

BOOK REVIEWS

The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815. By RICHARD WHITE. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. xvi, 544p. Illustrations, index. Cloth, \$69.95; paper, \$19.95.)

Historians of the colonial frontier have become increasingly aware of how complex that frontier was, especially when defined not as a place but as encounters between natives and colonists. Richard White's *The Middle Ground* will considerably advance our understanding of this dynamic, creative collision of peoples and cultures while, at the same time, providing the most comprehensive study to date of the world of Great Lakes Indians and their neighbors.

Where an earlier generation of scholars would have defined the frontier largely in terms of relentless hostility between Indians and settlers, White sees an arena within which cooperation, as well as conflict, shaped relations between societies defined not as cultural or racial monoliths but in terms of competing or converging interests. This was especially true in the Great Lakes region, a vast area known to the French as the "upper country"—the "Pays d'en haut." Here emerged the Middle Ground that White defines as "the place in between: in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the non-state world of villages. . . . the area between the historical foreground of European invasion . . . and the background of Indian defeat and retreat" (p. x). As place, process, and metaphor, the Middle Ground existed for a century and a half, from the Iroquois wars of the mid-seventeenth century to the American subjugation of the Indian middle west in the second decade of the nineteenth century. As it developed, the Middle Ground embraced Indians, Frenchmen, and British-Americans who learned to cooperate and together created a new world in the upper country based on shared needs and meanings. Only when cooperation gave way to coercion and the rise of Indian hating, as happened with the emergence of the United States, did the Middle Ground dissolve, to be replaced once more by two separate worlds, with Indians increasingly the objects of curiosity or scorn.

White's exploration of the Middle Ground has produced a study that contributes much to our understanding of both the frontier and native societies. The concept of a Middle Ground itself provides an explanatory unity within which events usually viewed in isolation—Pontiac's war, trade, native revitalization movements—emerge as threads in a complex tapestry of human relations that extended beyond the upper country to embrace the Creeks and Cherokees, to whom Tecumseh looked in building a pan-Indian movement, and to the Ohio Indians whose quest for autonomy added to the creative volatility of the Middle Ground itself.

Moreover, White takes special care to emphasize how much of the Middle Ground was the product of flawed perceptions. Cooperation was possible because participants either found within their cultural differences, or created, congruences that made understanding possible. It is on this level that White makes his biggest contribution. Through a study of the complex intercultural arrangements that defined the Middle Ground, he reminds us that, ultimately, the early American frontier was a continual process of discovery, learning, and adaptation. Mutual discovery and the new worlds that grew from it lie at the heart of the Indian-European encounters. By introducing us to the Middle Ground, White has provided the conceptual tools for a further reexamination of the frontier. *The Middle Ground* should be required reading for students of early American history.

University of Alabama at Birmingham MICHAEL N. McCONNELL

Blackcoats among the Delaware: David Zeisberger on the Ohio Frontier. By EARL P. OLMSTEAD. (Kent, OH, and London: The Kent State University Press, 1991. xviii, 283p. Appendixes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$29.00; paper, \$17.50.)

In *Blackcoats among the Delaware*, Tuscarawas County, Ohio, writer Earl P. Olmstead surveys the later stages of Moravian missionary David Zeisberger's career. With a local historian's eye for detail, he looks in particular at the various Christian Indian communities in the Tuscarawas River valley—the "Muskingum" region—over which Zeisberger and his colleagues presided between 1772 and 1821. The tale is dramatic: the wars between the United States and the Delawares, Shawnees, Miamis, Wyandots, and other peoples of the region chased the Moravians and their converts from the Tuscarawas to Canada and back on a tragic road; the American massacre of some ninety Christian Indians at Gnadenhutten in 1782 is only its most gruesome marker.

Unfortunately, in at least three ways this compelling material never comes into adequate focus. First, the reader's vision blurs as chronologies of great events intrude confusingly upon the Moravian mission scene. Repeatedly in a book that professes to be about Zeisberger's career, the military campaigns of Americans Josiah Harmer, Arthur St. Clair, and Anthony Wayne, the diplomatic maneuvers of British agents Matthew Elliot, Alexander McKee, and Simon Girty, and even such natural disasters as the 1812 New Madrid earthquake force their way into the local picture and require Olmstead to employ such phrases as "But Fallen Timbers was three years in the future" (p. 91) to lurch the Tuscarawas back into the field of vision without adequate explanation or analysis.

