

Virginia Reviews



Wolf, Eva Sheppard. *Race and Liberty in the New Nation: Emancipation in Virginia from the Revolution to Nat Turner's Rebellion*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006. 248 pp. ISBN-13: 9780807131947.

Race and Liberty in the New Nation is an ambitious book. Eva Sheppard Wolf takes on the likes of Gary Nash and William Freehling in order to provoke a reinterpretation of the historical process that resulted in the hardening of proslavery attitudes in the South before the Civil War. Historians like Nash viewed prominent early Southern leaders as moderates on the issue of slave emancipation, and pointed to the growing number of manumissions after the Revolution to conclude that the elimination of slavery was a distinct possibility before the 1830s.¹ Wolf argues, however, that most Southern whites “remained committed to the institution [of slavery] throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,” and that manumissions were not as numerous as previously thought nor, indeed, an indication of the popularity of antislavery principles (x). Rather than a process through which proslavery extremists gradually wore down the resistance of Southern moderates and reformists from the 1770s to the 1820s, as Freehling maintained,² Wolf argues that “discrete pro- and anti-slavery blocs crystallized... only in the late 1820s” (xii). To make that case, Wolf turns to an analysis of emancipation in Virginia during the Revolutionary and early national periods.

Wolf proposes that “By moving

our attention away from the elite, though they remain in the scene, we allow a different understanding of how Virginians responded to the challenges of the early national period to emerge.” The author turns the reader’s attention toward “a statistical and textual analysis of deeds and wills of manumission,” which, along with evidence from court cases, legislative debates, newspapers, and church records,

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leads to the conclusion that “white Virginians, though sometimes disturbed by the existence of slavery, remained generally convinced of slavery’s importance to their society as well as of the inferiority of the black people who were enslaved” (x, xi).

Some of the early moves by Virginia to end the foreign slave trade to the state and to make the manumission of slaves easier were not, according to Wolf, signs of general antislavery sentiment growing out of Revolutionary ideology. The 1778 ban on the importation of slaves into Virginia is explained as an attempt to moderate the state’s dependence on export agriculture and to promote economic diversification rather than as a statement on the immorality of slavery. The 1782

law allowing slave-owners to manumit their slaves without express legislative approval reflected an impulse in favor of masters’ rights rather than pro-emancipation sentiment. That the law was amended in 1806 to require that manumitted slaves leave the state indicates the underlying racism that made the proslavery position so powerful.

At the heart of *Race and Liberty in the New Nation* is a detailed examination of manumissions in eight Virginia counties representative of the regional diversity of the state. Wolf patterns her study after that of Peter J. Albert,³ but uses different counties. Happily, the general reader is not overwhelmed by statistical information or arcane quantitative methodology. The tables presented are accessible to the uninitiated, and the conclusions based on them are plausible and buttressed with supporting literary evidence. Wolf is convincing in arguing that the increase in manumissions in the 1770s and 1780s arose from the religious impulses of members of minority denominations, mainly Quakers and Methodists. But from the 1790s, “manumission usually resulted from something other than whites’ antipathy toward slavery—an enslaved person’s desire to be free, achieved by purchasing his or her own freedom, or a slaveholder’s wish to reward a single favorite slave.” Thus, “While manumission and the ending of slavery were related phenomena in Northern states such as New York and Pennsylvania, such was not the case in the Old Dominion” (44, 47). The proslavery consensus accepted by most Virginians was not challenged until the early 1830s.

That consensus was based on

racism. As Wolf pointed out, “even most white opponents of slavery subscribed, as slavery’s defenders did, to the belief that blacks were inherently different, [and] they could not envision a biracial society of equals” (87). Hence, the response to Gabriel’s Revolt of 1800 was the 1806 law requiring that manumitted slaves leave the state, preventing the unwanted growth of the free black population that came to be feared as a catalyst for slave revolt. Thereafter, as Wolf’s extensive research into church records shows, principled opposition to slavery among minority religious denominations diminished. It was only with the convening of the Constitutional Convention of 1829–1830 that slavery was again seriously challenged.

