

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."

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FLORENCE C. McLAUGHLIN

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*

in the Revolutionary age. Washington, Morris, Duer, Mifflin, Rittenhouse, Gallatin, Burr, Brackenridge, among others, were all involved with him at one time or another.

Nicholson was something of a financial wizard but, like others of his generation, viz., William Duer and Robert Morris, he overextended himself. Greed was his downfall. He was so interested in becoming very wealthy he neglected his family and, ironically, even his businesses as he constantly strove to extend his personal empire into the never ending greener pastures. His methods rarely stopped at the limits of the law, which he clearly flaunted for his own ends. But Arbuckle exonerates him in the end, seeing him as more of a "Captain of Industry" than a "Robber Baron."

The author is to be commended for bringing to the fore a heretofore obscure member of the eighteenth century. While it is doubtful that Nicholson is worthy of emulation, it is revealing to document the human foibles of one of our nation's leading men. After all, they were all mere mortals.

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A Documentary History of the Indiana Decade of the Harmony Society, 1814-1824: Volume 1, 1814-1819. Compiled and edited by KARL J. R. ARNDT. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1975. Pp. xxvii, 837. Illustrations, introduction, editorial note, acknowledgments, index. Cloth, \$17.50, paper, \$8.00.)

When you pick up this book, you are holding the first product of the great lifework of Karl Arndt. It represents over thirty-five years of research and scholarship by Dr. Arndt on the Harmony Society. This scholarship has already resulted in a two-volume history of the society (*George Rapp's Harmony Society, 1785-1847* and *George Rapp's Successors and Material Heirs, 1847-1916*, both published by Fairleigh Dickinson University), and so many other monographs on the Harmony Society that a complete listing would take several pages. Arndt's lone pursuit of the obscure Harmony Society has publicized it, at least in scholarly circles, and brought it the attention it deserves.

This volume is just one part of a much larger projected work