More disturbing is the distorted—albeit apparently unintended—focus the book places upon its Indian characters. Olmstead's clear partisanship in favor of Zeisberger and his native followers is forgivable. But his apparently deeply felt assertions of evenhandedness toward Indians are repeatedly undercut by unfortunate word choices that—until the display of racial insensitivity by 1991 World Series fans—seemed well gone from polite circles. The Moravian community at Schoenbrunn was “the first organized settlement in Ohio,” a land that previously was a “primordial wilderness” in which the native agricultural villagers were merely “roaming” (p. xi; see also pp. 64, 109). The Indians had “warlike ways” (p. 14), possessed a “wanderlust nature” (p. 126), and were “unpredictable and capricious” (p. 153). “Native riffraff . . . frequently roamed the countryside looking for a free lodging” (p. 21), while “the perfidious Wyandot” (p. 57) and other “rampaging Indians” (p. 82) sought worse. “The more competent members of the native population . . .,” however, “demonstrated an intense loyalty to the mission program” (p. 76).

A final flaw is the author's uncertainty as to the book's audience. Olmstead cannot decide if he is writing for a mass readership or for specialized researchers. Invented dialogue (“The old man quietly tapped Henry on the shoulder and said, ‘There it is, Billy, there it is’” [p. 3]) and evocations of imagined affective states (“Zeisberger was stunned! . . . His arms fell limp to his sides, and a great bubble of emotion began to swell within his chest” [p. 49]) suggest a historical novel more than a university press monograph. By contrast, a section of endnotes, a string of appendixes containing demographic information, and a valuable set of capsule biographies of the forty-four natives interred in one mission cemetery seem more appropriate to a weighty tome. But the scholarly apparatus will satisfy few serious readers; many statements and a few quotations are entirely unreferenced, while some endnotes contain only vague descriptions of “the letter from the [Moravian] archives’ holdings” or “the Fort Pitt records, especially the correspondence of General Brodhead” (p. 256). That very few recent scholarly works are cited may be a virtue in a work of local history, but the consistent spelling of historian James Axtell's name as “Axtel” (pp. 35, 257, 267) inspires little confidence in larger details. Zeisberger, his Indian followers, and contemporary readers deserve much better.

Dickinson College

DANIEL K. RICHTER

Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730. By JOYCE D. GOODFRIEND. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. xvi, 304p. Illustrations, tables, index. \$35.00.)

Through an unprecedentedly complete tracing of names on tax, occupational, church, and other public and private records, Joyce Goodfriend has

provided us with the finest discussion of social life in New York City in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries yet published. The heart of her argument is that Dutch culture, through language, the Reformed Church, and kinship networks, persisted and, in fact, predominated in the city until at least the 1730s. A tight-knit group that had prospered and held political office both before and after the English conquest of 1664, the Dutch outstripped the English in wealth, officeholding, and population for over seven decades after Peter Stuyvesant hauled down the flag. Their ethnic identity survived the debacle of Leisler's Rebellion and Governor Lord Cornbury's efforts to bolster Anglicanism in the first decade of the new century.

Goodfriend takes issue with the notion that New York "Anglicized" quickly or significantly after the conquest. She provides two convincing reasons in addition to her massively researched yet clearly presented demographic data. First, the English tolerated both Dutch religion and political participation. Second, unlike English immigrants to New York, who arrived on a scattered basis and failed to match the persistence, wealth, or prominence of their Dutch neighbors, the Dutch stuck together with great tenacity, in part because English rule offered few incentives for abandoning traditional ways.

In addition to dealing with the Dutch and English, Goodfriend provides interesting information on the French, Jewish, and black minorities who contributed to New York's ethnic diversity, with occasional glances at Quakers, Scandinavians, and others. Her ability to trace the sources of slave importations for a black presence that numbered one-fifth of the population in 1664 and one-seventh in 1700 is especially impressive. No less astonishing is the fact that 40 percent of white New York City households held slaves by the latter date, a concentration probably unmatched in any sizeable community on the North American mainland at the time. Goodfriend's information on the Anglican Church's efforts to convert blacks through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel is another bit of underinvestigated New York history crying out for elaboration.

Pictures of old New Yorkers and vignettes of particular families humanize a book that necessarily abounds with statistics and explanations of how they are used. (None of these, by the way, should frighten even the most non-quantitative of historians.) My only caveat is that Goodfriend has not written a chapter relating ethnicity to politics. I found myself trying to plug in New York's volatile political history for this period and figure out how it all fits together. By omitting this analysis, which her extensive footnotes demonstrate she could easily have performed, Goodfriend raises some interesting questions that I hope she will answer elsewhere. But no matter; this prodigious work of research and its clear presentation takes its place among the very best social histories of colonial America. It proves that the relative neglect of New

York vis-a-vis New England, the Chesapeake, and Pennsylvania has had less to do with the lack of sources, and more to do with the lack of historians with the energy and linguistic skills to exploit them.

