

1962

Book Reviews

Florida Historical Society
membership@myfloridahistory.org

 Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Society, Florida Historical (1962) "Book Reviews," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 41 : No. 3 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol41/iss3/7>

BOOK REVIEWS

The Territorial Papers of the United States, Compiled and edited by Clarence Edwin Carter. Volume XXVI, *The Territory of Florida, 1839-1845*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962. v, 1238 pp. Maps and index. \$8.00.)

On September 11, 1961, Clarence Edwin Carter died in Washington after thirty years as editor of the *Territorial Papers*, during which time he produced twenty-six volumes of this series. The volume under review, his twenty-sixth, completes the coverage of the Territory of Florida. This story, from the transfer from Spain to statehood, required five volumes, totalling 4,756 pages of documents and 677 pages of index. Selected largely from State Department records in the National Archives, these volumes represent the largest and most valuable published collection of source materials on Florida history which is now available. Documents in these volumes fill many gaps, and their detailed indices and copious explanatory and cross-reference footnotes simplify their use even for beginners.

The materials of these volumes include commissions and instructions to United States officials, correspondence of officials and citizens with government departments, reports of land surveys and sales, election information, petitions to Congress, recommendations for appointments, correspondence related to Indian affairs and the Seminole War, documents related to internal improvements and economic development, accounts of disputes between Washington and local officers over the conduct of their official duties, and so on. The volume under review covers the administration of Robert Raymond Reid (1839-41); the third term of Richard Keith Call (1841-44); and the final territorial governorship, that held by John Branch (1844-45). In this volume much attention is given to economic depression and repudiation of the "faith bonds," the removal and reinstatement of Governor Call, the Indian troubles, and political patronage disputes.

The casual reader, however, is likely to find much in these outwardly dull volumes to hold his rapt attention. Territorial officials frequently poured out their heart and soul, venom and vitriol, bitterness and bodily afflictions to their Washington superiors. There is material here gripping in its fascination, unique

in its colorful insights into frontier life. There is material to delight the comic opera librettist and the blood and gore addict alike—from droll personalities like Valentine Y. Conway, surveyor general of Florida, and preposterously improbable Hezekiah L. Thistle, “Agent for the preservation of timber and wood upon the public lands in East Florida,” to dramatic tragedies such as the murder of socially prominent Leigh Read.

Indeed, there is more documentary material on the Read murder than this reviewer has seen before. In it, the gripping story unfolds of Read, U. S. Marshal for Middle Florida, being murdered from ambush in Tallahassee by Willis Alston in revenge for Read’s earlier killing of his brother Augustus Alton in a duel. With the marshal dead and “the sheriff of the County being then in jail for shooting a man,” the duty of arresting Alston fell to the coroner. With the community violently divided over the affair, no judge would admit Alston to bail, but he managed his release on the authority of two justices of the peace whose commissions had expired, and promptly fled to the safety of Texas—where he was later lynched.

There are here many glimpses into living conditions, such as one which was afforded by a letter of Surveyor General Conway. Writing in support of another official who was complaining about the niggardliness of his salary, Conway declared that the man in question could not live on his \$500 per year salary supplemented only by about \$100 in land sale commissions. This, he said, fell about \$400 short of giving support to a single man “at this most expensive place [Tallahassee].”

Throughout the volumes of this series the highest editorial standards were maintained by the late Dr. Carter. Floridians may count themselves fortunate that the volumes relating to their history were completed before the death of this careful, scrupulous scholar.

HERBERT J. DOHERTY, JR.

University of Florida

The Triumph of Empire: Thunder-Clouds Gather in the West, 1763-1766. By Lawrence Henry Gipson. *The British Empire before the American Revolution.* Volume X. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961. lxxv, 414 pp. Index and illustrations. \$8.50.)

For the first six volumes in this set the author received the Loubat First Prize from Columbia University in 1948; the seventh volume was awarded the Bancroft Prize by the same institution in 1949; the volume under consideration earned the Pulitzer Award in History in 1962. Dr. Gipson, a Rhodes Scholar, a Yale Ph.D., and a Harmsworth Professor at Oxford (1951-1952), is a long-time member of the Department of History at Lehigh University where he is presently Research Professor of History Emeritus. Any comment by this reviewer on the worth of the volume or the competence of the writer would be unnecessary if not presumptuous. He will content himself, therefore, with a description of the book and its organization.

