

#### BOOK REVIEWS

Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation and Revolutionary Frontier*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007. Pp. x, 368, notes, maps, acknowledgements, index. Cloth, \$30.00; Paper, \$17.00.)

The transformation of the frontier in the latter half of the eighteenth century has been the subject of study for many historians. While a number of recent studies have focused on specific periods or aspects of the frontier, Patrick Griffin connects the pieces to give the bigger picture in *American Leviathan*. Griffin's study follows the transformation of the Upper Ohio River Valley from the close of the French and Indian War in 1763 to the Treaty of Greenville in 1795. This period would not only witness the failure of Great Britain's frontier policies, but the emergence of new American policies and attitudes toward the frontier and American Indian populations that would guide the westward expansion of the United States for the next century. Griffin describes the eighteenth century frontier in Hobbesian terms in which violence was a daily part of life. In this "short and brutal" existence western settlers created a new society, the "American Leviathan."

While viewing the larger picture, Griffin does not lose sight of the individuals who interacted along the frontier. He introduces this study with the story of Tom Quick, a Pennsylvania frontiersman whose hatred had driven him on a lifelong mission to kill one hundred American Indians. Quick rose as a frontier hero throughout the nineteenth century, but his tale was cast aside by modern historians. Griffin brings him back to life as an example of the attitudes and actions of western settlers, successfully distinguishing between the competing interests along the frontier and giving settlers a voice in the history which they helped create. Settlers struggled with provincial and imperial officials, land speculators and others as well as American Indians, often finding themselves in a two front war against the elites in the east as well as the Indians in the west.

Following the French and Indian War, officials in Great Britain embarked on several attempts to control the vast new territory acquired during the late war. Government was needed in new territory to prevent violence between settlers as well as to prevent their tumble down the stadial ladder as they became more Indian than British (53). These attempts to extend Imperial control over the region would not only fail, they would exploit cracks in the empire that would end British rule in America. The beginning of this end, Griffin argues, occurred not in Boston or Philadelphia, but along the Pennsylvania frontier (74). In 1765, the "Black Boys" threatened imperial authority after

destroying a pack train of Indian goods and besieging Fort Loudon to release several of the group's members who had been captured. Settlers like the Black Boys felt that British policy slighted them in favor of appeasing Indians and took up arms against a government that they believed was threatening their safety. By 1772, Britain found it could not appease both Indians and settlers and abandoned imperial control of the frontier.

With imperial authority out of the way, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and individual land speculators vied for control of the region in the years before the outbreak of the American Revolution. The battle for control of the region continued as the Revolutionary War raged throughout America. As the war engulfed the west, the level of violence escalated, fueled by a racist hatred that emerged along the frontier. "In 1763 the slaughter of innocents at least raised eyebrows," Griffin notes, but by 1783 it did not (154). By the end of the Revolution "violence became the only certainty" along the frontier where "race and violence went hand in hand" resulting in massacres such as that at Gnadenhutten (171). While the focus of the war effort lay in the east, settlers directed the war in the west. It was their blood being spilled and they would exact their revenge.

Despite the cessation of warfare along the coast, violence continued along the frontier. Settlers also pressed the new United States government to address their needs, just as they had done with Britain earlier. Attempts by the national government to curb Indian attacks failed miserably throughout 1791. While settlers found little protection in this government, they also faced conflicts from eastern speculators and land jobbers who threatened their ownership of the land they had protected with their blood. Settlers in western Pennsylvania embraced the ideals of the Revolution and sought to create their own society during the Whiskey Rebellion. Western Pennsylvanians were not alone in their anger against the United States for not heeding their grievances and other frontier communities "saw the cause of western Pennsylvanians as their cause as well" (233). While the Whiskey Rebellion fizzled out as a Federal army marched on Pittsburgh in 1794, it was perhaps the work of a second army that marched west at the same time that was of greater consequence in ending strife between western settlers and the east. Anthony Wayne's army, which had been preparing for war against the American Indians of the Ohio Country, marched west even as the Whiskey Rebellion escalated. Fears among easterners that the military stores reserved for Wayne would be seized by the Whiskey rebels proved unfounded. The rebels would not interfere with the army that had finally embarked on

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eradicating their main grievance, Indian violence. "Cannon could be used for its intended purpose" of firing at Indians, not fall into the hands of Whiskey rebels (247–248).

Following Wayne's victory and the subsequent treaties, the United States embarked on a new policy in the west. The United States had learned from Britain's failures and understood "that western land had to be held by a visible and credible force" (251). Peace and civility on the frontier had come to require the removal of the Indians. The United States government would now lead the way westward. "Common men and women would no longer stray onto Indian land alone," Griffin notes; "They would be preceded by troops and surveyors, agents of the state and market" (258). The American Leviathan was born and set to march westward. Wayne's victory not only ended Indian violence in the region, but appeased the settlers as well. Peace and optimism prevailed along the frontier as the new approach to western settlement would solve the grievances of the past. Following the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, settlers could live without the fear of violence and the "fight for the West had ended" (252). At least for the time being.

Griffin's persuasive argument successfully links the pieces of the frontier puzzle. While accomplishing this, Griffin could have taken it a step further by making the plight of the settlers more personal. The racial hatred of settlers for the Indians is a major element of his argument, but Griffin does not explore the psychological effects of frontier life that contributed to this state of mind. As Crèvecoeur wrote in *Letters from an American Farmer*, "Which ever way I look, nothing but the most frightful precipices present themselves to my view, in which hundreds of my friends and acquaintances have already perished." Constant exposure to the "short and brutal" lifestyle of the frontier filled with death, fear and anxiety, along with the physical and mental hardships brought on by almost constant warfare and atrocities, certainly contributed to build and feed this hatred. Aside from this omission, Griffin presents a valuable contribution to our understanding of this formative period of American history. *American Leviathan* is a must-read for any scholar of the Pennsylvania frontier.

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