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*Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction
of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (review)

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Just as their service in the Revolution had forged their identity from “colonial outsiders to full-fledged Americans,” they used this experience to resort to arms to “defend local practices against distant external authorities,” as in Fries Rebellion (110). Riordan’s journey through the Delaware Valley traces these changes “connecting the party formation of the 1820s to developments set in motion by the war of independence.” The ethnographical study of these communities contributes greatly to our understanding of the developments and decision making processes of these ethnic groups. Even in the face of nation-alizing forces, religious, racial, and ethnic issues remained central, gaining “heightened public significance” (12).

Many Identities, One Nation adds greatly to our understanding of the Revolutionary era and its legacy by painting a picture of how these communities viewed the chaotic world around them and their reactions to these events. The rich ethnographical studies and focus at the local level reveal a greater understanding of how Americans view their nation and their roles in it. While the diverse Delaware Valley may not have been symbolic of the early nation as a whole, it provides an excellent example of the multicultural identity that America would become.

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Kevin Kenny. *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn’s Holy Experiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Pp. 294, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$29.95).

In an especially brisk and dramatic narrative, Kevin Kenny tells the tragic story of Pennsylvania’s declension from its beginnings as a “Holy Experiment” to its numbing end in bloodshed and warfare. That basic story line is evident in previous works by Francis Jennings, James Merrell, Jane Merritt, Daniel Richter, William Pencak, and Peter Silver. But *Peaceable Kingdom Lost* is distinguished by Kevin Kenny’s narrative skill. This well-researched book is ideal for use in history courses as a readable and engaging narrative that very ably synthesizes much of the recent scholarship on Indian-European relations in colonial and revolutionary Pennsylvania.

Kenny’s well-told, yet familiar story is premised on the notion of Penn’s “holy experiment” where racial coexistence was writ into the colony’s foundation.

The author describes Penn as having a “benign spirit,” and an “unusual respect and decency” in his dealings with Native peoples (2). Kenny acknowledges, however, that Penn’s experiment was “already in decline by the time of his death in 1718” (3). Over the course of the eighteenth century, Pennsylvania’s relentless settlement expansion, along with the colonial government’s imperialistic collusions with the Iroquois Confederacy, led to displacement of the region’s original Native inhabitants from their lands. The Walking Purchase of 1737 symbolized the unholy experiment that Pennsylvania had become under William Penn’s descendants. By 1755, the Delawares, Shawnees, and other Natives of the Ohio Country waged an incredibly destructive war against the colonists who had earlier displaced them. Overall, the work is more a portrait of the destroyers of the Peaceable Kingdom, not the destroyed. One significant improvement to the narrative would be a more detailed examination of the Delaware, Shawnee, and Iroquois worlds. For example, Iroquois dominance and Delaware passivity is a bit overstated throughout the book. Greater skepticism is also needed regarding stories that express European gender stereotypes, such as the incident in 1742 where Canassatego disparaged the Delawares as women and allegedly dragged the sachem Nutimus by his hair out of the conference room (49). It is highly doubtful that any self-respecting Delaware sachem would allow anyone to seize his sacred scalplock and humiliate him. Using a European vocabulary—“king,” “succession,” “heir”—to describe Native political structures unfortunately misrepresents how Native leadership actually functioned (49, 54).

As an accomplished scholar of Irish history and Irish American history, however, Kenny focuses attention on the Ulster Presbyterians who were at the forefront of the Peaceable Kingdom’s grisly end in 1763: first with the Paxton Boys’ massacre of the Conestoga Indians, their menacing march on Philadelphia itself, and their political challenge to Pennsylvania’s government. With thorough research in Pennsylvania manuscript collections, Kenny reconstructs the events that led Pennsylvania’s “most aggressive colonists” to murder the Conestoga Indians (3). Kenny explains in a helpful appendix that most of the Paxton Boys “will forever remain anonymous,” though he identifies Rev. John Elder, Lazarus Stewart, and Matthew Smith as important ringleaders (237). The vigilantes were violent men “who did more than declare an end to Pennsylvania’s Peaceable Kingdom. They ushered in the new order that reached fruition during the American Revolution” (5). Indeed, the book is particularly effective in demonstrating the relationships between the Paxton crisis and the origins of the Revolution

