

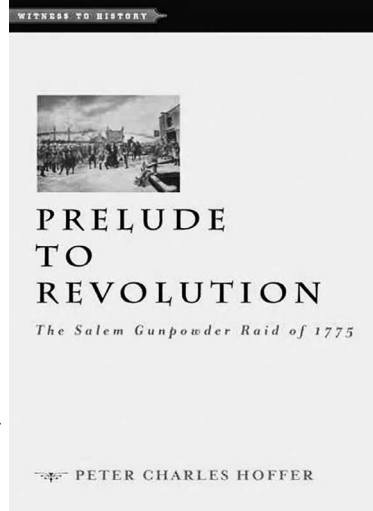
BOOK REVIEWS

***Prelude to Revolution: The Salem Gunpowder Raid of 1775.* Peter Charles Hoffer. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. 152 pages. \$55.00 (hardback). \$19.95 (paperback).**

Almost two months before the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord, British troops assembled outside the town of Salem and encountered armed resistance from local residents. A drawbridge prevented the soldiers from entering the town in search of cannons and gunpowder believed to have been concealed within the town's foundry. Having been alerted to the Regulars' activity in the area, the colonists had already removed the cannons and hidden them in nearby houses, fields, and woods. Following a tense standoff and a series of negotiations, the colonists agreed to lower the bridge and consented to a limited search of the town. Satisfied

with their search but disappointed with their inability to complete their mission, the British soldiers (commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Leslie) returned to Boston. Without a single shot fired by either side, the British Regulars had conceded the field for the first time to a group of armed colonists. Leslie's retreat, Peter Charles Hoffer argues, marks the official beginning of the American Revolution, noting that it was "only when the Regulars conceded defeat did a rebellion become the Revolution" (viii).

By providing a detailed microhistory of the gunpowder raid, Hoffer succeeds in investigating the limited sources and conflicting accounts for clues that reveal the historical actors' motivations. A real strength of this local history is providing the reader with a spatial dimension as the events unfolded by highlighting the interactions between Salem and surrounding towns, particularly the correspondence between Salem and Boston. Early chapters contextualize Leslie's raid by providing an overview of Salem's history, portraying Salem's citizens as reluctant revolutionaries caught between a militant Boston and a fervently patriotic New England countryside. However, given that the most thorough account of Leslie's retreat comes



from an antiquarian history written in 1856, Hoffer should have more fully addressed the limitations of historical memory.

The author sets the stage for the Salem gunpowder raid by following the journey of Captain William Brown and Ensign Henry DeBerniere, two of the many British spies General Thomas Gage sent to survey the surrounding towns to identify gunpowder and munitions reserves that the British army could seize in the event that hostilities erupted. Later chapters trace the historical memory of the event and explain why the Salem raid drifted into obscurity after fighting broke out at Lexington and Concord, and why Leslie's retreat became a historical footnote in the nineteenth century.

The British Regulars and colonial militia derived contrasting lessons from Leslie's retreat. The colonists realized that armed resistance could force the British army to back down. At the same time, commanders in the British army determined that a show of force might be necessary to reassert their authority. The gunpowder raid at Salem exemplifies a clear distinction between resistance and rebellion. For Hoffer, the incident marks a turning point that was critical in shaping how each side responded to the following gunpowder raid in Concord only weeks later. By closely examining the causes and consequences of the raid for both the American colonists and British Regulars, Hoffer provides a case study in historical contingency that provides context for the opening events of the Revolution. In following the specific circumstances that shaped Leslie's retreat and highlighting their influence on the subsequent raid in Concord, Hoffer challenges the thesis of the inevitability of the Revolution. If the chain of events had unfolded differently, he argues, the battles of Lexington and Concord might not have occurred and the colonists' grievances might have been addressed through peaceable means (140).

