

The Planting Of New Virginia: Settlement And Landscape In The Shenandoah Valley. By Warren R. Hofstra. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Pp. xv, 411. Illustrations, notes, index. \$49.95. ISBN 0-8018-7418-1.)

The planters of the Old Dominion—the Byrds, Carters, Randolphs, Washingtons, and others—dominated their colony. They led Virginia during the American Revolution and seemed poised to continue their control at the helm of the young republic. Then and today these families have been seen as the epitome of Virginia society. Yet, as early as the eighteenth century some Virginians recognized that something different was developing in the Shenandoah Valley. They christened the region west of the Blue Ridge “New Virginia” not only because it had been recently settled, but also because of the manner of that settlement (5). New Virginia, unlike the Tidewater and Piedmont regions, attracted large numbers of Germans and Scotch-Irish settlers. Most of these newcomers were religious dissenters. Rather than tobacco they preferred to grow grains. Slaves, while present, did not dominate the labor system as they did east of the Blue Ridge. Most striking, they welcomed the development of towns, a form of settlement that remained relatively rare in eastern Virginia.

“Why,” Warren Hofstra asks, “did a society develop on the Virginia frontier whose social and economic construction profoundly altered the identity, landscape, and future of the colony?”(53) Other historians have answered this question by focusing on the people who settled the Virginia frontier. Hofstra digs deeper. He opens his narrative history of the valley with a thorough examination of Native American interests in the region—a topic too often neglected by historians who accept the colonists’ assertion that the area had

been abandoned. While no natives lived in the Valley, many indications of an historic Native presence remained and the Iroquois and others continued to use the Valley as a travel route. Native American interests in turn linked the Shenandoah Valley to the imperial struggle between Britain and France for the North American interior. As a result, Britain actively encouraged settlement of Virginia's frontiers. Later, the construction of Fort Loudon during the Seven Years War stimulated the economy of Winchester and its environs. Soon much of the Valley was called upon to provision troops at the fort and those at Fort Pitt to the westward.

Hofstra next examines the combination of individual, community, and colonial forces that shaped the patterns of settlement and the bounding of property. Again, Hofstra profitably places the Shenandoah within the broader context of central Appalachia. This large region had been largely devoid of human settlement. Then in the early eighteenth century as Germans and Scotch-Irish families began to occupy the Shenandoah Valley. Delawares, Shawnees, and other Native American peoples simultaneously began to settle in the upper Ohio Valley. In this section of the book Hofstra delineates the fascinating traits shared by these various peoples. Europeans and natives tended to adopt a scattered settlement pattern. Families tended to live in cabins and often exploited the land's resources in similar ways. Both groups were also impacted by imperial decisions made in the distant locales of Iroquoia, Philadelphia, Williamsburg, and London. Nonetheless, they soon found themselves on opposite sides during the Seven Years War.

In addition to these exogenous forces, those settling the lower Shenandoah Valley brought with them a series of cultural assumptions and beliefs that shaped the community they were creating. This *mentality* influenced their architecture, agriculture, community relationships, and their overall impact upon the land. An initial vernacular landscape eventually gave way to a more official landscape reflected in town and county boundaries and other governmental institutions. Boundaries between individual land patents were formalized just as cabins were replaced with more substantial dwellings. Paths, which had connected one dwelling with another, were replaced with roads that connected each homestead to a much larger world. The exchange economy of the first settlers diversified, grew more complicated, and provided an essential structure to the social relations of the community. Those relations were strained with the introduction of a cash economy during the construction and subsequent provisioning of Fort Loudon. Elite leaders, such as George Washington, were frustrated by the collision of the Valley's traditional exchange economy with the more regulated provisioning of the Virginia regiment. Perhaps the most significant impact of the military on the Shenandoah Valley may also be the most mundane—the creation of a market for wheat flour. Military provisioning accelerated the Valley's shift to wheat production, thereby creating the conditions necessary for the Valley's development as a distinctive region.

In the last section of *The Planting of New Virginia* Hofstra traces the evolution of Winchester and its valley environs from a strategic place to an economically central place. He also examines the development and maturation of a variety of formal and informal institutions. As a region of market towns the Valley was prosperous. Tellingly,

unlike New England, Pennsylvania, and similar regions, the Valley did not industrialize. Instead, it came to be viewed as the paradigm of republican virtue. Thanks to wheat production, the family farms and market towns of the Valley enjoyed a rare economic and cultural stability. Visitors, then and now, viewed the Valley as an American “promised land.”

The Planting Of New Virginia successfully integrates history, geography, economics, ecology, and other disciplines in a holistic examination of the Shenandoah Valley within an imperial and national context. Warren R. Hofstra, the Stewart Bell Professor of History at Shenandoah University, imaginatively employs an impressive variety of sources to explore the contours of life in the Shenandoah Valley during the eighteenth century. He also offers valuable insights on the more general economic, social, and political development of colonial America. This thoroughly researched and amply documented monograph includes almost sixty pages of endnotes and over fifty illustrations. It is highly recommended for all scholars interested in the early American backcountry, ethnohistory, environmental history, economic history, and community studies.

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