

## BOOK REVIEWS

*David Andrew Nichols. Red Gentlemen and White Savages: Indians, Federalists, and the Search for Order on the American Frontier.* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008. Pp. xi, 268, index. Cloth \$39.50.)

From the moment of reading the title, the reader is jolted awake and forced to reevaluate many misconceptions about the early development of the United States. Nichols reinvigorates the detailed historiography of early United States policies toward Native Americans with a discussion of a complicated web of government, settler and Indian characters, each with their own self-interests and human motivations. More broadly, Nichols analyzes the political culture of the United States from the point-of-view of three divergent groups: elected federal officials in the east, white settlers in the backcountry, and various Indian groups in the west. In many ways, the narrative focuses on the odd and frequently unstable alliances between eighteenth century Indians and the fledgling United States government and the problems

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PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY: A JOURNAL OF MID-ATLANTIC STUDIES, VOL. 77, NO. 3, 2010.  
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both had dealing with white settlers in the west. The contradictions and mixed messages sent by Native Americans, government officials and so many other people suggest a political landscape devoid of cooperation as each faction fought for dominance. As David Nichols points out, the story is even messier, as it “illustrates the political and social divisions within both white and Indian communities, and the challenges facing leaders within each” (2).

The federal government initiated early political influence by supporting the dominant party in each region, largely in an attempt to gain a political foothold in the frontier. In the Southeast, they supported Creek and Cherokee negotiations against the problematic states of Georgia and North Carolina. In the Old Northwest, they took a much harder line against the weaker federalist Indians of the Ohio region. The overall effects of federal efforts throughout the western frontier were the weakening of Native American resistance, limitations of state control, and increased political control of the new federal government elite in the east. Their actions, though, rarely won them favor among westerners, Indian or European. In the Old Northwest, pan-Indian federations attempted to push back against faulty treaties like Fort Stanwix, and sought both military and political resolution while self-interested federal representatives attempted to codify beneficial treaties. The Southeast was characterized by much stronger Indian political and military intervention against both the Federal government and the settlers of the attempted state of Franklin. Nichols’ narrative explains the slow decline of Native American power and the rise of federal control over both Indians and whites along the frontier by the beginning of the nineteenth century. As populations of whites overtook those of Indian groups, and the federal government became better able to control both groups with military and political power, the balance of power shifted entirely in the favor of European descendants.

Though Native Americans play a primary role in Nichols’ text, the author is clearly focused on the development of the United States’ Indian policies and their implementation. The egocentric motivations and interests of historical characters play a major part in Nichols’ understanding of the constantly shifting political landscape of the trans-Appalachian frontier, including George Washington, Timothy Pickering, Joseph Brant, and John Sevier. The narrative ambitiously encompasses a large geographic region and a diverse body of actors. Yet the author manages to treat each region and cultural group with sensitivity to the internal factions that complicated and steered intercultural political interactions. This is most noticeable in the detailed explanations of the condolence ceremonies performed at treaty conferences. Far from taking

the ceremonies at cultural face-value, the author shows the theatrical nature of the displays and interprets the intentions of the actors, both Indian and white. As in the case of the Treaty at Greenville of 1795, the United States paternal political relationship with Northwestern Indians “was to be a provider and mediator, not a punisher of wrongdoers” (176). Equally as important, Nichols recognizes the mutual misunderstandings stemming from such conferences and the bloody conflicts that ensued. Rather than using indigenous people as passive critiques of western society, this book incorporates Native Americans as integral and dynamic players without demonizing or generalizing non-Indians.

There is something for all readers interested in early republic and Native American history. Nichols’ discussions are broad enough to explain the development of the early American republic for an introductory course and detailed enough to produce graduate level discussions. The only limitation was the lack of useful maps. The one general map showed where treaty conferences were throughout the time period but maps detailing the effects of treaties, especially land cessations, would be a very useful addition, especially for non-specialists. The narrative binds together the patch-work quilt of events and characters on the frontier into an exciting and easily understood whole. Nichols’ work is breath-taking in its cogent and insightful explanations that are as well-crafted for undergraduate students as for seasoned professors.

ISAAC J. EMRICK  
West Virginia University

Joseph S. Tiedemann, Eugene Fingerhut, and Robert Venables. *The Other Loyalists: Ordinary People, Royalism, and the Revolution in the Middle Colonies, 1763–1787*. (New York: SUNY Press, 2009. Pp. x, 210, maps, illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$70.00.)

In this work’s first chapter, Wayne Bodle writes “the ‘King’s friends’ always seem to be one big book away from popular critical mass, or at least historiographical redemption” (19). While *The Other Loyalists* might not be this “big book,” it is certainly an important step in the right direction. As the book’s subtitle indicates, Joseph S. Tiedemann and his fellow editors focus on non-elites in the middle colonies to offer new perspectives on loyalism and those who espoused it.