

The Planting of New Virginia: Settlement and Landscape in the Shenandoah Valley. By WARREN R. HOFSTRA. Creating the North American Landscape. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Pp. xv, 410. \$49.95.)

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Virginia's history is both long and filled with the kinds of delicious stories that fascinate historians. Warren R. Hofstra has looked west to illustrate how whites colonized new land and people as they moved across the Appalachian ridge into the Shenandoah Valley. Once in the Shenandoah, white inhabitants began turning the region—land that Indians had been living on and changing for generations—into European-style farmland dotted with barns and farmhouses, bounded by roads and fences, and anchored by towns. By the end of the eighteenth century, whites had turned the Shenandoah Valley into an “open-country neighborhood” filled with independent yeomen who increasingly produced for markets in the east (p. 8). Settlers repeated this process so frequently west of the Appalachian Mountains that, in the nineteenth century, these small towns and neighborhoods became “indelibly associated with the American midlands” (p. 2).

Hofstra contends that the transformation of the Shenandoah Valley occurred in three “evolutionary phases” (p. 5). The first began in the 1730s when Europeans moved into the region and ended when colonial officials organized towns and county political infrastructure in the 1740s and 1750s. Hofstra uses Winchester, Virginia, as his prototypical open-country neighborhood. During the second phase, Winchester grew and then prospered as goods, services, credit, and debt flowed into the town and into the hands of its inhabitants before the Seven Years' War. By the end of that war, wheat and flour prices had increased enough to make it possible, and then profitable, for farmers to ship their flour to markets in Alexandria, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. The defeat of the British in the Revolutionary War stabilized the valley's political structure, making possible widespread market participation. As farmers increasingly produced for these markets, they entered the third evolutionary phase. When they expanded their endeavors, Shenandoah farmers attracted the attention of tidewater planters and overseers who brought slaves into the valley. These migrants carried with them the power relationships defined by deference and dependence that had characterized the tidewater and that conflicted with the more republican society emerging in the Shenandoah.

Colonial and imperial officials began encouraging settlement of the region after a violent conflict in 1742 between white Virginians and a group of seven Oneidas and twenty-one Onondagas, led by an Onondaga named Jonnhaty, who were traveling from Iroquoia to Virginia. The skirmish pushed to the breaking point tense relationships between English colonists and the Iroquois Nation and prompted officials to try to formulate ways to prevent similarly explosive interactions in the future. They concluded, usually independently, that settling the region with white farmers was the best way to protect against being ensnared by the French or left open to Indian attack, and in short order Alexander Spotswood of Virginia began recruiting settlers to the Shenandoah Valley. At much the same time, the Board of Trade in London issued a report that legitimated white settlement of the territory and consolidated power over those settlements in the hands of the Board of Trade, the Privy Council, and various colonial officials. But, because the report “represented a consensus of broadly shared opinions and ideas . . . most of what it recommended came to pass” without the implementation of any specific policies (p. 81).

Colonial officials bound the land and the people on it by organizing towns and counties; they then turned to centering political power in a town, Winchester, that contained the tools they needed to inflict their brand of justice on all who defied their authority and power. Colonists built a courthouse, prison, and colonial offices and erected stocks, a pillory, a whipping post, and a ducking

stool. The construction project infused money into the region, and money made the town grow. Winchester quickly became a central place in the Shenandoah Valley, and it grew from an exchange center into the hub of a broader commercial economy. But Indian trade declined as whites in the valley increasingly participated in the flour production and trade boom of the late 1750s and 1760s.

The boom lasted for the rest of the century, and, because flour prices rose, wheat remained the predominant crop grown in the Shenandoah Valley into the nineteenth century. To take advantage of rising prices, officials built new roads that connected farms to mills, mills to local shops, and shops to markets in Philadelphia, Alexandria, and Baltimore. Easier access to markets encouraged farmers to specialize their production, and their increased trade brought more cash into the region. By 1800, Hofstra contends that even though “the percentage of Shenandoah Valley households lacking assets in slaves, horses, or cattle escalated from six in 1782 to twenty-five eighteen years later, other indicators suggest that the new wealth was not concentrating unduly in the hands of the better-off” (p. 285). The valley’s rural middle class embodied “the future of the new republic” (p. 337).

Hofstra maintains that change in the region was “inextricably related to long-distance trade throughout the Atlantic economy and the imperial system that sustained it” (p. 333), but at the same time he illustrates how white farmers moved where they wanted and settled the land how they wished. They proved so independent that, early on, Lieutenant Governor William Gooch moaned that they should abide by, and live according to, the desires of men of property. Several recent studies on rural regions in the eighteenth century have analyzed similar tensions between groups of white colonists who sought to establish different and sometimes conflicting social and political structures. Certainly, white farmers and their political rulers each had their own agendas, and Hofstra notes that officials made policy according to their own goals, and not those of farmers. One wonders if the Shenandoah Valley suffered from some of the same kinds of tensions and outright conflict that nearly split North Carolina or New Jersey.

Indeed, the region might have been less peaceful than Hofstra generally allows; he notes that conflict “might have been more the exception than the rule for the people in Winchester” (p. 318) and, presumably, throughout the rest of the region. Hofstra starts his story with the conflict between Jonnhaty’s group and white Virginians, and the threat of attacks by the French, Indians, or Spanish compelled officials to settle and then fortify the valley. Furthermore, the region was rocked by war on at least two occasions, the Seven Years’ War and the Revolutionary War. More specifically, Hofstra acknowledges that Dutch and Irish inhabitants of Winchester waged riotous attacks against each other twice a year during opposing holy days.

Despite the potential understatement of the extent of conflict and violence, Hofstra’s is a thorough, wide-ranging analysis of the complex issues surrounding the white settlement of the Shenandoah Valley. He uses his evidence judiciously and imaginatively to offer readers a detailed analysis of the planting of new Virginia.