Pennsylvania State University, Ogontz

WILLIAM PENCAK

A Dutch Family in the Middle Colonies, 1660-1800. By FIRTH HARING FABEND. (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991. xviii, 326p. Bibliography, illustrations, index. \$49.00.)

This remarkable account of the Haring family is more a long footnote than a saga. Based as it is on archival documents of all sorts—birth records, wills, church records, court records, military records, and so forth—it lacks the homey letters and diaries that have made similar attempts for New England families much more readable. No New England account, however, is more rewarding.

Is has long been a problem for Middle Colonies historians that so few personal family papers have survived, and for the Dutch virtually no personal papers. Firth Haring Fabend has done the extraordinarily tedious task of recreating a family from the evidence of documentary sources. She has also made excellent use of surviving artifacts of material culture.

The text is very happily elucidated by the inclusion of charts and tables that help clarify many of the issues that would be obscured if left only to narrative accounting. From all this data Fabend has sought to reconstruct motives, ideals, and goals, and all this she has done with care, caution, and success. This accomplishment is even more to be commended when one realizes that the volume was preceded by five novels. Never does she give in to the temptation to turn this account to a livelier level by introducing the artifices of the novelist.

Though Fabend very helpfully cuts through the religious divisions that afflicted the Dutch in colonial New York and New Jersey, she is less accurate in drawing out the old world theological divisions of the seventeenth century. The struggle between the Cocceians and the Voetians was neither as simple nor as straightforward as she seems to present it. Likewise, the links between the two parties and the Pietist movement were far more complex than she would have us assume. This was particularly true of the second generation of Dutch teachers and preachers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. And it was even more true of the new world where the practical matters of everyday life in the church led to problems and solutions that lay outside the framework of the old school theologies. Indeed, in the new world

the old school labels of Voetian and Cocceian are misleading without further qualifying distinctions.

A more consequential problem for this reviewer is Fabend's opinions on "Americanization." In the preface she suggests "a deep ambivalence toward America and toward becoming American." It is only on the next-to-last page that she refers to "the new anglicized ways." The problem lies, I believe, in the fact that the Dutch who came to America thought of the new country as "New Netherland" and their major city as "New Amsterdam." What they rejected was the anglicization of "their" country. In all of her arguments for the so-called rejection of America, Fabend never builds a convincing case for the point; rather, the case for their rejection of anglicization is implicit in many of her arguments. Indeed, the strong weight of the Dutch-American support for the Revolution is further evidence of their commitment to America—their America—and their rejection of anglicization.

Another factor that tends to skew the evaluation of this point is the "Washington Irving error," that is, the assumption that all Dutch were farmers and the more educated Dutch "did not act Dutch." By this criterion the educated classes in the Netherlands would not have been considered "Dutch." (One small related error is the assumption on page 102 that English-titled books listed for one of the Haring homes were English language books. The fact is, they were all Dutch books whose titles had been translated into English; the rest of the inventory was prepared in English.)

This excellent book is a mine of information and anyone interested in the history of the Middle Colonies will find it helpful.

Bryn Mawr College

JAMES TANIS

Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700-1800. By PETER C. MANCALL. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991. xviii, 253p. Appendixes, maps, index. \$29.95.)

Peter Mancall chronicles a "legacy of conquest," as the physically pristine Susquehanna Valley was transformed by waves of migration. With greater environmental and social sensitivity, the valley might have been the site of economic opportunity; instead it witnessed destruction and dependency. This volume, then, seeks to bury once and for all Frederick Jackson Turner's celebration of western settlement.

Drawing upon a wealth of traveller's accounts, personal papers and correspondence, as well as public records, the author provides a particularly intimate perspective. He begins with a fascinating description of the physical environment before settlement. Next, he traces the rise and fall of the

Susquehannocks and the Iroquois-allied refugees. Trade with the white man brought overhunting of furbearing animals, alcoholism, and European diseases. Even as whites poured into the area, the Indians cooperated with their eventual conquerors. The decisive break came with the Revolution when the Indians sided with the British; together they demolished the colonial towns and farms in the valley. Revolutionary troops wrought equivalent havoc on loyalist and Indian settlements. Losers in the war, the Indians could not reclaim their lands and were forced to relocate westward.

