
Review: Review

Reviewed Work(s): Friends and

Strangers: The Making of a Creole Culture in Colonial
Pennsylvania by John Smolenski

Review by: Doug MacGregor

Source: *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Winter 2011), pp. 64-67

Published by: Penn State University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/pennhistory.78.1.0064>

Accessed: 08-03-2017 21:55 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Penn State University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to
Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies

they were all united under Dutch colonial rule and cultural connection to the patria (61).

When the Peace of Breda halted the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1667, it did so at the expense of the colonists in New Netherlands. As Jacobs points out, the decision is indeed understandable from the viewpoint of the States General back in Amsterdam. New Netherland was a small, underpopulated island in a sea of ever-growing English colonies, particularly as the seventeenth century marched on. It would be extremely vulnerable in the face of its increasingly aggressive and expansion-minded neighbors. By 1664, Jacobs contends, New Netherland no longer fit within the Dutch Atlantic economy, as the Dutch were more concerned with their shipping and trade empires than colonization schemes in North America. It simply became an expendable pawn in the game of empires.

Jacobs's *The Colony of New Netherland* offers a richly detailed and exhaustive look into the Dutch colonial experience in North America, a subject until recently neglected by early American scholars. This is an illuminating and highly readable work. It might overwhelm nonspecialists with its level of detail and analysis, but it nonetheless fills an important niche in the history of the Atlantic World.

CHRISTOPHER J. KUBIAK

Community College of Allegheny County

John Smolenski. *Friends and Strangers: The Making of a Creole Culture in Colonial Pennsylvania*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. Pp. viii, 401. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$45.00.)

Pennsylvanians have prided themselves on the story of their founding almost since the founding itself. The story of William Penn's great experiment of religious freedom and harmonious relations with the native inhabitants is an often-told tale, recognizable by many, from grade schools to the ivory towers, and immortalized in paintings from the eighteenth century to videogames in the twenty-first. But is our creation story just that, a story, steeped in myth just as the wolf-raised Romulus? In *Friends and Strangers*, John Smolenski

finds that, “in its first decades” Pennsylvania was anything but the “‘peaceable kingdom’ of myth and legend” and seeks to separate fact from myth. In doing so, he uncovers the process of identity formation in the early commonwealth as “individuals and groups constructed new cultural habits and identities as they tried to make Old-World inheritances ‘fit’ in a New-World environment,” a multistage process Smolenski labels “creolization” (4). *Friends and Strangers* focuses on how Pennsylvania’s Quakers used creolization as a tool to stabilize the province and legitimize their rule over it.

Organized in three parts, *Friends and Strangers* begins by analyzing the success of the Society of Friends in its formative years and the creation of a Quaker identity. Early Quakers found great success in attracting and absorbing other dissenters, leading them to become the largest dissenting faith in England. As such, Quakers developed a unique identity and organizational structure that would give them firm control over their members. This “gospel order” was accomplished by missionary work, expanded and regulated publications, and a Meeting structured to impose discipline over its members and expel those who threatened the faith or unity. These strategies strongly influenced William Penn and his ideas regarding government. While some Quakers believed government should be limited, Penn advocated the positive role government could play. He hoped to create a form of government that “would shape its subjects’ civil conscience in much the same way that the Quaker Meeting shaped the Friends’ religious conscience” (52–53).

The second part opens with Penn’s idealistic goals for his province. The contradictions in his plan reveal its inherent weakness. He envisioned a tolerant and diverse society, but at the same time he intended it to be orderly and ruled by the Quaker minority. In order to achieve this, the plan required a fair and favorable government administered by a civic elite that would transform, or creolize, immigrants to become more Quaker-like. The unintended consequence of the creolization of the Quakers themselves, as well as a flawed approach toward Indian diplomacy, “represented a major crack in the foundation of Pennsylvania’s civic order” (65).

