

BOOK REVIEWS

Friends and Strangers: The Making of Creole Culture in Colonial Pennsylvania.

By JOHN SMOLENSKI. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. 392 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$45.)

“Quaker Pennsylvania” was made, not born, argues John Smolenski. From the time of its settlement in the 1680s until the 1720s, the colony’s Quaker pioneers, a contentious charter generation, struggled mightily to establish who among them would rule and which Quaker principles would guide the colony. Smolenski characterizes this tense process of cultural adaptation and change as “creolization”; it is the central theme of his book.

Smolenski opens with an examination of the Quakers’ origins in the turbulent era of the English Civil War. As dissenters whose emphasis on individual salvation challenged rather than confirmed the standing order, the Quakers were neither part of Britain’s political or social mainstream nor fully united. Rather, they grappled with how to balance the individual within the group in order to build a community and achieve some measure of consensus and were held together by often tenuous threads.

Quakers thus faced serious challenges as members of the fledgling movement began to govern Pennsylvania. Smolenski follows their efforts to “creolize” themselves and their colony by tracing how their struggles to adapt often resulted in bitter factional battles over colonial law, speech, print culture, and diplomacy. William Penn was central to this process. His unique legal and political visions were lightning rods for controversy. Creolization was thus no easy process. It produced such political dysfunction that even William Penn was ready to give up his colony. So what quelled Quaker factionalism? According to Smolenski, leading Friends made conscious efforts to put disputes behind them and define themselves as a stable ruling elite. Using the colony’s expanding print culture, Quakers formulated a mythic past and cast themselves as its makers and arbiters. In this way, they remade Pennsylvania into a uniquely Quaker place.

Smolenski’s book adds important dimensions to the growing body of literature challenging long-standing portrayals of colonial Pennsylvania as a utopian peaceable kingdom. His detailed depiction of the colony’s early Quaker leadership class as a divided lot, though indebted to such works of the 1960s as those by Frederick Tolles and Gary B. Nash, reminds readers in fresh ways that from its start Pennsylvania was a colony where harmony was often elusive, goals failed, and dreams were thwarted. Yet his use of creolization as the interpretive lens through which to view cultural adaptation is the work’s chief strength and weakness. As a new way of elucidating the dynamic process of transplanting European

cultural ideals to America, creolization works. Still, for readers familiar with Ira Berlin's "Atlantic creoles"—the Africans and their descendents, some of them mixed race, who operated in the multiple cultural worlds of Africa, Europe, and America during the era of the Atlantic slave trade—Smolenski's interpretive use of creole may be less than satisfying. To what extent can the experiences of a privileged group of white Quakers who moved from the British Isles to America and held political hegemony in Pennsylvania really be seen as creolization?

Muhlenberg College

JUDITH RIDNER

A Town In-Between: Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and the Early Mid-Atlantic Interior. By JUDITH RIDNER. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. 320 pp. Maps and illustrations, notes, index. \$49.95.)

The literature on Pennsylvania during the colonial and early national periods has become increasingly abundant in recent years, but it has concentrated on southeastern Pennsylvania, particularly Philadelphia. Because it focuses on a town in the backcountry, Judith Ridner's *A Town In-Between: Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and the Early Mid-Atlantic Interior* is a welcome addition to the historiography of Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century. According to Ridner, Carlisle's geographic location along the frontier—both east/west within Pennsylvania and north/south in the mid-Atlantic—led to it becoming a place where residents faced the typical challenges of life in the backcountry along with the opportunities available to settlers who ventured into the hinterland.

Carlisle was a place that experienced a considerable degree of turmoil and change in the eighteenth century. Early European settlers formed profitable trading relationships with the Shawnee and Delaware of the region before the town's establishment in the 1750s. In fact, Thomas Penn founded the town to advance the proprietors' economic interests at a time when the landscape was changing, both literally and figuratively. During Carlisle's early years, the relationship between the European settlers (mostly Scots-Irish with a few Germans) and the Native Americans shifted dramatically when war came to the Quaker province, as Cumberland County residents flooded to the town to escape the attacks on their property.

The Revolutionary War brought new challenges to the community, as many residents enthusiastically supported independence. Carlisle provided troops (most notably Thompson's Rifle Battalion), and the town served as a prisoner of war camp for British troops and Loyalists. Armaments manufactured at Carlisle contributed immensely to the successful prosecution of the war, and the town served as an important supply depot. However, economic factors discouraged service in the militia, leading to concerns about whether the townspeople fully