Now settlement burgeoned. Between 1770 and 1800 the population rose from 5,000 to 75,000. But opportunity eluded a majority of migrants one more time. Greedy landholders using their political connections took title to huge tracts in the fertile valley. They lured prospective tenants to the valley and demanded rent in the form of easily saleable produce. "Many [settlers . . .] tried their luck at owning land, but frequent cases at the orphans' court and notices in the local newspapers demonstrated that borrowing money to purchase land was a risky venture; those who failed lost their land and, if they died in debt, the courts bound out their children to serve as apprentices" (p. 235). Here as in the Middle West "[f]ew pioneers were able to climb the economic ladder to become property holders" (p. 236).

Such a revisionist argument demands evidence. The author provides several tables in an appendix on land distribution, tenancy, and persistence, but they are not employed effectively to prove his hypothesis. Acres of land owned are not the best proxies for wealth inequality. The tables fail to prove that the wealthy gained the most or that few of the lower orders were able to ascend the economic ladder. In fact, his narrative could be used to support Allan Bogue's classic study of the Midwest where speculators facilitated economic opportunity by providing credit to aspiring landholders. The author's archetypical landlord, William Cooper, attracted tenants with low rents that they had no difficulty paying. Cooper allowed his tenants either to pass the leases down through the generations or to purchase the holdings. For those who wanted to buy the land outright, he offered credit at the very modest rate of six percent. Most sought to purchase rather than rent. At his death in 1816, 8,000 residents (or roughly 1,200 households) lived on land Cooper once owned; yet seven years earlier, in 1809, Cooper had only 137 tenants.

For those who attempt to date the capitalist transformation of the countryside, Mancall claims "colonists . . . staunchly supported a market-oriented ethos long before Adam Smith" (p. 230). He does not attempt to engage in careful reconstruction of markets in commodities, capital, or labor as Winifred Rothenberg did for Massachusetts in the same era. For Mancall, the transformation's significance lay not in the continuing evolution of markets, but in the pursuit of profits by exploiting resource abundance. The result is

an absorbing narrative, one that amply demonstrates American enthusiasm for economic development with little if any concern for ecological costs. But until further evidence is offered, Mancall cannot conclude that "valley residents would become dependents in an age of independence" (p. 238).

University of Wisconsin, Madison

DIANE LINDSTROM

Robert Cole's World: Agriculture & Society in Early Maryland. By LOIS GREEN CARR, RUSSELL R. MENARD, and LORENA S. WALSH. (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991. xxi, 362p. Illustrations, maps, tables, appendixes, index. Cloth, \$39.95; paper, \$19.95.)

Lois Carr, Russell Menard, and Lorena Walsh have combined their impressive scholarly talents once again, this time to illuminate the specifics of life for a yeoman farming family of late seventeenth-century Maryland.

Robert Cole was about twenty-five when he migrated from England to Maryland with his wife, Rebecca, four children, and two servants. Robert's parents had been prosperous, and he began his new life with the capital to buy a freehold on St. Clement's Manor in St. Mary's County. Cole's world is recoverable not because of his considerable success at farm-building in the decade before he and his wife died, but rather because of the surviving Cole Plantation Account Book kept by the children's guardian for the years 1662 to 1673. This account book and Robert's will are printed in full as one of the four valuable appendixes to this thorough analysis of how agriculture was actually practiced in frontier Maryland.

Farming methods were changed by migration from a country where land was expensive and labor cheap to one where land was cheap and labor expensive. Robert's new farm, and those of his neighbors, was neither cleared nor plowed. Trees were girdled and left to decay unless needed for lumber or firewood. Both of the main crops of tobacco and corn were planted in knee-high hills created by hoeing, and both were labor intensive in different ways. In the absence of water mills, the "daily grind" was the pounding of corn with pestle in a mortar. To feed a family like the Cole's, someone spent between five and seven hours each day grinding that day's supply of grits and corn flour. Migratory farming was practiced within each Chesapeake farm, with specific plots cropped in tobacco, then corn, followed by twenty years in fallow. Apparently the most significant initial difference between agriculture of the colonists and that of the Indians they displaced was not crops, tools, or methods, but access to the massive European market for tobacco.

The raising of cattle, hogs, and horses was another major difference between colonial and Indian farming, but the "best" European methods were ignored by the pioneering generation. Crops rather than cattle were edged with worm fences made to be moved with the fields. Allowing the cattle to range freely all but eliminated feeding, but cost much of the milk, the fertilizer, and many of the calves. Less than half of the calves survived to maturity, and some adult cattle also died by being mired in swamps or eaten by wolves. As this volume's meticulous tables reveal, planters found the returns from cattle adequate, though horses were better, and hogs best.

