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Review: Revolutionary Virginia: The Road to Independence Volume VII

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as chairman of the Virginia House Committee of Commerce, he played a significant role in the call for the Annapolis Convention.

Braxton aligned himself with the conservative tidewater merchant-planters and against the more radical Lee-Henry alliance from the Northern Neck and western Virginia. In the years prior to independence Braxton supported greater autonomy in the empire while opposing separation. He was elected to the Continental Congress in October, 1775, and took his seat in February, 1776. Braxton served until August when the Lee faction deprived both Braxton and fellow conservative Benjamin Harrison of their seats by reducing the size of the Virginia delegation. The author notes that while Braxton was accused of lingering "British prejudices," he not only voted for independence in Congress but also played an active role in the formation of an independent Virginia government.

Dill gives careful attention to Braxton's role as a merchant and supplier of goods to the Revolutionary forces. During the war he supplied state and Continental forces on commission by continuing his prewar trade and mercantile activities. Braxton purchased tobacco in Virginia and shipped it to the Caribbean and Europe in his own ships, which returned with needed supplies. Dill discredits accusations of wartime profiteering made by Braxton's enemies. Instead of reaping unreasonable profits, Braxton sustained heavy losses from which he never recovered. Barely escaping debtors' prison, he spent the last years of his life in a rented town house in Richmond. At his death the compassionate local sheriff was withholding court orders against Braxton for nonpayment of debts.

Understanding of the Revolutionary period is enhanced by careful studies of middle-echelon leaders like Braxton who were involved in the details of state government, military supply, and wartime trade. This is the first published biography of Carter Braxton, a task rendered more difficult by the absence of an easily accessible collection of personal papers. Dill's research is impressive. He consulted a wide range of scattered manuscript and printed sources and produced a definitive biography. Dill, as readers of his *Governor Tryon and His Palace* will attest, writes in a crisp, clear style. He provides ample background for those unfamiliar with congressional politics and the genealogy of Virginia's first families. While careful to avoid overinflating Braxton's achievements, Dill's study will force a reassessment of Braxton's role in Virginia's Revolutionary history.

George W. Troxler

Elon College

Revolutionary Virginia: The Road to Independence. Volume VII: Independence and the Fifth Convention, 1776: A Documentary Record. Compiled and edited by Brent Tarter and Robert L. Scribner. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983. Part One: Frontispiece, preface, apparatus, chronology, appendix, additional documents. Pp. xxvi, 415. Part Two: Frontispiece, apparatus, chronology, appendix, index. Pp. xviii, 440. Set, \$50.00.)

This two-part work actually makes up the seventh and last in a series of volumes on the Revolution in Virginia published for the Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission. The series is of inestimable value to anyone interested in the development of the Revolution in the colony.

This volume covers the journal and papers of the Fifth Virginia Convention, which met from May 6 to July 5, 1776, and the proceedings of the Virginia Committee of Safety. As events moved rapidly toward independence, the members of the convention were concerned with providing protection for frontier citizens from Indians and loyalists as well as with whether to evacuate the population of Norfolk away from Lord Dunmore's foraging parties. Additional troops and supplies were constant problems.

Of utmost importance, however, was the decision of the convention on May 15, 1776, to instruct the delegates of the Philadelphia Congress to support independence—a decision that set the stage for the famous motion of Richard Henry Lee. A committee swiftly proposed a Declaration of Rights (mainly the work of George Mason), which prepared the way for the adoption of a "Plan of Government." With this constitution for the new state, the Revolution was complete except for the military aspects.

Among the people who were prominent in this convention were Edmund Pendleton, president of the convention; Edmund Randolph, attorney general; George Mason; Robert Carter Nicholas, treasurer; and Patrick Henry, who was elected governor of the new state.

The editors did a skillful job in placing events in context and adding biographical data through footnotes and editorial notes. Brent Tarter, employed by the Virginia State Library, completed the editing after the death of his collaborator Robert L. Scribner, who had been involved in most of the project. Volume VII contains 298 documentary entries with 6 editorial notes and an appendix consisting of 38 supporting documents to the convention. These are drawn from 57 manuscript sources in 21 different repositories. A valuable index is included, and its usefulness is enhanced by reference to previous volumes.

This whole series will be of great use to every serious student of the period and it should be in every reference library.

Cline E. Hall

Liberty Baptist College

Grant and Lee: The Virginia Campaigns, 1864-1865. By William A. Frassanito. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983. Lists of maps, acknowledgments, illustrations, notes, index. Pp. 442. \$24.95.)

"It just doesn't get any better than this," a popular beer commercial proclaims. One justly can say the same about this book, as long as one is aware of just what "it" refers to. William A. Frassanito is a respectably able Civil War historian who also happens to be an expert in photographic analysis. He earlier did similar work on Antietam and Gettysburg and now offers an unsurpassable package dealing with the end