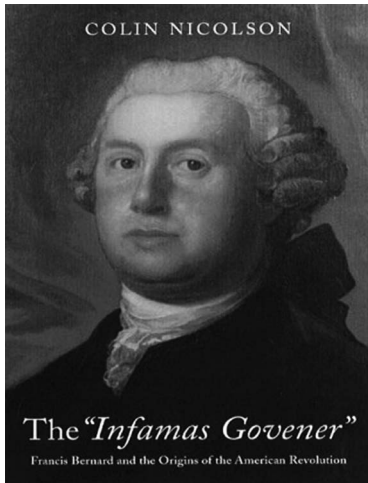
Hoffer's conclusion that Leslie's retreat marks the true beginning of the American Revolution might be overdrawn. Although both sides drew lessons from the gunpowder raid, the event did not inspire the colonists to produce claims to sovereignty. The formation of the Continental Army in the days and months following the Battles of Lexington and Concord marked a significant departure from previous acts of resistance. A closer analysis of the actions of the Continental Congress or the Massachusetts General Court might have strengthened the author's argument by providing more of a national or statewide component to the story.

Greater connections to recent historiography on loyalism and more direct engagement with the larger historiography of the Revolution could further support Hoffer's analysis. Hoffer counters interpretations that foreground the radicalism of the Revolution by emphasizing the role of middling

property owners responding to specific circumstances that threatened their community. However, he could better accentuate the factors that united the rabble in Salem and the minutemen in the surrounding countryside. While the work is well written and engaging, several minor flaws appear in the text. Hoffer cites Wikipedia in a few instances and does not always introduce quotations when presenting them in the text. The reader is forced to study the endnotes carefully to locate the original source and to clarify the quotation's context. Ultimately, Hoffer provides a definitive yet concise history of the Salem gunpowder raid that would serve as a useful textbook for any class examining the origins of the American Revolution.

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***The “Infamous Governor”: Francis Bernard and the Origins of the American Revolution.* Colin Nicolson. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2001. 326 pages. \$24.00 (hardcover).**



Francis Bernard served as royal governor of Massachusetts from 1760 to 1769, playing a pivotal role during the years leading up to the Revolution. Colin Nicolson, the editor of the six volumes of Bernard's correspondence and lecturer at the University of Sterling, Scotland, portrays Bernard as an imperial reformer, "caught in the crossfire between Britain and the colonies" (5). Rather than being a tyrant, as his opponents demonized him, he was, according to Nicolson, guilty of underestimating the strength of the revolutionary movement. He was too intent on rigidly upholding the supremacy of Parliament and unwilling to bend even the slightest in the winds of political radicalism. Nicolson argues that Bernard's reports on the political conditions in Massachusetts significantly influenced, if not determined, the policies and actions of the British government toward Massachusetts.

Nicolson's meticulously and richly researched political biography emphasizes Bernard's failure to reconcile his loyalty to the British crown with

the realities of colonial governance in the 1760s. Bernard sincerely believed that the cure for the antipathies to British rule in Massachusetts could be achieved by strengthening and enforcing the authority of royal officials, by reason if possible, by force if necessary. Nicolson points out that Bernard was tactless in his defense of imperial rule. He specifically asserts that Bernard did not panic in the face of what he viewed as increasing colonial violence. But Nicolson's evidence, drawn heavily from Bernard's correspondence, shows the contrary. Bernard also was unable to convince the "friends of [royal] government" who were the "mainstay of antirevolutionary sentiment in Massachusetts" to support him (112).

Bernard served as Governor of the New Jersey province from 1758-1760. He had early success in resolving the competing demands of London policymakers and vested interests in that province. However, he could not negotiate the more complicated political terrain in the more radical Massachusetts. The Stamp Act riots in Boston appear to be a turning point. According to Nicolson:

What Bernard witnessed in August 1765 never left him: his impressionistic accounts of an unstable polity struggling to realize ill-informed directives from London was the single, enduring message in his official correspondence for years to come. Henceforth, Bernard was preoccupied with recovering his dignity and exposing those whom he believed were conspiring against royal government (123).