All students of early modern life will value this careful and very accessible explanation of pioneer farming in the Chesapeake. The notes are rich in the related literature, but the book wisely avoids preoccupation with the three current historiographical issues to which its careful exposition contributes. Cole's pioneering agriculture was heavily market oriented, though self-sufficient in food. European methods of tillage and animal husbandry were significantly changed on new farms, but would reappear as the land was cleared and population increased. Yet Maryland was not thereby replicating England, for the pioneer phase was followed by plantation slavery.

By numerous measures, Robert Cole's world passed quickly. He and his wife died young, though at ages typical for the time and place. Robert's seven children were unable to match the pace of this Roman Catholic's material success. They would also have to choose between the political and religious freedoms he had enjoyed.

University of Western Ontario

IAN K. STEELE

Gentry and Common Folk: Political Culture on a Virginia Frontier, 1740-1789. By ALBERT H. TILLSON, JR. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991. ix, 228p. Maps, tables, index. \$30.00.)

Most historians of late colonial Virginia would describe the colony's political and social cultures as "deferential." By this they maintain that Virginia's gentry and common folk interacted within the bounds of well-defined hierarchical roles. Recent scholarship has addressed the extent and tenacity of the deferential style and the transition to the more broadly based republican ethos of the nineteenth century. In *Gentry and Common Folk*, Albert H. Tillson, Jr., maintains that the colony's deferential culture can best be understood if examined from a different vantage point, Virginia's backcountry. In this study of the Upper Valley of Virginia, Tillson not only provides new insights, he also points the way to a welcome integration of traditional scholarship and the growing field of backcountry studies.

Separated from eastern Virginia by mountains and rivers, the Upper Valley after 1730 developed a localist economy based on small farms and semi-subsistence agriculture. The exceptions were the region's intermarried elite families. This Scotch-Irish Presbyterian gentry had a more cosmopolitan outlook than their neighbors and embraced commercial activities. Tillson's backcountry, in other words, was neither a Turnerian paradise nor a stereotypical Appalachian backwater, as wealthy landowners lived alongside yeomen and tenants in "substantial inequality" (p. 12). The elite desired political and social hegemony as well, attempting to replicate the east's deferential culture in the west with partial success. As resistance to militia duty best demonstrated, the common folk largely frustrated the gentry's goals. Several factors—notably the inability of the common folk to unite beyond the immediate locality, the elite's willingness to compromise and make concessions, and the mediatory role played by social-climbing local leaders—combined to prevent the sort of disorder that often characterized the Carolina backcountry. When the Revolution came, wartime stresses finally triggered open resentment and resistance that found expression in Loyalism. The gentry responded sometimes with suppression, but Tillson suggests that this response has been overemphasized by recent scholars. He sees as more crucial the elite's willingness to compromise even further, as expressed in its reliance on volunteer troops, the development of a common western regional consciousness, and especially the emerging republican ideology. Ultimately, the strains of war and the new republican ideas worked dialectically to transform the region's political culture.

Gentry and Common Folk is an important study. The research is meticulous, the conclusions generally convincing, and, for a revised dissertation, the writing sure. There are problems. The last chapter, a structuralist analysis of an early regional history, adds little. In addition, historians familiar with the careers of antebellum southwest Virginians such as William Ballard Preston will likely agree that Tillson overstates the death of the deferential culture. Finally, it is unfortunate that Tillson did not link his findings to the related and complementary studies of Appalachian historians, particularly in regard to the region's socioeconomic status. Nonetheless, Tillson's *Gentry and Common Folk* is a fine work that should be regarded as the standard history of the region.

West Georgia College

KENNETH W. NOE

Mistress of Riversdale: The Plantation Letters of Rosalie Stier Calvert, 1795-1821. Edited by MARGARET LAW CALCOTT. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991. xv, 407p. Illustrations, appendix, index. \$34.95.)

Margaret Calcott, in translating, organizing, and editing this collection of Stier family letters, has provided both scholars and ordinary readers with a

treasure trove. Whether one is interested in social relations among the Maryland gentry, the nitty-gritty of existence in a gentry household, gender relationships, or American society, politics, and investment opportunities seen from the viewpoint of Belgian aristocrats, these letters provide fascinating material.