In that convention, which has often been overlooked in favor of the great debate over slavery in the legislative session following the Nat Turner Revolt in 1831, “a new political form of antislavery advocacy arose,” which “was closely linked with political opposition to Virginia slaveholders” (163–164). Wolf supports her view of the convention by referring to her study of the eight regionally representative counties, which demonstrates that the new antislavery movement arose in the western region in opposition to the political power of the eastern areas rather than in moral aversion to slavery itself. That such a movement emerged in the late 1820s and 1830s is explained by the demographic and economic shifts in Virginia in the early nineteenth century: white population shifted west and engaged in economic activity to which slavery was not vital.

In her analysis of the climatic debate over slavery in 1831–1832, Wolf relies primarily on conventional historical sources, and the Virginia elites not only remain in the scene, they take center stage. Nevertheless, Wolf argues cogently

that the debate “marked a turning point in Virginia’s history since it seemed to settle the question of emancipation.” While the slaveholding interest managed to deflect the desires of western delegates to rid Virginia of slavery and of African-Americans, “The debate prompted slaveholders to develop more comprehensive defenses of slavery...justifying what had by then become a peculiar institution, and it presaged the events that would eventually break the state apart during the Civil War” (198).

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HESS REVIEW

Race and Liberty in the New Nation is a thought-provoking and important book, even if it does not completely fulfill the ambitious agenda laid out by its author. Rather than overturning the interpretations of historians like Gary Nash and William Freehling, Eva Sheppard Wolf refines them and, at the same time, clarifies them. If the sources are not as unconventional and the methodology not as innovative as Wolf suggests in the preface, the research is both extensive and deep. If *Race and Liberty in the New Nation* doesn’t provoke a reinterpretation of race and slavery in the early national period, it will certainly contribute mightily to our understanding of those historical phenomena.

1. Gary B. Nash, *Race and Revolution* (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1990).

2. William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776–1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

3. Peter Joseph Albert, “The Pro-

tean Institution: The Geography, Economy, and Ideology of Slavery in Post-Revolutionary Virginia” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1976).

—Michael R. Trochim, *Ferrum College*



Hess, Earl J. *In the Trenches at Petersburg: Field Fortifications and Confederate Defeat*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. xxi + 403 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-8078-3282-0. \$29.70 (hardcover).

In the Trenches at Petersburg: Field Fortifications and Confederate Defeat is an exhaustively explored study of the trench warfare around Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia, that lasted ten months before the end of the Civil War. Earl Hess, associate professor and chair of the history department at Lincoln Memorial University, provides extensive details to illuminate the subject.

The 403-page book contains eighteen chapters, a conclusion, two appendices (“Artifacts of War” and “The Richmond-Petersburg Line”), an index, thirty-one pictures, and twenty-seven maps. Hess thoroughly describes the reasons for the trenches and their effects upon the Civil War, the troops, and the war’s outcomes.

As the fighting occurred, trenches were built to guard against attacks. Both the North and South utilized engineers to create mines and defense mechanisms. Unbearable living conditions in the trenches included dust so thick that breathing it was like eating it, rats that crawled on the soldiers nightly, rain that caused walls to give in and kill troops, flies, maggots, bad or little food, grass- and weed-eating, diarrhea, dysentery, and intensely cold conditions that created ice on beards while shaving and froze rifles and clothes. The ghastly trenches caused some soldiers to run away. At times, the

militia would hurt themselves to get out of battle. Men left due to the lack of food, Southern defeats, or their families' pleas that they return home. Southern soldiers who stayed in the mountains were not found.

Unlike the South, the North had an abundance of provisions and food from many donors, including the legendary New York City restaurant Delmonico's. Meanwhile, excess rain sometimes stopped food from being sent to the South. Those in charge of the Southern Territorial Army would request food for an extra-large sum of soldiers because a lesser amount of fare was always sent. From time to time, bandits would steal the South's supplies at train stations.

At times of quiet, defense forces from both sides would lie in the sun. The Southern military, when not battling, would put on skits, conduct educational seminars, and worship in churches they built. Fireplaces were built in the trenches, and whiskey provided a reward for work accomplished.

Hess makes the case that the South lost Richmond and Petersburg due to spending too much time in the trenches rather than in battle, in addition to Sherman's great assistance of the Northern militia at the end. After the Civil War, the citizens of Petersburg utilized the remnants of the battle to make money from interested tourists, selling bullets left behind at four cents per pound.

