

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson.* By BERNARD BAILYN. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974. Pp. 374. Preface, illustrations, epilogue, appendix, index. \$12.50.)

Bernard Bailyn, Winthrop Professor of History at Harvard University, has received further recognition for distinguished writing in the 1975 National Book Award for *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*.

He examines the American Revolution, not from the perspective of the twentieth century, but from pre-Revolutionary times. First, he takes a fresh look at the Adamses, the Bowdoin, the Otises, John Hancock, and other Massachusetts protagonists, whose distrust of Hutchinson began early in his political life. Second, Bailyn explores the mind of Thomas Hutchinson, who had served in many offices from assemblyman and judge to governor. Finally, in an appendix, Bailyn takes a long, compassionate look at the loyalist Tories, "the real losers," who are often only lightly sketched in studies of the American Revolution.

What kind of man was Thomas Hutchinson? His Puritan ancestors were founding fathers of Massachusetts, but he was accused of secretly leaning toward the Church of England. At first, during the French and Indian War, voters had approved of his protection of their charter rights. Yet from the 1760s on, he steadily lost political standing until he became the most hated man in the colonies, ultimately an exile in England. In 1765 a mob gutted his home, destroying everything from wainscoting to books, manuscripts, and research material, then carried off what they wanted, simply because they erroneously believed that he had approved of the Stamp Act. An estimated 10,000 people came to see the ruins.

Ironically, while Massachusetts celebrated independence on July 4, 1776, the exiled Hutchinson received an honorary doctorate of civil laws from Oxford University, as the most distinguished and most loyal colonial-born official, and the most distinguished historian in the American colonies.

Yet he was the most hated man in America. One reason for the hatred of his constituents was Hutchinson's multiple office holding and his control of Massachusetts through his office-holding relatives. Voters also felt that this aloof man was using them for self-advance-

ment. John Adams always felt that Hutchinson was a courtier, "slyly manipulating the passions and prejudices, the follies and vices of great men in order to obtain their smiles, esteem, and patronage and consequently their favors and preferment." Many believed that he had recommended oppressive measures against the colonies, but they had no proof.

Hutchinson's favorite way to reveal his thought was through letter writing and his diary. His records also include his complete administrative and private papers. There are 1500 letters in the Massachusetts Archives, Boston. At the Massachusetts Historical Society is Catherine Barton Mayo's script copy of Hutchinson's letters for the use of scholars. Most of the remainder of his manuscripts are in the Egerton Manuscripts, British Museum. Bailyn notes that these were preserved by Hutchinson's great-grandson, Peter Orlando Hutchinson, for his own book, and that after the book was completed, he had sold the papers to the British Museum. All of his official correspondence with British authorities is among the Colonial Office Papers, London. There are also some items pertaining to Hutchinson at the University of Michigan and at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

It was Hutchinson's custom to write and rewrite his thoughts, for he was a prudent man: "My temper does not incline to enthusiasm." Yet his unconscious revelation of self in his letters was the cause of his downfall, to be described later.

The office of colonial governors was fairly carefree until the reign of George III, when the colonies were asked to help with their keep, and Whitehall became stringent. It was easy for Hutchinson to adapt to the change, because of his conception of the absolute power and authority of the British Empire. However, many of his constituents were discontented, and this meant trouble: "He was unprepared to grapple with the politics they shaped." For a long time after the Stamp Act, he wrote about the issues at stake and suggested changes in certain British laws relating to the colonies, never using the documents, merely filing them away. Bailyn considers them first-rate, the distinguished works of a man deeply acquainted with history and law.

Men of like mind in England, who were exploring the same ideas, upon hearing about his unpublished studies, suggested an exchange of ideas; William Bolla, former governor Shirley's son-in-law, Richard Jackson, agent for Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, both Pownalls, Thomas Whately, writer of the Stamp Act, and Sir Francis Bernard were in this group.

In replying to a letter from Jackson, Hutchinson stated that the American colonies were too weak to survive without protection by English power. He also wrote: "No amount of theorizing or wishful thinking would change the necessity for an abridgement of what is called English liberty. I doubt whether it is possible to project a system of government in which a colony 3,000 miles distant from the parent state shall enjoy all the liberties of the parent state. . . . I wish to see the good of the colony when I wish to see some restraint of liberty rather than that the connection with the parent state should be broken, for I am sure such a breach must prove the ruin of the colony."

When these sentiments were published in 1773, they shocked and angered the entire political population of America and utterly destroyed Hutchinson in Massachusetts.

He also recommended that Whitehall "bear with the disorderly colonies until they have distressed themselves so as to bear their distresses no longer"; and also "to encourage the animosities already begun between the colonies, and distinguish one colony from another by favor for good behavior and frowns for the contrary."