Henri Joseph Stier and his family fled to the United States in 1794 as the French Revolution expanded into what is now Belgium. The Stiers came first to Philadelphia, then moved to Annapolis, and finally acquired land near Bladensburg. There, Henri Stier established a plantation he called Riversdale. In 1803, however, all the family except his daughter Rosalie returned to Antwerp. Rosalie married George Calvert, son of an illegitimate but acknowledged son of the Fifth Lord Baltimore, and made her home in Maryland. The letters published here begin with the departure of her family and end at her death in March 1821.

Calcott introduces the letters with an account of the nine-year stay of the Stiers, using correspondence and account books. We see the life of a young girl, born and raised in a different social setting, as she adjusted to new ways, was courted and married, and bore her first child. Calcott ends the book with the story of George Calvert and his children after Rosalie's death, including the black children that went unmentioned in her letters but who she probably knew about.

These letters offer fascinating insights into the life of one family. It was, of course, not typical, given Rosalie's European background and the Stier's enormous wealth. Nevertheless, her correspondence has much to tell us about plantation life in the Maryland of her time, family arrangements, the care and education of children, and the social life of the capital of the new nation. Rosalie, in control of a large household, worked hard. In Antwerp the Stiers had plenty of skillful servants. Rosalie found that in Maryland good white servants were hard to keep and slaves required constant supervision. She not only organized all household arrangements, she made the clothing for the family, servants, and the Riversdale slaves, cutting out the cloth herself and supervising the sewing. During the Napoleonic Wars she oversaw the spinning and weaving of much of the cloth. She also ran a dairy and sold butter, boasting of its quality. Good tutors and governesses were hard to find, and most of the time she taught her young children herself.

Rosalie was well educated and her father and husband showed great confidence in her abilities. Stier put her in charge of his American investments, sending instructions from Belgium but accepting her advice. Eventually her brother and brother-in-law did the same. She persuaded her husband to keep accounts by starting to keep them for him, and he made no important decisions without consulting her. Consequently, her letters to her family note changes in tobacco prices and exchange rates and record decisions about

when and where to sell the crop and when to buy public bonds or invest in bankstocks or turnpikes or land.

The letters show Rosalie's feelings about motherhood, childbearing, and raising a family. After her sixth child she wished, unsuccessfully, for an end to childbearing, perhaps in part because her health was failing after a bout with typhoid. But she nurtured her children with great love, including one so defective that she never sat up and never talked. The deaths of this one and three others (out of a total of nine) were devastating experiences.

Margaret Calcott has done a beautiful job of editing and has arranged the letters so that they tell an interesting, sometimes gripping, story that can capture the general reader as well as inform the scholar.

Historic St. Mary's City

LOIS GREEN CARR

Spanish Observers and the American Revolution, 1775-1783. By LIGHT TOWNSEND CUMMINS. (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1991. xv, 229p. Index. \$32.50.)

It has never been easy to acknowledge that the winning of American independence involved the assistance of European monarchs who rejected the basic American premises, much as they welcomed the opportunity to weaken and humiliate Great Britain. This is particularly true in the case of Spain, for Charles III refused timely recognition of the young republic, and Spain's North American empire was victimized by the United States within a generation of 1776.

Spanish Observers is a study of those spies, agents, and "observers" who informed Havana and Madrid of British-American affairs between 1763 and 1783. It centers upon Juan de Miralles and Francisco Rendon, who resided in Philadelphia after 1778, and upon their voluminous contributions to Spanish "strategic intelligence." But in the work of lesser figures in the earlier years, Cummins finds the development of an imperial intelligence system inspired and directed by Governors Unzaga and Gálvez in New Orleans and by Captains-General Torre and Navarro in Havana.

Spanish jealousy and nervousness regarding Britain's position in the Floridas after 1763 was only natural. European confrontations, such as that over the Falkland Islands in 1770, might lead to hostilities for which Spanish colonial authorities were ill prepared. The formalization of pre-revolutionary crisis measures enjoyed the support of the merchants of the Asiento de Negros at Havana and of José de Gálvez, minister of the Indies at Madrid. The revolutionary explosion to the north made "observation" both easier and more important to the Spanish government. By 1777, Spain was giving

covert aid to the American rebels, and Havana was opened to American merchants. To this point, Spanish interest was focused upon the Gulf coast and the Floridas; French adhesion to the American cause in 1778 forced Spain to look to Philadelphia. Miralles was dispatched from Cuba in the guise of a merchant, but the business of intelligence gathering and diplomacy were two sides of the same coin.

