

Book review by Michael Tuosto, Journal of American Revolution. November 2016.
Revolutionary Delaware: Independence in the First State
by Kim Rogers Burdick (History Press, November 2016)

There needs to be twelve more books just like this one. Only one for each colony will suffice. Kim Burdick has found a way to foster debate and discussion amongst Revolutionary War enthusiasts that resembles debates over sports teams. Revolutionary Delaware highlights the strategic importance of Delaware, more specifically the Delaware River and the contributions of Delawareans to the ultimate victory of the colonies over Great Britain. It's not braggadocios in anyway, but I still feel compelled to write a reply book, focusing on the importance of New Jersey to the American Revolution.

Revolutionary Delaware takes the reader from the Stamp Act of 1764, to the Tea Act, through the Treaty of Paris in 1783. What makes the book unique is that Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington are not highlighted during the reader's journey, but instead the reader is introduced to Thomas McKean, George Read, and Caesar Rodney, while being reintroduced to one of the most underrated of the founders, John Dickinson. You may be confused by the title of Dickinson's Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies. The first significant call for colonial unity in the face of British oppression reads "from Pennsylvania," but Kim Burdick explains the reason for the confusion surrounding the man that served as governor of Delaware and Pennsylvania. Team Pennsylvania will have a hard time arguing these facts.

The primary source materials published in Revolutionary Delaware give this book great depth without reading like a text book. They include Dickinson's "The Liberty Song" (which could easily have become our national anthem in my view), the New Castle group's seven-point program to assist the people of Boston to endure the British siege, secret committee minutes, and a number of illuminating letters. The author cited to the Delaware archives to support the exact amount of booze served at the New Castle celebration of the Treaty of Paris and the end of the war: 41 gallons of Madeira Wine, 49 gallons of port, and 21 gallons of rum. This tells me two things: that the book is unbelievably researched and that the authors of the other twelve books better have a rebuttal regarding which colony can hold their liquor better.

The military contribution of Delawareans is underscored in this book, and in my opinion it was an outsized contribution. Richard Henry Lee believed "The state of Delaware produced one regiment only and certainly no regiment in the army surpassed it in soldiership." The most famous battle the Delaware regiment participated in was the Battle of Monmouth Court House in (my colony) New Jersey. The regiment also served under Gen. Nathanael Green in the southern theater. They fought valiantly in the battles of 1780 that led to our glorious independence!

As always for me, the most interesting aspect of this history book was the social history. The social history of revolutionary Delaware is defined by religious schisms between Anglicans, Quakers, and Presbyterians. Loyalties and views on declaring war matched religious lines pretty neatly. Presbyterians were largely patriots, Anglicans were largely loyalists, and Quakers were the most criticized of all: pacifists. Similar to many other states, "patriots" were considered radical in Delaware right up to the Declaration of Independence and, similar to the rest of the emerging nation, law abiding colonists feared war and were wary of the economic plight created by inflation. As stated above, once the war began Delawareans fought valiantly. The public sentiment shifted and by 1778 all white males were

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required to take an oath of loyalty to the patriot cause. Many tories and Quakers had their property seized after refusing. Bitter tories, after the war, ravaged John Dickenson's estate. Sore losers.

Putting together a comprehensive social history of a certain place during a certain time period is far more difficult than displaying easily findable facts. Revolutionary Delaware's social history is the most profound, while not the only, testament to the author's great research and writing ability. What makes it truly unique is the focus on one colony's plight, contributions, and experience. I truly hope twelve more just like this one are written in the near future.

Michael Tuosto is from Montgomery, New Jersey. He graduated from Quinnipiac University with a Bachelor's of Arts in History. After nearly three years in the financial services industry he could no longer ignore his passion for history, law, and politics. He is currently pursuing a law degree at Emory University School of Law. His insatiable appetite for knowledge about the American Revolution, the Founding Fathers, and America's founding principles stems from the regularity with which public officials reference this period in history.