Bernard became a prime target of the radicals' increasing opposition to the Townshend Acts of 1767. The colony's House of Representatives censured Bernard in 1767 and, in the following year, approved a petition calling for his dismissal. The Whigs, led by James Otis and Samuel Adams, focused their polemics on Bernard. Perhaps because he became the symbol of royal tyranny and seemed to have no support anywhere in the colony, he repeatedly asked for help from London in the form of more stringent enforcement of collection of the taxes and, finally, calling for troops to be sent to Boston. He retreated at times to Castle William, a fort in Boston Harbor, and eventually moved five miles out of Boston to Jamaica Plain, then a suburb of the city.

The British government relied heavily on Bernard's reports of the events in the colony. Because they respected his judgement, they took him at his word, but Nicolson points out that Bernard's correspondence was flawed for, among other reasons, overstating the extent of violence in the colony, and being unable or unwilling to name those he claimed were intent on

insurrection. So when Bernard called for troops to be sent to Boston in 1768, they were. The result, according to Nicolson, was a moment symbolic of Bernard's "time of tryals . . . when the governed lost all confidence in the governor and the governor seemed to abdicate responsibility for his actions" (180–81).

It is not clear from the book if other royal officials in Massachusetts were also sending reports back and, if so, what impact these may have had on royal decision making and policy. Nor does Nicolson include a discussion of what the governors and other royal officials in the other colonies were reporting back to London. Thus, it is difficult to measure how much reliance was placed on Bernard's assessment of the degree of rebelliousness in Massachusetts or the rest of colonial America. Nicolson's claim that Bernard's warnings, that respect for royal government was crumbling so fast as to require British soldiers to restore it, is probably correct. However, there is no information about the other colonies with which to make a comparison. A broader context would have been instructive.

In 1769 some thirty letters that Bernard had written to London officials were made public. The letters revealed that Bernard had discussed revoking the colony's charter, that he had exploited a riot to obtain British troops, and that he had "slandered" the province and "poisoned the king's ear" (199). Samuel Adams analyzed the letters in the Boston press, characterizing Bernard as a hater of free assemblies. Adams wrote a series of resolves that were issued by a Massachusetts House committee that "firmly placed Bernard's infamy within the context of the colonist's struggles against the British 'tyranny'" (202). Bernard's defense of his actions and words was minimal and ineffective. By this time, all he wanted to do was to go back to England and enjoy the baronetcy he was promised. Once home, he defended his actions by claiming that everything he did or said in Boston was in support of the primacy of Parliament and the prerogatives of the Crown. As he did when Governor, he tended to blame others for his problems.

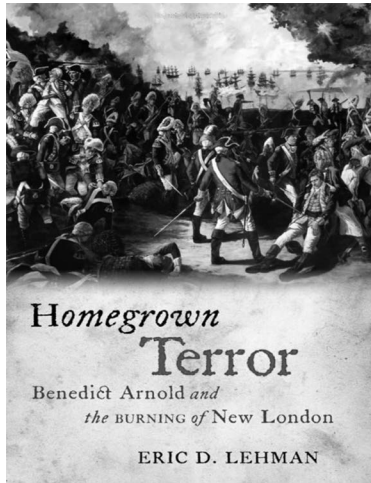
Bernard's influence on Lord North's policy and actions toward Massachusetts, especially as seen in the Massachusetts Government Act (or Second Coercive Act) of 1774, was substantial. Nicolson correctly points out that these policies were based on outdated, over dramatized, and erroneous information. The consequences "were catastrophic" (227). However, by placing so much emphasis on Bernard, Nicolson minimizes the growing desire in the 1760s for the colony to have a say in their taxation and the revolutionary fervor of the 1770s. Nicolson claims that Massachusetts officials, judges, and civilians submitted to the dictates of the local Patriot Committees to disavow the Massachusetts Government Act. Although

Nicolson cites two of his own previous works as a basis for this assertion, with over one thousand footnotes in total, this important statement merited more evidence.

