

BOOK REVIEWS

The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667–1783. By DAVID L. PRESTON. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 408 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, list of abbreviations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.)

With the recent publication of several Native American-European back-country studies that emphasize empire, global and Atlantic perspectives, and, especially, settler-Indian violence, it is easy to lose sight of the small-scale interactions at ground level that better typified social life in colonial frontier settlements. Through exhaustive research in state, local, and institutional archives, David Preston challenges the depiction of northeastern frontiers merely as European-dominated zones of friction, fighting, and eventual Indian defeat. Studying the texture of daily life in both Indian and European settler communities, he shows that Iroquois and other native groups had no intention of surrendering their carefully maintained borderlands to European interlopers until the era of the American Revolution. Iroquois settlers, along with Delawares, Shawnees, and others acting under Iroquois auspices, moved into zones of Indian-white interaction and preserved them as Indian places. The result was not always, or even usually, violence. On the frontiers of Iroquoia, many Native American and European settlers found ways to coexist, resisting waves of land speculation, colonization, ethnic hatred, and imperial warfare that threatened constantly to implant violence throughout Indian Country.

Preston's lively and very well-researched book adds a complexity to Iroquois studies that may surprise even those familiar with the abundant recent literature on Iroquois culture. Iroquois settlers in the reserves of the St. Lawrence Valley moved seamlessly between Indian, French, and British worlds, visiting ribbon farms and enjoying Montreal pub crawls with friendly habitants; they were still free to trade for more desired British goods in Albany when they so chose. Mohawks in New York exhibited similar autonomy, living in near harmony with Palatine German settlers near their Mohawk Valley "castles" of Canajoharie, Schoharie, and Tiononderoge. Mohawks even collected rents from white settlers, further establishing their status and mastery of the Iroquoian frontier. Delawares enjoyed amicable relations with frontier squatters in Pennsylvania's Susquehanna Valley until the illegal settlers became too numerous in the mid-eighteenth century. Delaware and Iroquois complaints about them gave land-hungry provincial proprietors and land speculators the opening they needed to evict squatters (temporarily) and induce large Indian land cessions, effectively dispossessing Delawares of whole regions and turning amity into conflict.

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When war did break out in Pennsylvania in 1755, it was interpreted as a series of betrayals by suddenly belligerent Indian and white neighbors. Ethnic hatred and total war ensued. Hostility between former neighbors carried on for years in Pennsylvania, but the same pattern did not hold for the Mohawk Valley. There, despite similar tensions, German, Mohawk, and Oneida neighbors chose cooperation instead of conflict and maintained the region's neutrality during the Seven Years' War. This is hardly surprising, Preston shows, given the incredible degree to which British, German, and Iroquois neighbors were connected through proximity, trade, intermarriage, religion, and the mediation of their influential neighbor and Indian superintendent Sir William Johnson.

No such cooperation existed in the much more violent Ohio Country of the 1760s. Legal white settlers and illegal squatters flooded across the Appalachians after 1763, led by the British army, which facilitated white expansion through "military colonization," rather than slowing it as ordered in the 1763 Proclamation. After creating the Ohio mess, the army turned tail and left in 1773, leaving behind fearful and vengeful Indian and white settlers to battle in increasingly bloody confrontations. Finally, the American Revolution pushed even relatively harmonious Mohawk Valley neighbors into contentious land and loyalty conflicts; more betrayals would eventually cause thousands of Iroquois loyalists to be exiled to Canada.

Some may accuse Preston of picking his evidence too injudiciously in locating so much intercultural cooperation and friendliness. Those critics should have their own research in order before making that charge. Preston's investigation is exhaustive, and he relies on underused and obscure local archives. Students of Iroquois culture and backcountry history will be surprised and challenged by this book, which shows in a new way that conflict was never inevitable in the backcountry. Even on the eve of the Revolution, there was still the possibility of Indian-European amity in the Iroquoian borderlands.

University of South Florida

DANIEL INGRAM

Bodies of Belief: Baptist Community in Early America. By JANET MOORE LINDMAN. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. 272 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.)

Bodies of Belief examines Baptist communities in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Virginia from their founding to their partial assimilation into the mainstream denominations and American culture. Two hundred congregations make up Lindman's extensive sample that includes records from the seventeenth century through 1830. Lindman provides a corrective to histories that focus on the persecution of Baptists in New England and Virginia,