These flaws, among others, would lead to disorder in Pennsylvania and discord in Quaker identity. In crafting the 1683 Frame of Government, Penn remained true to his earlier visions for the colony. While political participation was granted to most white men in the colony, it placed “substantive political power in the hands of a few” (67). Just as in the Quaker Meeting system where “Quaker ministers and elders uttered the Word to and for Friends at large,” so too would they seek to dominate civic matters (69). This imbalance

and a host of other problems led to great disorder within early Pennsylvania. As Smolenski states, “the mechanisms by which Penn hoped to tighten civic bonds instead revealed fractures within them” (107). The struggle between the rulers and the ruled was mirrored in Pennsylvania’s Indian diplomacy. Their strategy necessitated American Indians deferring to colonial superiority in return for governmental protections and concessions, a requirement that proved “far more difficult in practice than it appeared in theory” (107).

These fissures ultimately culminated in the Keithian schism crisis in the early 1690s. What began as debate over theology soon exploded into a major religious, political, and legal quandry that would fracture the Quaker community. The debate over Christ’s body in Heaven between George Keith and William Stockdale escalated as Keith’s disagreements grew to include more prominent Quaker ministers. While Keith was disowned by the Society, he had attracted both a following and an opposition, igniting a bitter and very public debate that aired Quaker dirty laundry. Although the schism came to an end in 1695, it was a sign to many Quakers that their faith had become bastardized in America and that the “province’s elites had failed in their efforts to create a unified Quaker community” (177). However, out of the ashes of the schism Pennsylvania’s Quakers would find solutions to their early troubles, enabling them to “create a coherent, distinctly creole political coalition” (247).

The closing part of the book explores the final triumph of the Quakers’ colonial experiment. The failed methods used against the Keithians were replaced by those learned from the Keithians themselves, of publishing and opening public debate to create a provincial identity along with increasing governmental authority over the populace. Quakers published government proclamations and addresses, creating “a form of public discourse designed to convey authority, not elicit response” (254). The creation of “Rules of Discipline,” as well as stricter oversight and censorship of Meeting topics, established a means of keeping order and eliminating future dissidents. Additionally, as these rules were deemed necessary to return Meetings to their “Primitive Purity” following the Keithian schism, Quakers found an opportunity to create a new usable history of their existence. As Smolenski explains, the ruling Quaker party “justified its authority through appeals to a mythical age of Quaker settlement” and as “descendants of the province’s ‘Ancient Settlers,’ they cast themselves as uniquely virtuous in civic affairs” (10). Recasting their history in a light favorable to their interests allowed Quakers to solidify “a creolized Quaker identity and Quaker political rule” (10).

By 1710 their efforts came to fruition, as they had created a “workable political identity” and “established Pennsylvania as a firmly Quaker colony” (216). Historical revisionism remained a crucial strategy as Quakers struggled to remain in power, most notably through the pen of David Lloyd, Speaker of the Assembly. This Quaker revisionism would go on to exert tremendous influence on later histories of Pennsylvania. Dying in 1727, Caleb Pusey left unfinished his “Account,” a manuscript of Pennsylvania history. The manuscript would pass through the hands of several prominent Pennsylvanians before reaching Robert Proud, who wrote the first published history of the commonwealth in 1797–1798. Pusey’s Pennsylvania more resembled the Garden of Eden than the true nascent Pennsylvania, Pusey’s omissions and overwhelming praise of the Quaker founders in his “Account” had a lasting impression that still reaches us today.

While many Pennsylvanians may delight in the mythical origins of the commonwealth, Smolenski brings justice to the founders by bringing out the not-so-divine aspects of creating the province in this masterful work. While *Friends and Strangers* is a study of identity formation in early Pennsylvania, it is also a reflection of larger patterns seen again in colonial British America and throughout the history of the United States. A work like *Friends and Strangers* is long overdue in Pennsylvania historiography and I hope that it will invite others to look further into other long-held historical traditions.

DOUG MACGREGOR

University of Virginia

Thomas E. Crocker. *Braddock’s March: How the Man Sent to Seize a Continent Changed American History*. (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2009. Pp. xvi, 329. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$28.00.)

The defeat of General Edward Braddock on the banks of the Monongahela River in July of 1755 remains one of the most devastating defeats of Anglo-American arms on the continent of North America. It was also entirely unexpected. So confident had Philadelphians been that the city had already prepared a fireworks display in anticipation of Braddock’s certain victory.