The battle areas of Richmond and Petersburg are maintained by the Petersburg National Battlefield, the Richmond National Battlefield, the Chesterfield County Park System, Pamplin Historical Park, and the Civil War Preservation Trust. In addition to the remains of trenches and forts, the Petersburg National Battlefield includes a display with a federal mine and artifacts such as shoes, tools, and weapons. Scenes from the war are reenacted by

marines, the National Guard, and students from the Virginia Military Institute, while other offerings at Petersburg include a tourist center, paths for strolling, and a large crater from a huge explosive from the North, where the extreme amounts of blood and men killed in and around the enormous crater made Northern soldiers ill and caused some to stop battling. The vast crater has greenery growing in it now and is the most visited spot.

In the Trenches at Petersburg: Field

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MORRISON REVIEW

Fortifications and Confederate Defeat is an outstanding source for anyone researching Civil War trench warfare at Petersburg and Richmond.

—Melinda F. Matthews, *interlibrary loan/reference librarian, University of Louisiana at Monroe Library*



Morrison, Heather. *Scholarly Communication for Librarians*. Oxford, UK: Chandos Publishing, 2009. 245 pp. ISBN-13: 978-1-84334-488-9. \$95.00 (softcover).

In the summary of her chapter on the economics of scholarly communication, Heather Morrison says, "It is timely to look beyond the continuing serials crisis towards a future of scholarly communication online that can do vastly more for scholars than was ever possible in print, and begin to plan and prioritize accordingly." In order to respond to this completely worthwhile call to action,

it is essential that librarians—especially academic librarians—understand the current complex state of scholarly publishing and its transitional nature. Reading Morrison's book is the most efficient way for most of us to acquire that understanding.

Admitting a significant bias toward the open access movement, Morrison, a project coordinator at the British Columbia Electronic Library Network and an adjunct professor at University of British Columbia's School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, constructs a careful and complete description of the current scholarly publication environment, including everything from the reason researchers publish, to the workings of the traditional publishing market, and finally to the overwhelming change in information access that is driven by the Internet.

One of the book's strongest chapters examines the economics of scholarly journals using the concept of the cost per article of producing articles in various types of journals, which can vary thirty or even a hundredfold, to make it clear that commercial publishing is all too often focused strictly on making money for the stockholders of three or four large corporations. She also describes the business model of these corporations and emphasizes that their profit margins are in the range of 30 percent. Most of us who work in academia are aware that there are science and technology journals that cost as much annually as a good small car, and we are looking forward to the day that researchers and the people who vote on their tenure realize that rigorous peer review is not limited to commercially published journals. Obviously professional society publishers and the various types of open access publishers are presented as alternatives that should attract more interest from

authors as publishing changes in the digital environment.

Some readers will recognize Morrison as the author of the blog *The Imaginary Journal of Poetic Economics*, a site followed by advocates of the open access movement; and, as might be expected, her chapter on open access is a clear introduction to the various approaches to making peer-reviewed research literature available free online. In fact, if you are not perfectly clear on the differences between green and gold access or libre versus gratis access, this chapter is available free as a PDF file at <http://eprints.rclis.org/16282/>.

Perhaps the most satisfying aspect of *Scholarly Communication for Librarians* is Morrison's evaluation of the roles librarians can play as scholars writing, archivists managing repositories, acquisitions experts purchasing, authorities on publishing advising faculty, reference librarians answering research questions, and advocates of open access pushing for publishing models that support availability of information over profit for private investors. It is both gratifying and sobering to imagine the impact our profession can have in the next few years as new models of publishing evolve. Morrison's discussion of strategies for libraries and her examination of emerging trends are rich with examples of resources and concepts librarians should know if they are to serve their communities well. Readers will find themselves turning to their computers frequently, so the experience of reading the book is much more involved and productive than the length of the volume would suggest.

—Cy Dillon



Kreiter-Foronda, Carolyn. *River Country*. San Francisco, Calif.: San Francisco Bay Press, 2008. 74 pp. ISBN-13: 978-1-60461-003-1. \$14.99 (trade paperback).

In *River Country*, Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, Virginia's Poet Laureate from 2006–2008, demonstrates her deep love of Chesapeake Bay life and her desire to imprint it on our hearts so that it will be preserved—through memory and, perhaps, even grassroots action. Her vivid descriptions of the sim-

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ple acts of nature and daily life, of the ecology and folkways of Virginia, shine with the magic that is all around us. At the same time, Kreiter-Foronda takes care to point out the danger that awaits endangered species and ways of life that are fast disappearing or already gone, with a rich layering of detail that convinces through empathy and point of view rather than didacticism. Further, many poems take a joyful rather than an elegiac tone as they celebrate the enduring beauty of Virginia's natural world and the rhythms of human and wild life.