When Bernard left for England and Hutchinson became governor, personal attacks on Hutchinson increased. On March 5, 1770, he became the scapegoat for the Boston Massacre. He was proud of the skillful way in which he substituted crown troops for provincial troops in the harbor garrison, and of his smooth transfer of the general court from Boston to Cambridge, two successes which later would backfire. In fact, the Cambridge controversy lasted for two years; ten papers were exchanged between governor and assemblymen, all published throughout the colonies.

All this time he had been writing to England for directions and reporting all events. There was silence for ten months. One packet of letters lay unopened in England for a year, and was read only at the insistence of a Massachusetts visitor.

When his crown salary was announced, the assembly forced him to refuse it; and when crown salaries were offered to judges, a pamphlet entitled *Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders of Boston*, written mainly by Samuel Adams, was circulated to all colonies. It was "the foundation for the coming Declaration of Independence." His debates with the council later were printed in 126 pages, containing the arguments of both sides. Samuel Adams, Joseph Hawley, and John Adams assembled and supervised the publication.

Hutchinson was always afraid that discovery of the contents of

his private correspondence might lead to his political downfall. He even wrote to England to caution the government to safeguard private papers.

His worst fears became realities when the assembly met in closed session to hear letters written by Hutchinson and four of his relatives. Two weeks later, the letters were published in a pamphlet, advertised as the "fatal source of the confusion and bloodshed in which this province especially has been involved and which threatened total destruction to the liberties of all *Americans*." More letters came, revealed to Franklin by an ancient enemy of Hutchinson. The letters in pamphlet form went through ten printings, and were reprinted in all colonial newspapers. Franklin was dismissed from his position as deputy postmaster general of the American colonies and was rebuked before Parliament — but he was a hero in the colonies. This part of Hutchinson's life is as exciting as an episode in a John Le Carré novel.

Naturally, Hutchinson was anxious to leave for England but he had to wait for the arrival of his successor, General Thomas Gage. Notice of his recall was at sea for three months, and by that time the weather was too stormy. He still had to endure the Boston Tea Party, scapegoat as usual. Before he left, he hid all his papers in the attic at Milton, made plans for his dear family, and prepared to take daughter Peggy and son Elisha with him.

Gage arrived on May 13, with a letter from the king containing "some comfortable expressions that may make his mind easy that he is not discarded and will receive marks of favor."

At first he was happy in England, much consulted in Whitehall. He attended the king's levees. But he longed for Milton and the countryside, for his family at home. Gradually, he was ignored by government officials. He disliked London's pursuit of pleasure. Then there was Lexington, the invasion of Canada, Bunker Hill, the great victory of the Americans at Saratoga, to name a few events which destroyed all hope of returning to the colonies. Finally, his family came in exile to England. It was to be permanent.

In November 1775, his old trunk in the attic at Milton was discovered by a curious neighbor exploring the empty house, the contents turned over to the provincial congress, edited by the Reverend William Gordon of Roxbury, then published in the colonies and England.

Hutchinson finished his work on the family history in 1778. In

July 1779 he received a copy of the Massachusetts Act of Banishment, with his name first on the list. He died of a stroke on June 3, 1780. James and Mercy Otis Warren bought and enjoyed the Milton house. Arthur Lee wrote to them: "It has not always happened in like manner that the forfeited seats of the wicked have been filled with men of virtue. But in this corrupt world it is sufficient that we have some examples for our consolation."

*Pittsburgh*

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*Pennsylvania Speculator and Patriot: The Entrepreneurial John Nicholson, 1757-1800.* By ROBERT D. ARBUCKLE. (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975. Pp. 266. Acknowledgments, illustrations, notes, index. \$12.50.)

Most students of Revolutionary America quite naturally anticipated the appearance of a large number of works extolling the virtues of the Founding Fathers. They have not been disappointed. Jefferson, Washington, and Hamilton, to name but a few, have been so honored. What has emerged as a pleasant surprise are studies of lesser known albeit important members of the Revolutionary generation who, for too long, have been ignored. Thus, we now have solid studies of Alexander McDougall of New York, Thomas Nelson of Virginia, and John Nicholson of Pennsylvania.

Professor Robert D. Arbuckle, of Penn State's New Kensington Campus, whetted the scholarly appetite of readers of this journal with his introduction to Nicholson in the October 1974 issue of *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*. He has now delivered a full-scale, nuts and bolts biography which was his Ph.D. dissertation at Penn State. Therein lie the strengths and weaknesses of this work. Like most modern dissertations, Arbuckle's is solidly grounded in manuscript sources, but follows too closely a blow-by-blow approach. The reader finds himself literally buried under a mountain of evidence, much of it economic, which is necessary but nonstimulating. The hand of a competent editor is obviously missing.

Nevertheless, John Nicholson was a fascinating man. He served in the Continental army, was a clerk for one of the numerous boards of the Continental Congress but made his mark as "the virtual financial dictator" of Pennsylvania. His letterbooks read like a *Who's Who*