
Many North Carolinians have seen the Regulator Movement and the resulting Battle of Alamance as the beginning of the American Revolution. Although that belief has been discredited, the uprising continues to pique the interest of scholars and the general public alike. In *Farming Dissenters: The Regulator Movement in Piedmont North Carolina*, Carole Watterson Troxler’s in-depth examination of the backcountry protest movement, we find a welcome addition to the Regulator bibliography.

Troxler’s work begins several decades before the movement’s better known events of the 1760s and 1770s. In the first chapter Troxler looks at the “geographic imbalance of power” in colonial government and identifies this as one of the major sources of conflict between the competing factions. The colonial legislature and other apparatuses of governmental power were controlled by eastern elites, causing political and financial difficulty for settlers in what was then the backcountry of North Carolina. This system, combined with problems caused by land speculation, a poorly functioning land grant office, and rampant corruption, led to mounting dissatisfaction. Although the author follows a mostly chronological retelling of the events leading up to the Battle of Alamance, she pauses in Chapter 3, “A Century’s Legacy: Dissenter Religious Culture as a Carrier of Political Expectations,” to analyze the religious makeup—predominantly Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Quaker—of the areas where the protest movement was most active. Troxler provides background information on the development of these denominations in Europe and North America and argues that the methodology used and beliefs held by dissenting religious factions were very similar to those employed by Regulators and those who sympathized with their cause. In the final chapters Troxler takes the story through and a little beyond the American Revolution, showing how both Loyalists and Patriots sought to woo former Regulators to their side. In what may be a surprising twist, many of those who had been involved in the uprisings remained loyal to the Crown, though some, of course, became involved in the early Revolutionary state government.

*Farming Dissenters* has an interesting selection of images, including original documents from the North Carolina State Archives, portraits, and a few maps. There is a brief introduction, adapted from the Alamance Battlefield historic site’s website, and two appendices. The first appendix lists the names of individuals who may have been Regulators, sympathizers, or at least signers of petitions that supported Regulator causes. Genealogists may find this list of names useful, at least as an indicator of an individual being in a specific place and time period. The second appendix is a
bibliographic essay examining historians’ treatment of the Regulator Movement; it also includes a list of influential works on the topic. An expansive list of sources and a suitable index complete the book.

This book will be a valuable addition to libraries across the state, especially school and college libraries where colonial United States and North Carolina history are taught. The narrative, when used in conjunction with previous documentary treatments of the subject, is invaluable for fully understanding the sometimes complicated events and numerous actors involved in the Regulator Movement.

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