

FROM THE EDITOR

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It has been fifty years since the publication of R. R. Palmer's seminal work *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*. Since that time many scholars have focused their work on the larger influences of the Atlantic World and the exchange of ideas. This year's special issue focuses on "Pennsylvania and the Atlantic World." The contributions to this issue clearly reflect the interplay and connections in the broader trans-Atlantic region and Pennsylvania.

In the first article Michael McCoy investigates the life and works of James Smith, who was born in Chester County and spent most of his life on the frontier. Through an examination of Smith's writings McCoy maintains that "the rural world was *not* indissolubly isolated from the Enlightenment." In spite of his relative isolation from the center of the Enlightenment in Europe, Smith still actively participated in the exchange of Enlightenment ideas.

Charles Russell also illustrates the influence of Enlightenment thought on Pennsylvania. Enlightenment ideas shaped the debate between Constitutionalists and Republicans during the

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1776 Pennsylvania State Constitutional Convention, especially over the topic of religious liberty. Russell states, "This examination of Revolutionary Pennsylvania's discussion of religious liberty places Islam in its proper context, as a part of the larger debate about the role of religion in early American government."

Antoinette Sutto takes a fresh perspective on the Maryland-Pennsylvania border dispute. Her essay recasts the dispute into an Atlantic framework and the context of royal absolutism. Sutto argues that historians have tended to focus more on the eighteenth century when examining the controversy and have misunderstood the origins of the Maryland-Pennsylvania border dispute. By looking backward into the seventeenth century and to England she asserts that the root of the dispute has more to do with Stuart political authority. Sutto further asserts that "The Penn-Calvert dispute is as closely tied to events in the 1630s as it is to the eventual solution of the controversy in the eighteenth century."

John Catron recounts the experiences of enslaved Africans in the mid Atlantic region—Bethlehem Pennsylvania specifically—in the eighteenth century. Catron shows how enslaved Africans used Christianity to challenge their servitude. While not losing their African identity, Christianity was used "to blur the lines between slavery and freedom—a practice which ultimately led those who successfully became "Afro-Moravians" to enjoy greater economic mobility, autonomy and, often, to obtain their freedom." Bethlehem became a critical point where Atlantic connections between Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and mid-Atlantic were realized.