tection, eventually succumbed to vio-

lence as settlers advanced inexorably

on Native Americans debilitated by
disease and economic dependency.
The authors address the root causes
of these violent confrontations in
competing philosophies regarding the
land.

Throughout At the Edge of Empire,
the authors make an implicit argu-
ment about British North American
history: that the British did not plan
on destroying tribes with Old World
diseases anymore than George Wash-
ington set out to become an Ameri-
can through his actions at Fort
Necessity, at the dawn of the French
and Indian War. Too many historians,
in their view, read conspiracies into
events that resulted from the hap-
hazard mingling of people over time.
While deep-seated cultural and eco-
nomic goals informed both alliances
and conflicts between British
colonists and Native Americans, these
outcomes were not part of a coordi-
nated three-hundred-year plan script-
ed by British colonizers.

This narrative synthesis of the
advancing British Empire is inter-
rupted by brief but involved explo-
rations of specific wars, communities,
and regions. The structure of At the
Edge of Empire advances Hinderaker
and Mancall’s goal of illustrating both
the unity and the diversity of British
North America. Students and gener-
al readers will appreciate this highly
readable synthesis of the backcoun-
try—a moving region that was, in
many ways, at the center of the British
Empire.

STEPHEN WARREN is visiting assistant
professor of history at Augustana Col-
lege, Rock Island, Illinois. His forth-
coming book, The Shawnees and their
Neighbors, 1795-1870, explores the
creation of modern tribal govern-
ments among the Ohio Valley tribes.

The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846
By R. Douglas Hurt
ogy, notes, bibliography, index. Clothbound, $45.00; paperbound, $21.95.)

Any scholar who studies Native Amer-
ican history, the American West, or
Indian-White relations prior to 1850
will find few surprises in this book.
Nonetheless, they should take note of
it. R. Douglas Hurt, a prolific author
and chair of the history department at
Purdue University, has taken it upon
himself to produce a concise one-vol-
ume overview of nine distinct but
overlapping frontier regions over eight
extremely complicated decades. Major
players in his broad survey include
civil, religious, and military figures of
Spanish, French, English, and Amer-
ican origins. Central also are leaders
and members of the Iroquois,
Shawnee, Sauk, Cherokee, Comanche,
Chickasaw, Mesquakie, Seminole,
Dakota, Ute and numerous other Indi-
Originality is not always the best indicator of a book's value. In completing this work of historical synthesis, Hurt has provided a service to a variety of audiences. For those who teach classes in U.S. history that cover the period prior to the mid-nineteenth century, he has presented smoothly written chapters that provide a great deal of information and are easily comprehensible to undergraduates. For graduate students preparing for qualifying exams in related fields or taking a course outside their area of specialization, Hurt has provided an excellent overview, as well as thorough documentation and an extensive reading list. Most importantly, though, he has provided a history of Indian-White relations for general readers that emphasizes conflict but is not really about warfare. Nor does it dwell on a particular region or narrow time period at the expense of all others. In effect, Hurt has adopted a comparative approach to frontier studies, summed up a decade of scholarship, and packaged the result for popular consumption.

Too often, academics write only for other academics. With The Indian Frontier, Hurt has demonstrated that complex ideas and situations can be conveyed to non-specialists without sacrificing their complexity or their richness. Moreover, Hurt makes it look deceptively easy. One can only hope that readers of all stripes will appreciate his efforts.
Michael Sherfy is a Ph.D. candidate in American history at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. His dissertation, “Narrating Black Hawk: Constructing and Reconstructing a Native American Historical Subject,” will be completed later this year.

**The Mythic Meanings of the Second Amendment**

*Taming Political Violence in a Constitutional Republic*

By David C. Williams


Almost thirty years ago, in *The Gun in America* (1975), Lee Kennett and James Anderson concluded that “time works against the gun” (p. 255). Yet, since this prediction, debates over the Second Amendment have only continued, heating with time. Now enters David Williams, John S. Hastings Professor of Law at Indiana University School of Law, Bloomington, who proposes to reduce the heat by constructing a new myth for these new times. An early participant in the most recent wave of polemical battles, Williams uses this book to solidify his arguments, while answering friends and critics—particularly Gary Wills, Saul Cornell, Robert Cover, and Sanford Levinson—and dismissing by silence those who composed the friendly brief in *U.S. v Emerson* (2001).

The book is divided into three parts: the first is a foray into the period of the founding; the second, a survey of the complex present understandings of myths and political violence; the third, a proposed remedy for the current confusions over the meaning and significance of the Second Amendment and, by implication, a prescription for judicial action. Here Williams concludes that as “disciplining violence is the first task of constitutional order, it is also the first duty of citizenship” (p. 313).

Williams’s historical vision is inextricably intertwined with his idealism. His reading of the Second Amendment leads him to assert that “the right to bear arms belongs to the Body of the People, which is a sui generis element of eighteenth-century theory: the citizenry as a collectivity organized into a universal militia and unified by a common culture” (p. 70). Of course, such a vision of society did not survive the rapid growth and change of the nineteenth century, although the author includes little discussion of its erosion over time.

Williams states his thesis most clearly in the final section of the book. Here, he makes a plea for “restructuring” the Second Amendment by creating a new American unity built upon “the revival of a common life,” and prescribes the construction of a new “myth” of “civic trust” (pp. 320,