

The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies. By ALAN TAYLOR. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. 620 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$35 cloth; \$18 paper.)

The eminent historian Alan Taylor, who is especially known for his Pulitzer and Bancroft Prize-winning books *The Divided Ground* (2006) and *William Cooper's Town* (1995), has written a magnificent and persuasive study of the War of 1812. While mentioning that this conflict between the British Empire and the American republic was waged, in some respects, over British violation of maritime rights and over her impressment of some American sailors, Taylor accentuates the thesis that America and Britain were engaged in a civil war for the control of Upper Canada. He argues that this struggle pitted Americans, Irish immigrants, and some Indian allies of America against Late Loyalists and Native Americans who backed the British Empire in lands between Montreal and Detroit. In this military, ethnic, and political study comprising sixteen chronologically and topically arranged chapters, Taylor maintains that this bloody borderlands conflagration resulted from American expansionist aims to take Upper Canadian provinces, where many Loyalist families located after the American Revolution. The War of 1812 therefore revolved around two salient and competing ideological visions: namely, the doctrines of American republicanism in opposition to those of British constitutional monarchism.

Taylor's book contains many detailed and vivid accounts, especially in the sections pertaining to the first years of the war. Following the inexplicable surrender of Detroit by the American general William Hull on August 16, 1812, America earned several key victories along the western front, first winning the Battle of Put-in-Bay—and thus securing control over Lake Erie—under Commodore Oliver H. Perry in September 1813. The next month, the Battle of the Thames proved to be a great American success, for the British-Indian coalition was defeated by General William Henry Harrison, and the eminent Shawnee chief Tecumseh was killed. Thereafter, the war's western front remained a stalemate. Neither side could claim victory either in the Niagara or Lake Ontario regions. The Anglo-Canadian force at Queenstown Heights in October 1813 lost its talented leader, General Isaac Brock, but won the battle; likewise, the British and their Indian allies that year occupied Fort George, a town ravaged by the Americans under General George McClure, but lost in 1814 to the American general Jacob Brown (a University of Pennsylvania graduate).

Taylor lucidly describes the social features of the war in the Niagara, emphasizing how burning, plundering, and scalping were prevalent at the Battles of Lundy's Lane, Fort Erie, and Buffalo. His assessment of the conflict in the region between Lakes Ontario and Champlain is incisive; despite the burning of York in 1813 and its naval victory at Lake Champlain the following year, America could not defeat her opponent, but managed to protect herself from a British

attack against New England. Taylor's last chapters illustrate the importance of the 1814 Ghent Treaty and suggest how its effects would become significant to American expansionist programs, to Canadian political culture, and to Britain's North American imperial policies.

The Civil War of 1812 is a fine and a fascinating study. The book, which briefly alludes to minority populations in Pennsylvania and to its congressmen, who voted overwhelmingly for the war in order to preserve unity in President Madison's party, is distinctive for devoting meticulous attention to American ethnic groups. This work, which contains extensive endnotes and a lengthy bibliography, is also a paragon for the study of borderlands history. Lastly, by stressing salient features of nation and empire building, Taylor's superbly written tome enhances our understanding of early nineteenth-century Atlantic history, surpassing the recent studies written about the 1812 war by Donald R. Hickey and by Jon Latimer.

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Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War. By STANLEY HARROLD. (Chapel Hill, : University of North Carolina Press, 2010. 312 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.)

With the sesquicentennial commemorations of the American Civil War well under way, enthusiasts will continue to debate the causes of the war, including the centrality of slavery to its commencement. Stanley Harrold's recent book emphasizes not only the political importance of slavery to increasing sectionalism but also the physical conflict it provoked along the margins between free and slave states. When one considers the many examples of violent confrontations between pro- and antislavery citizens along the border region, it seems surprising that a full-scale civil war did not break out much sooner. Harrold presents compelling evidence that these skirmishes caused Border South slaveowners to push for stronger federal protections of slave property while fueling the conspiracy theories of Deep South planters.

Most students of history are familiar with the major flare-ups along the border before the Civil War, such as John Brown's infamous raid, or the Margaret Garner case, which inspired Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. But Harrold here unearths dozens of obscure or hitherto unknown instances in which tensions surrounding the institution of slavery escalated into violence. These clashes between proslavery advocates and abolitionists took place along the southern edges of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, which Harrold refers to collectively as the Lower North. These free states contained many citizens with strong anti-slavery sentiments influenced by politics, morality, or religion. In contrast, the Border South states of Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and Kentucky were home