



Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia)

By Woody Holton



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In this provocative reinterpretation of one of the best-known events in American history, Woody Holton shows that when Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and other elite Virginians joined their peers from other colonies in declaring independence from Britain, they acted partly in response to grassroots rebellions against their own rule.

The Virginia gentry's efforts to shape London's imperial policy were thwarted by British merchants and by a coalition of Indian nations. In 1774, elite Virginians suspended trade with Britain in order to pressure Parliament and, at the same time, to save restive Virginia debtors from a terrible recession. The boycott and the growing imperial conflict led to rebellions by enslaved Virginians, Indians, and tobacco farmers. By the spring of 1776 the gentry believed the only way to regain control of the common people was to take Virginia out of the British Empire.

Forced Founders uses the new social history to shed light on a classic political question: why did the owners of vast plantations, viewed by many of their contemporaries as aristocrats, start a revolution? As Holton's fast-paced narrative unfolds, the old story of patriot versus loyalist becomes decidedly more complex.



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- Sales Rank: #187180 in Books
- Brand: Brand: The University of North Carolina Press
- Published on: 1999-09
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.21" h x .54" w x 6.14" l, .80 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 231 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Its lively style and wealth of anecdotes will make it an enjoyable read for anyone.

"Journal of American Studies"

[He] portrays the coming of the Revolution in Virginia as deeply bound up with competing social groups.

"American Historical Review"

The main strength of Holton's book is his effort to place the actions of the Virginia gentry within a more detailed local context.

"Law and History Review"

"May be the most important book on the political culture of Revolutionary Virginia since Rhys Isaac's 'The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790.'"

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"Journal of Southern History"

Review

[Holton's] insights into the interplay among class, race, and ideology produce a complex and persuasive account of Virginia's path to revolution. The strength of Holton's book lies in its careful delineation of the regional issues propelling the Chesapeake into revolution and in his insistence that Indians, slaves, and small farmers played roles as significant as the planter elite and British policy-makers in making that revolution. . . . A really well-written book, with vivid descriptive details and clearly presented analysis.--Carol Berkin, Baruch College and The Graduate Center, CUNY

In a detailed, painstakingly researched book that examines the forces that fomented revolution in Colonial

Virginia, Holton reveals a new view of Virginia history and a lesser-known side of himself.--*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

The main strength of Holton's book is his effort to place the actions of the Virginia gentry within a more detailed local context and to see them as actors who were responding to the material concerns that governed their everyday lives.--*Law and History Review*

The Revolution in Virginia is at last explained. The great menaces that threatened the Virginia gentry and that gave force to their revolutionary rhetoric have been effectively documented for the first time. Woody Holton shows most persuasively that armed Indians, rebellious enslaved workers, and democratically active smallholders were just as much active agents of the Revolution as Lord North and Patrick Henry.--Rhys Isaac, La Trobe University

This book gives us a brisk and convincing analysis of a region--and revolutionary leaders--we thought we already knew. Given the threats they faced, we can only marvel that those uneasy leaders ever succeeded in such a desperate feat as making a revolution in such a dangerous and divided region. As Holton shows us, they were forced to.--*Journal of American History*

In this *tour de force*, Woody Holton takes on a powerful image: (white) Virginians moving together into independence, united behind a patriot leader class. He shows instead how Virginians of all sorts confronted a shared crisis from their own points of view, how all of them influenced the outcome, and how living through that crisis changed them all.--Edward Countryman, Southern Methodist University

A fascinating reinterpretation of the coming of the Revolution in Virginia. . . . Each vividly detailed and keenly argued section of the book demonstrates how a diverse collection of ordinary men and women pushed Virginia's leaders to declare independence. . . . Holton's powerful and innovative book should influence the study of the American Revolution for years to come.--*Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*

[A] fine new book. . . . Where Holton moves beyond his predecessors is the large and colorful cast of characters that he includes in this story.--James H. Merrell, *H-Net*

An important revisionist appraisal of the factors from 1763 to 1776 that propelled Virginians to support the Revolutionary movement and independence.--*Choice*

Holton does more than transfer a familiar neo-progressive narrative of the coming of the Revolution to Virginia. . . . [He] portrays the coming of the Revolution in Virginia as deeply bound up with competing social groups--planters, farmers, Indians, slaves, and British merchants--all of whom pursued their own interests. His social history of a revolution emerging out of these struggles rather than out of civic humanism or disputes surrounding the imperial constitution complements Rhys Isaac's interpretation of cultural conflict in revolutionary Virginia.--*American Historical Review*

A challenging reconstruction of the trajectory which carried Virginia's gentlemen revolutionaries from resistance to independence. It will be appreciated by serious scholars of Virginia's revolutionary period; its lively style and wealth of anecdotes will make it an enjoyable read for anyone.--*Journal of American Studies*

This may be the most important book on the political culture of Revolutionary Virginia since Rhys Isaac's *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*. It is certainly the most provocative.--*Journal of Southern History*

From the Inside Flap

Challenging traditional interpretations of the American Revolution, Woody Holton argues that the Virginia gentry were forced to rebel against Britain because of pressures exerted by Indians, farmers, and slaves.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Larry Young:

The book *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia)* can give more knowledge and also the precise product information about everything you want. Why then must we leave the great thing like a book *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia)*? Wide variety you have a different opinion about guide. But one aim that will book can give many facts for us. It is absolutely right. Right now, try to closer using your book. Knowledge or details that you take for that, you are able to give for each other; you are able to share all of these. Book *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia)* has simple shape but the truth is know: it has great and large function for you. You can search the enormous world by open up and read a guide. So it is very wonderful.

Jerald Higgins:

This *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia)* tend to be reliable for you who want to be considered a successful person, why. The main reason of this *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia (Published for*

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