claiming that, "Pittsburgh occupies one of the most beautiful spots in the world." (p. 55)

"Defense in the Wilderness" retains its historical value. It is rich in detail about construction of the forts at Pittsburgh (Fort Prince George, Fort Duquesne, Mercer's Fort, the Blockhouse and Fort Pitt, and Fort Fayette) and includes excellent illustrations, contemporary maps, and photographs, including an aerial picture of the point in the 1950s upon which Stotz superimposed with drawings of the structures. His clearly written description of these forts retains its value as a standard source of information about them and the level of detail is impressive. Stotz assesses fort design and construction, life at the installations, and gardens and gardening at Fort Pitt.

While the "standard source on the seminal events of the French and Indian War" is now *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in*

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British North America, 1754–1766 by Fred Anderson, *Drums in the Forest* still provides detail about the early history of Pittsburgh unobtainable elsewhere. Its republication is welcome.

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Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*. [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. Pp. xx, 323. Appendices, notes, maps, illustrations, index.] \$26.95 (Cloth).

Jill Lepore possesses the enviable skill of writing popular histories that meet the highest standards of scholarship. Her previous books, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (1998) and *A Is for American: Letters and Other Characters in the Newly United States* (2002), combined the interpretive sophistication demanded by professionals with the period details and narrative zip that appealed to interested general readers. This book, exploring the 1741 slave conspiracy that cost thirty black men and four whites their lives, continues along these lines. Via archival research, some learned inferences, and a few leaps into imaginative gloom, Lepore addresses the question of whether New York's conspiracy was a real plot or a tragic projection of Anglo-American fear. In addition, Lepore uses the conspiracy as a platform to explore the nature of slavery, race relations, and political culture in Britain's North American colonies. Although some of her judgments strain the evidence up to (and maybe beyond) its breaking point, her treatment is at the same time enlightening and entertaining. If academic historians minded the way that Lepore blends meticulous research, interpretive rigor, and accessible writing, bookstores might be able to sell history books that dealt with subjects beyond the second day of Gettysburg.

Eighteenth century New York City housed the second largest slave population in British North America. Only Charles Town, South Carolina, was home to more. Lepore brings to life its community of slaves and free colored persons. She also illuminates the white population's perceptions of, and interactions with, this community. Like the city's Africans and African-Americans, Manhattan's