

*Fries's Rebellion: The Enduring Struggle for the American Revolution.* By PAUL DOUGLAS NEWMAN. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. xii, 259p. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95.)

Arguing that Fries's Rebellion, the resistance movement by German American Church people against the federal Direct Tax in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley in 1799, was an attempt "to expand the role of the people within the political system" (p. x), Newman successfully ties local events to the larger political, ethnic, religious, and social climate of the early republic. Newman goes beyond previous interpretations of the so-called rebellion that emphasize religious tensions between minority sectarians and majority Lutherans and Reformed Church people (*Kirchenleute*), ethnic differences between Anglo- and German Americans, popular opposition to the Alien and Sedition Acts, or political conflicts between Hamiltonian Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans. By offering the variety of voices discernable in court records and newspapers, Newman shows that Fries's Rebellion "testified to the democratizing forces in politics and society unleashed by the American Revolution" (p. xii).

Newman's interpretation is anchored in the history of German speakers in Pennsylvania, beginning in the 1740s with their struggle to obtain land and security in ownership and leading by the 1770s to their ascension to positions of local political power in part by supporting the radicals who wrote Pennsylvania's Constitution of 1776. *Kirchenleute* were men of modest means who could bear the immediate burden of the Direct Tax, but fear of an uncertain future and enslavement by the government motivated their opposition. *Kirchenleute's* resistance was based also on successful precedents during the 1780s when state tax collection and attempts to foreclose on properties were met by local militias refusing to act because they saw their neighbors' defense of their property as a defense of the constitution and a celebration of the Revolution. Newman points out repeatedly that *Kirchenleute* did not see themselves as rebels, did not engage in violent acts or ritualistic violence, and heeded Washington's call to arms during the Whiskey Rebellion. They perceived themselves as law-abiding citizens who used the First, Second, and Sixth Amendments as legitimate means to oppose oppressive legislation.

Newman clearly explains the federal government's budget woes of the late 1790s and Federalists' fear of war with France, resulting in the Stamp Tax, the Direct Tax, and the New Army. President Adams's appointment of sectarian Federalist tax collectors in the Lehigh Valley was the key to *Kirchenleute's* resistance, since the collectors saw *Kirchenleute's* pacifism during the Revolution as loyalism. Tavern keepers, millers, and preachers played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of community but also in strengthening resistance. Fries was representative of *Kirchenleute*—he was a bilingual, literate war veteran and farmer with a German wife and several children, owned a small tract of land, and was vulnerable

to economic downturns. Newman is at his best when he narrates the actual rebellion and its aftermath. His description shows that *Kirchenleute* were not quite as peaceful as he otherwise suggests—only sheer luck, bad aim, and the intoxication of would-be shooters prevented human casualties. Newman blames overzealous, order-obsessed Hamiltonians for sending federal troops, although Fries's and his followers' actions amounted only to "non-violent obstruction of one law and vocal constitutional opposition" of the Federalist agenda (p. 185). Adams's pardon of Fries contributed to Federalists' political abandonment of Adams and led *Kirchenleute* to support Jefferson in the election of 1800. Still, *Kirchenleute* remained critical of both political camps and continued to concentrate on local and ethnic concerns to strengthen their political voice as German Americans. Newman's work (including nine photographs and a map) tells us how ordinary people understood the Revolution and its heritage.

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*The Enlightened Joseph Priestley: A Study of His Life and Work from 1773 to 1804.* By ROBERT E. SCHOFIELD. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004. xv, 461p. Illustrations, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$55.)

This book is the second and final volume of Robert E. Schofield's forty-year effort to write a complete biography of Joseph Priestley, the English radical, chemist, dissenting clergyman, and philosopher. Schofield presents an intellectual biography, which seriously engages Priestley's science, theology, and metaphysics so that it is as much a book of Priestley's ideas as it is of his life. To this end, Schofield "consulted and described every published writing of Joseph Priestley and attempted to place every bit of it in its historical context" (p. xi), introducing the reader to the various political, philosophical, theological, and scientific controversies to which Priestley was a party. Schofield explicitly writes for "historians of science, chemists, and theologians as well as intellectual and cultural historians" (p. xiii), making the book rather demanding of its readers. Schofield's goal is to show that Priestley was "more than a lucky empiricist in science, more than a naïve political liberal, more than an exhaustive compiler of superficial evidence in militant support of Unitarianism" and to elevate him to his rightful place as "a leading luminary of the Enlightenment" (p. xii). Schofield succeeds brilliantly.

Although Schofield clearly sympathizes with Priestley, he criticizes his subject when the occasion demands it. He faults Priestley's intellectual idiosyncrasies, his penchant for controversy, and his discursive style of composition. Of course, Schofield treats Priestley's stubborn refusal to adopt the "New