Thirty-three poems are grouped in three sections: "By the Bay," "Voices," and "Sculpting the Air." The poet's subjects include ospreys and a wide variety of wildlife; an endangered Virginia cypress swamp; the beach, ocean, and Bay

tributaries; boats of many descriptions, including the Chesapeake Bay deadrise; storms small and large; bridges and bridge jumpers; ghosts and country cemeteries; oystering; the importance of trees; littering on country byways; and many themes of conservation and remembrance.

Throughout the collection, the poet shows a keen attention to form in both her free verse and her more formal work, such as several villanelles. In part two, "Voices," the poet makes skillful use of the simultaneous poem in the six works that open the section. For those who have not yet encountered it, this form offers the reader three poems in one. Two points of view are represented: one, flush left, in roman type, presents the first viewpoint; the second, often aligned at the center of the page in italics, frequently presents a first-person observation from the point of view of an object, person, or natural force or being central to the first poem. The lines are interspersed as the poem progresses in alternating groups of one to three lines. Each voice can be read separately, presenting two aspects of the poem's subject; the poem can also be read straight through, the voices intermingling to offer a third poem whose subtle counterpoint brings a deeper, joined meaning. One such poem, "Elegant Worms," deals delicately and profoundly with the crash of space shuttle *Columbia* through the survival of the roundworms whose biological traits shared with humans brought them aboard as a science experiment. The haunting, loving, and humble yet proud tone of the waterman's appreciation of "The *Jenny Dawn*" shows how deeply the poet can immerse herself—and us—in another's viewpoint.

The closing poem, "Green Burial," ends the collection on a chord that pulls the many themes into close harmony: death in

union with life, the importance of preserving our natural world, and the joy and beauty in becoming one with it. This fine collection on topics of relevance and importance to Virginians should please general readers, poets, and those with an interest in Virginia ecology and folkways.

—Lyn C. A. Gardner



Peters, Margaret T. *Conserving the Commonwealth: The Early Years of the Environmental Movement in Virginia*. Edited by Patricia Cecil Hass. Afterword by FitzGerald Bemiss. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008. x + 133 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-8139-2773-2. \$27.95 (hardcover).

In North America, the relationship between European immigrants and the ecological environment has slowly shifted. Originally, these colonists were farmers and naturalist-observers who harvested the natural riches they encountered. Over the centuries since Jamestown was colonized, there has been a growing appreciation of the need to conserve and husband the Commonwealth's native assets. *Conserving the Commonwealth* describes many of the major conservation and environmental political events in Virginia from the 1960s to the first few years of this new millennium.

The seven chapters in this

compact volume can be read as succinct, self-contained essays providing insights into Virginia's natural heritage and environmental politics. Chapter 1 provides a survey of the state's history and environmental regions. Chapter 6 focuses on the development of the state's parks and scenic highways. Chapter 7 reviews the history and environmental struggles regarding the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's rivers. The unique strengths of this volume are in its state-level reviews of the political history of last cen-

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PETERS REVIEW

ture's environmental legislation. Chapter 2 reviews the creation of the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Study Commission and its 1965 *Virginia's Common Wealth* report to the General Assembly. The recommendations from this report laid the groundwork for much of the state's environmental policies in the decades that followed (reviewed

in Chapter 3). Chapter 4 reviews private-public collaborations that led to Virginia's current open-space conservation programs. Chapter 5 covers the parallel development of historic preservation policies that were often initiated by individuals and organizations active in nature conservation programs.

All reviewers have topics that they feel merit additional analysis, and I am no exception. Perhaps because of its focus on political process, this book omits significant discussion of conservation and environmental science education in the Commonwealth. Noteworthy omissions include Nature Camp in Vesuvius, Virginia, which has operated since 1942 and has focused on conservation and environmental science education for students in grades 5–12; the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William & Mary, which grew out of the research interests of Dr. Mitchell A. Byrd and his graduate students from the 1960s to the present day; and Ferrum College's environmental science program, which is the second-oldest such program in the United States. Nonetheless, this interesting volume should be part of the collection of any library wanting to cover Virginia's politics and environment.

—Dr. Christine H. Stinson, dean of Information and Learning Management, Ferrum College 