Miralles was a great success. Sponsored by Robert Morris and Henry Laurens, he was General Washington's honored guest when he died in 1780. Because of his unofficial role, Miralles was forced to approach Congress through the French ministers to the United States, but he displayed outstanding diplomatic qualities in the face of Spain's refusal to recognize the new nation. His secretary and successor, Rendon, was less accomplished but served Spain's interests well.

These Spanish observers, playing the difficult role of unaccredited diplomats, were primarily concerned with Spain's desire to recover the Floridas and to block American access to the Mississippi River. Cummins emphasizes the narrow particularity of Spanish interests in America and the defensive attitude of both colonial administrators and national policy makers. Future dangers to the Spanish empire were clear enough to contemporary Spaniards, for the new Americans had been suckled on the milk of westward expansion and showed little sympathy for the imperial welfare of their Spanish neighbors.

Cummins's book is solidly based upon Spanish archival materials, and he brings together the scattered earlier studies in English that probe Spanish intelligence operations. His attention to recent Spanish scholarship will also be illuminating for American readers. He touches the broader European diplomatic scene judiciously but lightly, naval and military aspects of the war hardly at all, but these were matters largely beyond the view of Spanish observers at Philadelphia. The Spanish government honored Cummins's *Spanish Observers* with first prize in the international competition, "Spain and America in the Quincentennial of the Discovery"; it should be no less well-received on this side of the Atlantic.

Auburn University

ROBERT R. REA

To Be an American: David Ramsay and the Making of the American Consciousness.

By ARTHUR H. SHAFFER. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991. x, 334p. Bibliography, index. \$39.95.)

Most early Americanists know David Ramsay as the author of *The History of the American Revolution* (1789), which is generally regarded as the first

and most successful national history of the United States written by a member of the revolutionary generation. But in Shaffer's excellent intellectual biography, as in history, several different yet related things are going on at the same time. Ramsay's story, as Shaffer tells it, threads its way through a host of major historical themes: the backcountry of colonial Pennsylvania as a breeding ground for men-on-the-make; pre-revolutionary Princeton's capacity to blend Christian and classical values into a potent version of radical republicanism; the fusion of great political and cultural expectations for America within the revolutionary generation, most of whom died disappointed; the surprising role of Charleston, South Carolina, as an early intellectual capital; the complex adjustment of southern republicans like Ramsay towards slavery, once they realized that it was not going to disappear naturally.

At the center of these several themes lies Ramsay himself, a poor boy from Lancaster County whose ambition carried him to Princeton in 1762. He graduated just as the Stamp Act was mobilizing colonial opinion against Parliament. From the beginning, Ramsay was a passionate opponent of British policy; his Whig values only grew in strength while he studied medicine in Philadelphia under Benjamin Rush during the early 1770s. In 1774 he carried his radical convictions and his medical degree to South Carolina, where he quickly established himself as a political and cultural leader within the upper reaches of Charleston society. By the time he died in 1815—shot in the back by a deranged former patient—Ramsay had outlived three socially prominent wives, made himself the preeminent historian of the state as well as the new nation, served in the Continental Congress, championed the federal Constitution, accumulated a fortune, then lost it in bad investments, and found a way to accommodate his unbridled nationalism to the discrete charms of the slave-holding planter class of the South.

If the central challenge of any intellectual biography is to connect the life and thought of the subject, Shaffer answers the challenge admirably. The overall framework is chronological, but Shaffer pauses to provide chapter-length treatments of the most resonant intellectual and cultural topics: Ramsay's abiding republicanism, most clearly exhibited in his *History*; the sources of his nationalistic vision in the 1780s; his view of written history in shaping a national ethos; his shifting attitude toward slavery. The book actually lives up to its somewhat sweeping title, which at first blush conjures up an ethereal account with Hegelian overtones. But Shaffer deftly manages to ground his analysis in the particularities of Ramsay's life. This is not easy to do, and there are moments when the back-and-forth between chronology and a thematic focus proves awkward or repetitive. The writing, however, which is lucid—at times even lyrical—rescues the book from many of these

clumsy moments and gives both the narrative and the analysis a common voice.

