



People of the American Frontier: The Coming of the American Revolution

Walter S. Dunn Jr.

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Life on the frontier in the decades before the Revolution was extremely difficult and uncertain. It was a world populated by Native Americans, merchants, fur traders, land speculators, soldiers and settlers—including women, slaves, and indentured servants. Each of these groups depended on the others in some way, and collectively they formed the patchwork that was life on the frontier. Using a wealth of material culled from primary sources, Dunn paints a vivid picture of a world caught up in the winds of change, a world poised on the edge of revolution.

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In the 15 years preceding the American Revolution, the existence of the frontier exerted a dominant influence on the colonial economy. The possibility of new territory in the West and the removal of the French army offered an enormous opportunity for economic expansion but such prospects were not without risk. Farmers worked endlessly to clear a few scant acres for production. Traders struggled to reach remote areas to bargain with local tribes. Merchants weighted the possibilities for enormous profit with huge risk. Native Americans faced increasing encroachment upon their traditional lands. Women and slaves played a greater role in opening the frontier than many sources have indicated.

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