

Seeds of Discontent: The Deep Roots of the American Revolution, 1650-1750

By J. Revell Carr

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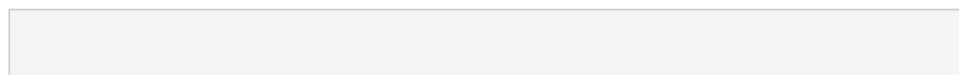
A narrative history of the largely unexplored events?starting almost a century before?that inspired the colonists to launch the American Revolution.

The causes of the American Revolution are most often defined as the Stamp Act and other repressive actions by the Crown against its colonies in the years following the French and Indian War. While these are the direct causes, J. Revell Carr takes a longer view, and in *Seeds of Discontent*, he locates the roots of the Revolution a century earlier, and argues that "the cumulative effect of more than one hundred years of British disrespect, mismanagement, and exploitation prepared the minds of the colonists for revolution."

In the latter half of the seventeenth century, tensions between colonists and the Crown were strikingly similar to those of 1775: representative legislatures had been suspended, the charters of colonies had been revoked, free trade was being impeded by Navigation Acts favoring the Crown, and heavy taxes were being levied unilaterally. The colonists' frustration erupted in April 1689, when the king's representative, who governed the region from Maine to Pennsylvania, was overthrown and seized in Boston. The rebellion spread down the coast, and for the first time colonists risked their lives against English firepower. Unprepared to break with England, the colonists submitted to new governance, but had demonstrated they could rebel.

Through subsequent decades, numerous instances of British abuse fostered resentment and friction built, reaching a peak after the 1745 conquest of Louisbourg, the seemingly impregnable French fortress in Nova Scotia. Won on England's behalf at great cost to the largely American-born strike force, the British summarily returned it to France four years later?an act that outraged politicians, citizens, and soldiers alike.

Bringing to life the two generations that inspired our founding fathers, Revell Carr illuminates the eventful half-century that inspired a revolution.



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Seeds of Discontent: The Deep Roots of the American Revolution, 1650-1750 By J. Revell Carr Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #598855 in Books
- Brand: Walker n Company
- Published on: 2008-10-14
- Released on: 2008-10-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.49" h x .6" w x 6.45" l, 1.45 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 416 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Carr (*All Brave Sailors*), former director of Mystic Seaport, believes the seeds of the American Revolution were first sown in the mid-17th century, when Britain began to exert control over colonies that had mostly been left to tend and fend for themselves. In 1651 the first of the anti-free trade Navigation Acts was introduced, and England began suspending representative legislatures. These and a multitude of slights (real and imagined) bred long-simmering resentments and periodic revolts; a failed rebellion in 1689 was sparked after Massachusetts's charter was revoked. Carr focuses most of his account on the wars between Britain and France, and Britain's postvictory surrender to the French of Louisbourg, on Nova Scotia—which had been taken at great cost in American lives. A century of British disrespect, mismanagement, and exploitation, Carr summarizes, prepared the minds of the colonists for revolution. Carr's exploration of this background to the War of Independence is fascinating, but leaves an important question unanswered: if Britain was so oppressive, then why did a third of Americans remain loyal to the Crown? 25 b&w illus., 3 maps. (*Oct.*) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From School Library Journal

Carr (former director, Mystic Seaport; *All Brave Sailors*) presents a survey of the turmoil that led up to the American Revolution, including Bacon's Rebellion (1676), the Maine campaign of 1688, Queen Anne's War (1702–13), the War of Jenkins's Ear, and King George's War, both of the 1740s, all the while describing situations that demonstrate the growing strife between the emerging "Americans" and the often heavy-handed British officials. Carr is at his best when depicting specifics that colorfully illustrate the growing tension, such as the British practice of impressing sailors and the Casco Bay siege during Queen Anne's War. But the reader is left to wonder why Carr ends the book at 1750 and thus provides only a cursory overview of the French and Indian War, which arguably had the greatest impact on colony-crown relations, and King Philip's War. Despite these flaws, Carr's text provides a decent update to Douglas Edward Leach's *Arms for Empire* and *Roots of Conflict*. Recommended only for public libraries.—Matthew J. Wayman, Ciletti Lib., Penn State Schuylkill

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Review

“Carr (*All Brave Sailors*), former director of Mystic Seaport, believes the seeds of the American Revolution were first sown in the mid-17th century, when Britain began to exert control over colonies that had mostly been left to tend and fend for themselves. In 1651 the first of the anti-free trade Navigation Acts was introduced, and England began suspending representative legislatures. These and a multitude of slights (real and imagined) bred long-simmering resentments and periodic revolts; a failed rebellion in 1689 was sparked after Massachusetts's charter was revoked. Carr focuses most of his account on the wars between Britain and France, and Britain's postvictory surrender to the French of Louisbourg, on Nova Scotia—which had been taken at great cost in American lives. A century of 'British disrespect, mismanagement, and exploitation,' Carr summarizes, 'prepared the minds of the colonists for revolution.' Carr's exploration of this background to the War of Independence is fascinating, but leaves an important question unanswered: if Britain was so oppressive, then why did a third of Americans remain loyal to the Crown? 25 b&w illus., 3 maps.”
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“A history of the 100 years of 'abuse, exploitation, mismanagement, and disrespect' suffered by the American

colonies at the hands of Britain. At the heart of the narrative lies the thrilling story of the 1745 taking of the French fortress at Louisbourg by a combined force of New England colonials and a halfhearted Royal Navy. Carr (*All Brave Soldiers: The Sinking of the Anglo-Saxon*, August 21, 1940, 2004, etc.) cleverly uses this triumphant moment to illustrate themes--British arrogance, indifference and greed--that he traces back to at least the end of the Interregnum where, after a period of benign neglect during which the colonists had become used to a large measure of self-government, Britain sought to impose greater control over its valuable possessions. Carr assembles the growing catalogue of American resentments: the heavy-handed and light-fingered rule of royal governors and military officials and their subsequent exoneration of any wrongdoing by British tribunals; the impressment of American citizens by the Royal Navy; seeming British indifference to the colonies' vulnerability to Indian attack and French encirclement; Parliament's imposition of taxes and trade restrictions; the shabby treatment of those who, either by their service or their financial aid, contributed to British success. Relaxing his galloping pace, Carr settles into the Louisbourg story, detailing the characters (his portrait of the conniving Admiral Warren is wonderful) and the campaign that captures so many of his themes. After the expenditure of much American blood and treasure, the colonials watched as British officials claimed credit, titles and plunder. Even more galling, the mother country, as always more concerned with global politics than American welfare, returned the hard-won prize only a few years later to France. No doubt Britain had her own list of grievances against the 'ungrateful' colonies, but Carr restricts himself to the origins of American discontent, in place well before any tea was dumped into Boston harbor. A well-calibrated account of the foreign and domestic events that prepared Americans, psychologically and emotionally, for the revolutionary break in 1776." *Kirkus Reviews*

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