

Reference Books

Tammy J. Eschedor Voelker
Editor

American Revolutionary War Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary.

By Bud Hannings. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2010. 558p. acid free \$125 (ISBN 978-0-7864-4379-6).

Many of the leaders of the American Revolutionary War are well known to every American student—Benedict Arnold, George Washington, Paul Revere, John Hancock, Patrick Henry, et al.—yet a great many obscure leaders played an integral role in the establishment of the United States. Unfortunately, little has been written about many of these personalities, and much of what is available is difficult to find. These include, among others, officers of the army, navy, and marines; farmers; politicians; plantation owners; state militia officers; diplomats; their wives; and the women of the Revolution. Written by Bud Hannings, a recognized expert in American military history and the head of Seniram Publishing, a company specializing in U.S. military history, this encyclopedia will enable students to research and discover many of the instrumental yet less-heralded people of the Revolutionary era. Entries are comprehensive, giving an accurate and complete picture of the subject's life and career, and are well written, interesting, and informative. Each furnishes a wealth of heretofore inaccessible biographical information from birth to death and includes a host of genealogical information for those entries where it is available. The book provides several features that will enhance its usefulness for the researcher, including a comprehensive bibliography, a list of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Framers of the Constitution, an index, and a generous number of high-quality black-and-white portraits. Unfortunately, the index is not subdivided by subject, making it difficult to use. Hannings' work is, however, noteworthy in its analysis and in its attention to detail, making this new effort unrivaled in its field in the scope and strength of its research, especially for the more obscure people included here.

Unique in its exceptional depth, readers will be hard-pressed to find another biographical source in this field that contains the amount of information or the number of entries in one volume. Yet there are several interesting and recent additions to American historiography that may serve as valuable companion volumes. Cokie Roberts' *Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation* (William Morrow, 2004), is a delightful biographical examination of the largely overlooked women of the Revolutionary era and their enormous contributions to the war effort. Joseph C. Morton's *Shapers of the Great Debates at the Constitutional Convention of 1787: A Biographical Dictionary* (Greenwood, 2005) is an alphabetically arranged single-volume encyclopedia providing concise

biographies of the fifty-five delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention. In a more in-depth examination of the era, John R. Vile's *The Constitutional Convention of 1787: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of America's Founding* (ABC-CLIO, 2005) furnishes more than 350 alphabetical entries (many of which are biographies of the key participants) and furnishes a number of valuable primary sources. Finally, *Colonial America: An Encyclopedia of Social, Political, Cultural, and Economic History*, edited by James Ciment (M.E. Sharpe, 2005), is a carefully crafted and exhaustive work that furnishes a wealth of biographical information out of its more than two thousand pages.

Hannings's book will fill an important gap in the reference literature, and it will serve as a welcome addition to American historiography. Well written, thorough, and without rival in its coverage, this will undoubtedly become the premier biographical reference encyclopedia on the subject. A work with this much depth and quality is easy to recommend for all libraries that support American history researchers, students, and interested readers.—Vincent P. Tinerella, *Public Services Librarian, Arkansas Tech University, Russellville, Arkansas*

Annual Register: World Events. 250th ed. Ed. by D. S. Lewis. Bethesda, Md.: ProQuest, 2009. 720p. acid free \$240 (ISBN 978-1-60030-828-4).

This edition of *The Annual Register: World Events* commemorates the 250th anniversary of its initial publication in 1758, which, as noted in the "Annual Register Archive" section, was marked by the return of Halley's Comet.

The 250th edition opens with two short essays, one on its history and one on its possible future, written by a "future reader" in 2059. These essays are followed by a review of the world in 2008. A strength of the *Annual Register* is that all entries are written in an "executive summary" format by subject specialists. Each entry is attributed to each specialist.

The organization of the *Annual Register* allows users to easily identify relevant entries. The main section is organized first by major geographical region, such as "Western and Southern Europe" and "Middle East and North Africa," and then by individual countries in each region. Each country entry begins with background information, such as population, official languages, and political system. An essay outlining the major events of the year in each country follows. These essays are usually only a couple of pages long and tend to expound on one key development while touching upon other newsworthy happenings. The entry for Egypt, for example, focuses on how the situation of the Palestinians in Gaza significantly affected the Egyptian government. The essay then briefly reviews the impact of the world economic crisis on the local economy, the tension between the poorer populations and government, and the struggle of the government to maintain civil order. The impact of the world economic crisis in 2008 pervades much of this edition. Countries with greater roles in world events, such as the United States, China, and the United Kingdom receive greater breadth of coverage.