in Pennsylvania. The political aftermath of the massacre—including the pamphlet wars that erupted—“destablized the provincial government to an extent the Paxton Boys could never have imagined possible” (191). Readers will readily see how incredibly fragile colonial law and authority was, particularly among the backcountry settlers who defied all proprietary attempts to bring the Paxton Boys to jail or to justice. One of Kenny’s finest sections is his methodical tracing of Pennsylvania’s serpentine political factions from 1763 to the beginning of the Revolution, and how those factions emerged from the Paxton crisis. In a particular poignant conclusion, Kenny relates the grim fate of the Moravian Indian survivors of the Paxton Boys’ aggression. Brought to Philadelphia for safety in 1763, they eventually resettled at Wyalusing, where they were again displaced during the Pennamite-Yankee conflicts. The Moravian Indians resettled in the Ohio Country—at Gnadenhütten—where they would be systematically executed by Pennsylvania militia in 1782.

The Paxton Boys’ very anonymity has made them an ideal stereotype in recent historiography focused on the emergence of racism. Indians who were once caricatured as bloodthirsty “savages” in historical writing have been replaced by an image of violent, land-hungry, and racist Indian-hating Euroamerican frontier settlers. Much of this recent portrait relies heavily upon the prejudicial descriptions of frontier settlers in the writings of proprietary and imperial officials such as Thomas Penn and Sir William Johnson. Were the Scots-Irish as a group any more land hungry than the Penn family, whose record of fraudulent and grasping treaties destroyed the Holy Experiment as much as, if not more than, the Paxton Massacre? A closer examination of the everyday worlds of Conestoga Indians and their European neighbors further complicates our notions of how frontier settlers thought and acted. Not all Scots-Irish settlers believed that Indians had no right to land: backcountry squatters negotiated openly and directly with their Indian neighbors for land rights, and some even paid yearly rents to Natives, indicating an initial modicum of respect for Indian occupation and use. Evidence from the eighteenth century also shows that whites and Indians lived together as neighbors for decades and forged beneficial economic relationships. Many Conestoga Indians, for example, were out among the white settlers selling their handi-crafts on the day of the massacre. What were those face-to-face relationships like? How interrelated was the Conestoga economy with that of the Paxton community? How did earlier ties of interdependence become unraveled by the 1760s?

Kenny's vivid narrative remains a wonderful entrance into the complex world of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, and allows readers to grapple with larger questions regarding historical causation, cultural encounters, and human nature. Kenny rightly places emphasis on the Paxton Boys' culpability in the final end of William Penn's dream. But the author's parallel portrait of expansion-minded and dishonest proprietary officials raises the question of whether the Holy Experiment was a hollow dream after Penn's death in 1718. We might profitably remember C.A. Weslager's argument that the turning point in Peaceable Kingdom's demise was not solely the Paxton Massacre, but the proprietary alliance with the Six Nations that enabled thousands of Scots-Irish and other European immigrants to flood onto the Delawares' lands.

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The Citadel

Edward Slavishak. *Bodies of Work: Civic Display and Labor in Industrial Pittsburgh*. (Duke University Press, 2008. Pp. 354, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth \$89.95; Paper, \$24.95.)

From the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the factories, mills, and mines of the Pittsburgh region were hazardous and often deadly. Falling debris and rock, overhead spills of molten metals, and explosions in steel mills and coal mines, for example, claimed the lives and devastated the flesh of thousands of working-class men between the 1880s and the 1910s. Echoing reformers who researched the Pittsburgh Survey in the early 1900s, and historians such as S. J. Kleinberg, Edward Slavishak reminds us that Pittsburgh "was an unusually dangerous place in which to work" (151). *Bodies of Work* is an illuminating history of working bodies, the dangers of industrial labor in the "Steel City," and observers' varied responses to the ubiquity of bodily harm. Slavishak's focus on the working body illuminates not only the physical impact of industrial work on working-class men (and women), but also more broadly the body as a site of cultural argument among competing groups—especially city boosters, reformers, industrial employers, and craft unionists—who were eager to define Pittsburgh's civic identity, the rights and obligations of laborers and employers, and the legitimacy of industrial capitalism as a whole during this period of profound economic and technological change. While Pittsburgh's Gilded Age working-class