Ramsay's vision of America, which Shaffer calls "republican nationalism," provides a similar coherence for the book's major argument. While this is clearly the authoritative study of Ramsay's contribution as a historian of the American Revolution, it is also much more than that. Ramsay emerges as a leader in what might be called a second-tier of Founding Fathers. Comprised of men like Jeremy Belknap, Jedidiah Morse, Charles Willson Peale, and Noah Webster, this group did not shape American political institutions so much as shape the way subsequent generations thought about them. And the source of Ramsay's influence, indeed the hard core of his personal and national philosophy, was a flexible and ever-adaptive version of republicanism that managed to encompass dichotomies and contradictions with apparent serenity. Of course, scholars have been doing battle over the deconstructed elements of "the republican paradigm" for over a quarter-century. But just as the debate has become tiresome and unduly esoteric, Shaffer's version of David Ramsay offers us a compelling account of the republican ideology in action, not as a dead paradigm but as a dynamic life. This book should win some prizes.

Mount Holyoke College

JOSEPH J. ELLIS

In the Cause of True Education: Henry Barnard & Nineteenth-Century School Reform. By EDITH NYE MACMULLEN. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991. xiv, 378p. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$37.50.)

In the annals of American education Henry Barnard is a hero—or so Edith Nye MacMullen would have us believe. During a life that spanned nearly all the nineteenth century Barnard served as the chief school officer in two states, Connecticut and Rhode Island, and the first Commissioner of the United States Department of Education. He presided over two institutions of higher learning, the University of Wisconsin in Madison and St. John's College, in Annapolis, Maryland. He published many books for teachers and for more than thirty years compiled and edited the *American Journal of Education*, the most famous and influential periodical of its kind in the United States in his time. But the man behind this record of accomplishment was flawed. Exploiting what she calls the "Barnard myth," MacMullen almost makes a straw man out of him, rehearsing his prestigious reputation as a school reformer while repeatedly bringing it down.

In his career Barnard worked for better teacher training and the management of public education by the "enlightened and responsible few." He strongly believed that each state should develop an integrated system of education from the elementary school to post-secondary institutions. Beginning in Connecticut, he supported the cause of teacher education by promoting in-service teacher institutes and state normal schools. He was the first superintendent of the Connecticut Normal School and insisted on doubling as the agent of the Wisconsin Normal School while serving as chancellor of the University of Wisconsin. In 1845 he wrote a new school law for Rhode Island that led to the establishment of an educational chain of command from the state to the district level. Such reforms meant not only structural change. They promised to make education a more effective defender of the status quo as well.

The *American Journal of Education* was Henry Barnard's greatest achievement. Published between 1856 and 1882, it supplied American educators with a torrent of data about schools and schooling both at home and abroad. It was not his first effort as an editor. Begun by Barnard in 1838, the *Connecticut Common School Journal* gave him the incentive to reach for a national audience. Ironically, Barnard the bureaucrat was not a disciplined publisher or editor. He lost subscriptions and sometimes took liberties with the work of others. The *American Journal of Education* often displayed signs of "carelessness and haste."

Super sensitive to criticism, Barnard always had an excuse for his failings. He was overworked; he was short of funds; he was betrayed by others. As an author and editor, he avoided taking sides, preferring to inform and inspire rather than analyze. Such a cautious policy was perhaps to be expected of a gentleman reformer. But according to MacMullen Barnard never matured. "He had ideas, many derivative but not a few original, which he proposed to implement, with great zest at the start of each segment of his career. But he tired easily, and became 'ill,' and he never grew."

The Henry Barnard portrayed by MacMullen is not a very likable man. Vain and self-serving in his dealings with colleagues, he made no exception for friends or family. Leaving his pregnant wife at home, he went on a research trip to Europe in 1852. "He was a frugal man in a way," says MacMullen, but "he spent lavishly on his own schemes and pleasures, especially to indulge his greed for books." In his work he would have been ineffective "without the constant support and activity of scores of others, and it is not to his credit that he never publicly recognized their contribution."

How could such a man ever have become a hero? Was he such a skilled publicist or politician? Was the cause of "true education" so desperate for heroes that its leaders could be forgiven serious flaws? Whatever the explanation, it is clear that MacMullen has fashioned an entertaining and compel-

ling, yet strangely paradoxical, portrait of a complex and important figure, one that reminds us to be skeptical of appearances.

Temple University

WILLIAM W. CUTLER III

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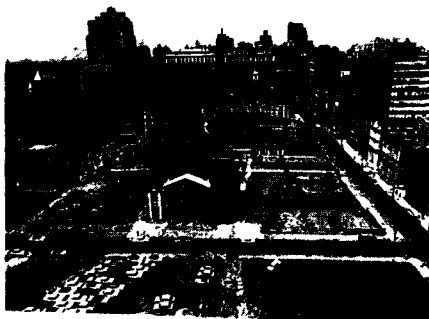
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