As indicated by the subtitle, the author in this volume deals with the conditions which made it necessary for the British Government to raise money in the colonies after 1763; the recasting of the regulatory Molasses Act of 1733 (which had never been enforced) into the Sugar Act of 1764, which would have both regulatory and revenue aspects; the formulation and passage of the Stamp Act and its hostile reception in America, spearheaded by the Sons of Liberty; and the circumstances and significance of its repeal. Emphasized by Dr. Gipson as underlying the whole controversy was the increasingly important constitutional question of whether the people in the colonies could be taxed by a Parliament in which they were not represented. While it should be said that the author appreciates the American point of view he does not fail to give adequately the British.

To this reviewer the gist of what Dr. Gipson says is this: Britain emerged from the Seven Years or French and Indian War (the Great War for Empire, Gipson calls it) burdened with heavy financial obligations occasioned in part by the expenses of the war and in part by the necessity of protecting the newly acquired territory. The tax burdens of American colonials were much less than those of Englishmen in the Mother Country, and as a whole the Americans seemed much more able to pay. It did not seem unreasonable to ask the Americans to bear part of the expense of protecting recently gained areas on the North American Continent; hence, the replacement of the Molasses Act with the Sugar Act and the passing, after deliberation and delay, of the Stamp Act. The American response to these measures was unexpectedly violent. The principal objection was the fact that the colonies

were not represented in the British Parliament. Actually the Americans had acquired a maturity which was not in keeping with the subordinate position they occupied in the Empire. Had the Stamp Act not been repealed and had real efforts been made to enforce it, the American Revolution might well have come ten years earlier than it did. The repeal of the Act eased the situation temporarily but set a precedent for violent opposition if and when the Mother Country attempted policies objectionable to the Americans.

Copious footnotes amplify and document the narrative and serve as a guide to both secondary and source materials. A fifty page table of contents is available to guide the reader through the details of the text, as is an elaborate chronology. Sixteen pages of reproductions (largely contemporary maps, plans and pictures) add flavor and interest.

With the completion of Volume XI which will treat the actual outbreak of the Revolution and of Volume XII on historiography and bibliography, Dr. Gipson will have established a landmark in the writing of American history and in doing so will have erected a monument to himself as one of the great historians of the twentieth century.

CECIL JOHNSON

University of North Carolina

The Causes of the War of 1812. By Reginald Horsman. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962. 345 pp. Bibliography, appendix, notes, index. \$6.00.)

Because of the sesquicentennial years, the War of 1812 is nudging the Civil War for wider space on the bookshelves. In seeking the causes of the war, Reginald Horsman, University of Wisconsin professor, advances the by no means novel explanation that Great Britain was the culprit. He discards the Indian problem and American expansionist aims as major provocations. Of the Indian attacks on the frontier, he says ". . . there seems no reason to suppose that this was either the basic cause of the war, or even the factor that finally impelled America into open hostilities." President Madison in his message of June 8, 1812, listed Indian attacks as a provocation. In pinpointing the cause

the author seems confused. Great Britain in fighting Napoleon "needed every resource she could muster" and therefore had to go to war with America to prevent American commerce from aiding France. How Britain could conserve her resources for Napoleon by taking on a fresh and considerable enemy is for the reader to determine. And if Britain were driving toward war she would scarcely have repealed the Orders in Council so hastily when war actually loomed.

This is not a distinguished or even a well considered book. While more pretentious in its approach than Albert Z. Carr's recent *The Coming of War* (New York, 1960) dealing with the same subject, it is neither as sprightly in style nor as sure in its grasp of American or world affairs.

On the American side he refers to the "half-demented diatribes" of John Randolph during the House war debates, and again, to "the half-mad Randolph," when any reading of the eccentric Virginian's speeches will show that his mind during these discussions was as clear as a blue noon sky and perhaps the most brilliant of any in the chamber. The decay came later. He ignores the call of the Clay delegation on Madison to demand war in return for renomination, which in any adequate discussion of the war causes must be explained. While the significance of the incident has often been challenged, it has long had a place in American accounts and cannot be dismissed.

Appropriately Mr. Horsman, who was born in England and largely educated there, gives details about the British conditions just prior to the war and in this area the book has value. He tends to haul up other historians. The confusion over the causes "has stemmed primarily from the lack of attention paid to the position of England . . . and from overemphasis that has been placed on 'western expansionist' factors."

Though this is his first book, he sits in judgment on some of the literature of the conflict and may make reference to a book not being cited to downgrade it or charge inaccuracy when it would be more helpful to specify where he believes error occurs. This volume is not likely to induce new opinions.

GLENN TUCKER

(Author of *Poltroons and Patriots* and
Tecumseh: Vision of Glory)