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BOOK REVIEW

Loyalists in East Florida, 1774 to 1785, By Wilbur Henry Siebert. (DeLand, Florida; The Florida State Historical Society, 1929. Two volumes, 263 p., 431 p.)

Although many and varied have been the studies of the events of the American Revolution, there has been one aspect to which the historian has been seemingly indifferent;-one series of situations which has escaped the glare of the historical searchlight. This is the role played by the Floridas in the actual struggle for independence and in the policies and plans of England, Spain and the Colonies. Of late, however, new interest has been displayed in this topic and no one had achieved any more notable result than Wilbur Henry Siebert in his *Loyalists in East Florida*. The study is the most recent addition to the publications on Florida history brought out by the Florida State Historical Society and consists of two quarto volumes.

Volume one is a connected narrative of the events of the American Revolution participated in by the British loyalists who were either permanent residents of East Florida or who migrated there from the colonies in rebellion. As a background for the loyalist movement, the author has sketched the administration of Patrick Tonyn who arrived in Saint Augustine as governor on March 1, 1774 and who became at once involved in the misunderstandings and animosities of the two factions of the province. These feuds formed the undercurrent of events in the colony throughout most of the years examined. At the outbreak of war East Florida, which was fiercely loyal, suggested itself to the British ministry as a likely refuge for persons too devoted to the mother country to join in the rebel-

lion against her; accordingly in 1775, Tonyn issued a proclamation of invitation to such groups which was published in Savannah and Charleston. Settlers had begun migrating to East Florida prior to this and their number increased rapidly in the next three years.

But the problem of East Florida was much more than the assimilation of new inhabitants. Until the British invasion of the southern colonies, there was constant danger of raids and invasions by the Americans. Tonyn made as effective a defense as possible, but East Florida was saved from conquest less by her own strength than by the inefficiency of her opponents. To the support of the campaign in Georgia and the Carolinas, the colony contributed generously ; in fact, the settlements were left in a rather dangerous and unprotected condition and there were times when Tonyn was fearful of the results of a possible attack by Spain. The surrender of Cornwallis brought new difficulties when thousands of people flocked south as the British army evacuated the lands to the north. The white population of East Florida was more than doubled by the newcomers from Georgia alone and the whole country was filled with activity. Lands were being cleared, dwellings erected, even new towns were appearing, and the colony was experiencing a development never known before when news was brought that the territory had been ceded to Spain. The volume ends with a detailed study of the removal of the British to the Bahamas, Jamaica, Dominica, Nova Scotia, England and, in some instances, back to the now independent states.

Documentary material concerning the investigation of claims and compensation for losses of East Florida residents make up the second volume of the study. Most of the records were transcribed from the "Loyalist Series" (Volume LX) in the New York Public

Library which are in turn transcripts from the *Audit Office, Loyalist Series, volume III*, "Memorial Book, 3. 1786." The author has supplemented these reports by other records transcribed from the *Examinations of East Florida Claimants in the Bahamas*, and other memorials and petitions of a like nature. The documents are much more than mere statements of losses sustained and compensation sought. They are veritable cross-sections of Florida life during that turbulent and somewhat chaotic period. In them may be unearthed items concerning the establishment of plantations, arrival of settlers, production of crops, methods of labor, development of the industry of naval stores, prices charged, and wages earned. Many sidelights on East Florida persons may also be glimpsed. In addition to the transcribed records, Professor Siebert has added short biographical sketches of the important property owners and other worthies of the colony. These are valuable for the information which is often not found elsewhere and also for the bibliographies appended to each account.

One cannot examine either the narrative or the volume of documents without being deeply impressed by the wealth of material consulted and the scholarship which has been exercised in assembling and editing that material. The study can in no way be classed as popular history, it is obviously intended for a historically minded public already possessing a fairly ample knowledge of the revolutionary period ; to these it is both interesting and illuminating. As a piece of scholarly research, its position is assured and the author is to be congratulated on having made a real contribution to American history.

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