Bernard was a failure as governor. He never tried to understand the motivations of the colonists. He was unable to retain the support of the “friends of government,” a formidable group that might have stuck with him had he the skills, tact, and empathy that were needed. He adhered rigidly and stubbornly to the principles and theories of government he brought with him from England. He left with them intact in his mind. As it turned out, his successor, Thomas Hutchinson, fared even worse.

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***Homegrown Terror: Benedict Arnold and the Burning of New London.* Eric D. Lehman. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014. 261 pages. \$30.00 (hardcover).**



Most Americans are familiar with the name Benedict Arnold and instantly associate it with the word treason. We may know that he turned traitor during the Revolutionary War in a plot involving West Point but, for most of us, that is the end of the story. *Homegrown Terror* corrects this knowledge gap by recounting Arnold’s wartime exploits both before and after his notorious volte-face. The book convincingly levels the additional charge of domestic terrorism against Arnold and leaves little doubt that his name will remain forever infamous. This is not a revisionist history. If anything, it represents a well-deserved “piling on” of additional charges that have been lost, and now revived, to general knowledge and to history.

The story of Benedict Arnold is akin to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Before the war he was an affluent merchant in Norwich, Connecticut, with family and commercial ties to New London. An early “Son of Liberty,” during the war he participated in many battles, distinguishing himself as a legitimate hero in the effort to gain independence from Britain. He and Ethan Allen

captured Fort Ticonderoga without firing a shot. He led the disastrous attack upon Quebec, which was doomed to failure anyway due to poor planning and logistics and unrealistic expectations. Ironically, he was also instrumental in beating back an early British attack on Connecticut. Arnold was the real hero of the pivotal Battle of Saratoga, though his commanding officer, Horatio Gates, gained most of the laurels.

Throughout his career, early warning signs of a difficult and prickly personality emerged. He was arrested for assaulting a Loyalist before the war began. He repeatedly threatened to resign when he did not receive promotions fast enough to keep pace with his ambition. On the personal side, he became deeply indebted and married a beautiful Tory from an affluent family. As military governor of Pennsylvania, he was known as a hothead and was charged with misconduct and peculation (embezzlement). He resigned this post, was court-martialed and acquitted, and was reprimanded by Washington. This led to his fateful correspondence with the British and the eventual betrayal of his friends, family, and country.

Arnold was offered a British generalship and twenty thousand pounds to turn West Point over to his former enemies. If the conspiracy had not been discovered, it is not unreasonable to believe that the entire course of the Revolutionary War may have been upended. Control of the Hudson was considered vital to the war on both sides, analogous to control of the Mississippi River during the Civil War. Of course, the conspiracy was discovered and disaster averted, but Arnold would exact his revenge in two distinctive campaigns.

The first of these campaigns was the invasion and capture of Richmond, Virginia, that led to the near apprehension of then-Governor Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was never fully able to live down the charges of cowardice and mismanagement associated with his flight from captivity. The escape of Jefferson is a well-known historical incident, but the part that Benedict Arnold played in the disgrace of one of the country's early luminaries is largely forgotten.

All that is a backdrop for the main event of the book, a recounting of Arnold's assault and terror campaign against his former home state. This volume is part of a series of works written about Connecticut or by an author from that state. It is for that reason that this former campaign has been resurrected from the "dustbin of history" and given new life for people previously unfamiliar with it. The campaign was meant to divert Washington from his march on Yorktown. The failure of this mission (Washington never stopped), combined with the timing of its concurrence with the climactic battle of the war, helped to relegate it into the background for future generations. But at the time, this battle was big news, especially for the people of Connecticut and New England.

