

*A Child of the Revolution**William Henry Harrison and His World, 1773-1798*

By Hendrik Booraem V

(Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2012. Pp. vii, 252. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00.)

Hendrik Booraem makes clear from the beginning of this impressive work that “the reader can expect to find a great deal about Harrison’s world and less about the young man himself” (p. viii). This disclaimer will not surprise anyone familiar with Booraem’s other books on the early lives of Andrew Jackson, Calvin Coolidge, and James Garfield. Setting the context is an essential part of all of Booraem’s carefully crafted biographies.

Combining letters and other primary sources penned by Harrison and those who knew him with a variety of public documents, Booraem recreates the worlds of the Virginia tidewater and the Ohio territory, essentially dividing the book into two sections. He guides the young Harrison through his childhood at the end of the Revolutionary era and his father’s decision to send his son to an obscure academy where—apparently to his father’s displeasure—young Harrison dabbled in the Methodist faith. These contacts probably led to Harrison’s later decision to join a Virginia abolitionist society. Then, just as Harrison prepares to enter into the study of medicine in Philadelphia, his father dies, leaving him with the first real opportunity to determine his own destiny. In spite of the admonitions of many of his father’s friends,

he opts for a life in the military. At this point, the second half of his story begins, and readers spend the rest of the book in the Ohio country as Harrison settles into military life, learns about Native American diplomacy and warfare, and marries. The book ends with a twenty-five-year-old Harrison about to leave the military for a career in politics.

At times, the details used to describe Harrison’s personal relationships, the machinations of the military, and frontier diplomacy overshadow the man himself. Given the scant resources available for Harrison’s early childhood and adolescent years, Booraem makes plausible connections, and ties together the sources into well-reasoned conclusions. For example, the author handles Harrison’s introduction to Methodism with skill, never straying far from the sources. Booraem’s historiographical arguments stay in the well-written, informative footnotes—a bonus both for the scholarly reader and for those who just want to find out more about Harrison. The scholar will find interesting discussions about Methodism and anti-slavery societies in Virginia in the notes, while the narrative gives enough detail to inform the reader without the distraction of side discussions.

This book should find a wide-ranging audience, including historians interested in biographical writing, undergraduates in classes on the Old Northwest and post-revolutionary America, as well as the general public.

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Buying America from the Indians

Johnson v. McIntosh and the History of Native Land Rights

By Blake A. Watson

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012. Pp. ix, 494. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00.)

Any work of scholarship must answer the proverbial “so what” question—what new and meaningful insight does a work provide that contributes to the greater good? The question only increases in importance when the subject of study—here, the Supreme Court case *Johnson v. McIntosh*—has already received considerable scholarly attention.

Surprisingly, Blake A. Watson does not offer a particularly explicit answer to this question in his otherwise ambitious and accomplished work. In fact, he undersells his contribution early in the text when he notes that he seeks to “provide additional historical context” (p. xiv). He comes the closest to making explicit his purpose in the conclusion, where he notes that he hopes to “facilitate a critical assessment of the impact of *Johnson v. McIntosh* on indigenous land rights in the United States and elsewhere” (p. 358). Watson likely had difficulty articulating a single purpose for his book because he actually sought to ac-

complish several goals, two of which predominate throughout the text.

First, Watson successfully dissects John Marshall’s famous opinion and exposes its inconsistencies. Although Marshall remains the United States’ most influential jurist and a commanding figure in American law and politics, he had a tendency to treat the pronouncements in his opinions as facts, simply because he had made them. In *Johnson v. McIntosh*, for example, Marshall made several suppositional and unsubstantiated statements about the limited nature of tribal property rights that he subsequently took for granted. Watson contextualizes those assertions—generally refuting their absoluteness—and explains that Marshall made his decision amidst fierce debates over the nature of tribal property rights. The goals of non-Indians—whether land speculators seeking personal wealth, individuals governed by their morals to recognize tribal rights, or various governments vying for authority on