

Claudio Saunt. *West of the Revolution: An Uncommon History of 1776*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2014. Pp. 283. Cloth \$26.95.

Native Americans and the western North American landscape are often omitted from scholarship about the American Revolutionary War. Most historians focus on understanding the impact of the American Revolution in the thirteen British colonies. Scholarship on 1776 has been defined by the great American Patriots such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin, who championed American independence, freedom, and popular consent. Claudio Saunt offers an alternative history of 1776 in *West of the Revolution*, by emphasizing the importance of North American geography, Native Americans, and the presence of Europeans west of the thirteen colonies.

Geography is an important framework for the book; the first section addresses the Pacific Northwest and Southwest while the second half begins with middle Canada, transitions into the Midwest, Southeast, and finishes with the Deep South. Saunt, Professor of History at the University of Georgia, weaves together the histories of native peoples and European settlers to reveal complex power dynamics that defined the topography of North America in 1776. Each chapter focuses on a specific region and details the relationships and conflicts in the area. The availability and quality of trade goods often shaped interactions based on supplies, disease, weapons, use of natural resources, and the size of the population.

West of the Revolution provides a complex narrative of Native Americans' experiences in the west by mapping out the different types of relationships they had with Europeans. In chapters one and five, Saunt illustrates how Native Americans influenced world-wide consumerism through their involvement in global trade via beaver and otter pelts. Due to the popularity of felt hats in Europe, the demand for beaver pelt was so high it nearly resulted in the extinction of beavers. Beavers are nature's conservationists, creating dams and lodges; their disappearance drastically changed the environmental landscape of North America.

Saunt challenges the perceived relationships between Europeans and Native Americans by giving examples of Native agency. The Osages in the Missouri area maintained a stable trading relationship with Europeans; they began to adapt to new technologies and became heavily dependent on foreign goods due to their fruitful trading partnerships. Around 1770, European traders began selling guns to other tribes and the Osages could not continue to defend themselves from their enemies. Vulnerability to attacks and a deadly combination of diseases and European trading policies further weakened them.

West of the Revolution highlights the centrality of geography to the discussion of America during the pivotal year of 1776. The book provides useful maps which help keep track of the many different locations to which Saunt refers. This book is not meant to be a comprehensive history of Native Americans in North America. Instead, it provides a necessary understanding of what would become the Western United States during the American Revolution. Scholars, graduate, and undergraduate students interested in early American history, Native American Studies, and Ethnic Studies will find the arguments enlightening.

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