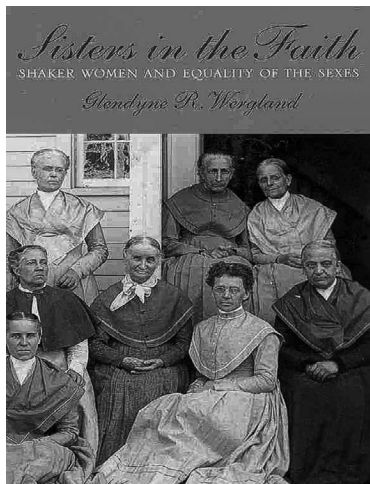
Arnold asked for command of the mission, which was in his former "backyard."

He attacked and burned New London, destroying many of his former friends' homes and businesses. It was the worst destruction of any city during the war. Not content, Arnold went on to capture Groton Fort and to burn the city of Groton. This battle saw the highest ratio of American soldiers killed in any battle during the war, partly because many of them were killed after they surrendered. So, to the charge of treason, we can add the deliberate burning of two prostrate cities after their defenders were vanquished and the deliberate extrajudicial killing of combatants after their surrender in battle—terrorism by any other name.

Arnold's subsequent career provides some small measure of justice for his misdeeds. Hated by America for his treachery, shunned by the British for his lack of honor, he eventually immigrated to Canada for his final days. Even former friend Silas Deane, also in disgrace due to charges of corruption during the war, rebuffed his overture of friendship. Now the verdict of history can add another charge against Arnold, that of domestic terrorist. It's a charge his contemporaries were fully aware of but that was lost to popular history until the publication of this informative and fascinating book.

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***Sisters in the Faith: Shaker Women and Equality of the Sexes.* Glendyne R. Wergland. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011. 228 pages. \$27.95 (paperback).**



The focus on Shaker studies has often focused on the community and their decorative arts. Within any Shaker community is a spiderweb of interactions, industries, and relationships. These connections are often overlooked in their importance to the synergy of how the community functioned and evolved. Glendyne Wergland's latest work, *Sisters in the Faith*, puts a focus on the overlooked aspect of Shaker women and the unique situation of having equality within the communities. Shaker women were equal to the men within the community, creating a

balance that enabled Shaker communities to function in remarkable ways.

Throughout the hierarchy of the Shaker faith and the separate communities, the leadership role of “The United Society of Believers,” or the Shakers, was held by both a male and female member of the faith after their founder, Ann Lee, had passed. This equal part in leadership led to a balance of the sexes. It was not without unique circumstances. Wergland goes into wonderful depth on Lucy Wright, appointed by John Meacham to fill the female seat of ministry leadership and a steadying force in growing the faith around the turn of the nineteenth century. While Wright’s leadership is important, Wergland focuses a bit more on her personal history. When one joined the Shakers, among other requirements, any existing marriage that a man and woman may have had before joining the faith was no longer recognized. With the man the dominant force in marriages at the time, to be considered equal would have been a humbling circumstance. Wright joined the Shaker faith with her husband, and, ultimately through her growth in leadership and charisma, she had a higher position in the community than her former husband, something unheard of in that time.

What makes *Sisters in the Faith* an excellent and much needed work in Shaker studies is that Wergland looks at not only the change of roles of Shaker women, but also how they dressed, the jobs they held in the community, and how the outside world viewed them. Through her subtle shift of focus on the role of women within the Shaker faith, Wergland is still able to weave a history of the Shakers that is engaging and highly detailed. The book also goes into depth, showing how unique women within the Shakers fared compared with the society outside, an important perspective. The historical photos in the book give an intimate glimpse into the Shaker sisters that are the focus of the book. While Wergland discusses and explains the Shaker sisters’ cap, the detailed photo shows how delicate this important component of a sister’s daily life is.

This latest work from Glendyne Wergland is an important addition to the study of Shaker communities, as well as their religion, which was often passed over. Such detail and context provides an important aspect to consider when looking at the entirety of a Shaker community. This is an excellent accomplishment and lays the foundation for further scholarship into this understudied but important aspect of the Shaker faith.

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