

Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac's Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America. By DAVID DIXON. Campaigns and Commanders. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005. 371 pages. \$34.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by David L. Preston, *The Citadel*

Fred Anderson has written that, until recently, the Seven Years' War appeared in historical literature as a "quaint mezzotint prelude to our national history." Similarly, Pontiac's war was often treated as a mere appendage or violent aftershock of the Seven Years' War without a proper understanding of its uniqueness, spontaneity, explosiveness, and ferocity. Many works, however, have broadened and deepened our understanding of Pontiac's war, including Anderson's *Crucible of War*, William R. Nester's "*Haughty Conquerors*," Gregory Evans Dowd's *War under Heaven*, and Colin G. Calloway's *The Scratch of a Pen*.¹

David Dixon's *Never Come to Peace Again* argues that the war was "a transcendent episode in the struggle of Native Americans to retain their identity and sovereignty" (275) and became "the bridge that linked [the] two bitter encounters" (xii) of the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. Dixon's well-researched book explores the war's intense human suffering and how it shaped larger debates about the status of Indians and colonists in the British Empire. Though it does not offer an entirely new interpretation, the book succeeds as a readable narrative of Pontiac's war that eloquently captures its human drama. Dixon's accounts of the siege of Detroit, the battle of Bushy Run, and the British defeat at Devil's Hole near Niagara are compelling. The author also has a keen grasp of the unique personalities caught up in the maelstrom of war, such as Keekyuscung, a Delaware warrior whose body was found after Bushy Run in 1763, who had prophesied in 1758 that there "would be a great war, and never come to peace again" (41) if the British army did not leave the Ohio Country, and Sir Robert Davers, a dreamy British aristocrat who came to America to live among the Indians he admired only to be killed and beheaded by them near Detroit.

The narrative focuses on the Ohio valley, a "cauldron of unrest and awful violence" (3) and the "last sanctuary" (17) for the Delaware, Shawnee, and Mingo who lived there. They had fought in the Seven Years' War to preserve their lands from colonial interference, and they expected that the British would honor their legal and verbal commitments to withdraw their forces afterward. Dixon traces the war's origins through the establishment of British outposts across the Ohio valley, renewed settlement expansion and violence, Neolin's religious teachings that made the conflict a "holy war" (184), and the "conceited and foolish" (100) policies of Major General Jeffrey Amherst. The British commander in chief is contrasted with beneficent Sir William Johnson, superintendent of Indian affairs. Dixon's interpretation of Johnson and the Iroquois Confederacy is inaccurate in light of scholarship: Johnson was as much an imperialist as Amherst, he had no unilateral authority to "send Iroquois war parties" (220) against the western nations, and there was no such thing as "Iroquois hegemony" (243) over the independent Ohio valley peoples.

Dixon's interpretation of the natives' formidable military campaign emphasizes the "forceful character of Pontiac" and his "personal magnetism" (131) over diverse western nations who had "forged an identity as one people" (88). Warriors quickly captured and destroyed smaller British forts such as Sandusky, Michilimackinac, Venango, and Presque Isle. Large native contingents

¹ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (New York, 2000), xv–xvi; William R. Nester, "*Haughty Conquerors*": *Amherst and the Great Indian Uprising of 1763* (Westport, Conn., 2000); Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore, 2002); Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (New York, 2006).

unsuccessfully besieged the formidable British garrisons at Detroit, Pitt, and Niagara. Though the Indians' victories were sudden and dramatic, many of the dilapidated British stockades they captured contained only puny garrisons. Far more significant was the human toll the Indians exacted on Euroamerican farmers: probably one thousand or more were killed or captured. The author's descriptions of warriors "lurking" (145) around and "butchering" (112) unfortunately detract from the strategic nature of the Indians' attacks on the farms that supplied British posts.

The author's overall portrayal of the war's brutality is stark; he states in the preface that the war was "unprecedented for its awful violence" (xiii). He does not shrink from retelling stories of attacks that cast the colonists and Indians in a particularly vicious light (for example, Delaware warriors disemboweling a pregnant woman in Pennsylvania). But did those kinds of incidents, along with the Paxton massacre of 1763, mean that "both sides seemed intoxicated with genocidal fanaticism" (xiii)? The author's own evidence reveals that natives and colonists did not always embrace genocidal actions. Dixon relates how native warriors brought advance warning of impending attacks to their white friends, how French habitants seamlessly moved between British and Indian camps, and how the war ended with a bloodless climax in Colonel Henry Bouquet's and Colonel John Bradstreet's 1764 expeditions (despite British officers' rhetoric of chastising Indians). Finally, Dixon disputes the significance of the so-called germ warfare practiced by the British at Fort Pitt in 1763. In contrast to Francis Jennings's *Empire of Fortune*, Dixon argues that the "British failed in their attempt to unleash germ warfare upon their enemies" (154).²

The final chapter examines the relationship between Pontiac's war and the American Revolution. Dixon answers a call by John B. Frantz and William Pencak, in *Beyond Philadelphia*, to study the revolutionary movement in the Pennsylvania hinterland, where most of the colony's population and the strongest pockets of Whig sentiment were located.³ Dixon argues that Pontiac's war forged a "crucible of interests between urban and frontier patriots" (xii) in Pennsylvania, though the book does not explain precisely how this happened. The Proclamation line of 1763 is an insufficient explanation for colonial grievances, since British imperial authorities subsequently sponsored the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix that opened frontier lands to thousands of speculators and settlers. The best evidence of revolutionary unrest is the "Black Boys," a group of frontier vigilantes who confronted a British garrison in Pennsylvania in 1765. Yet this incident fits with the context of previous backcountry mayhem, not necessarily with the advent of the revolutionary movement.

There is a connection between Pontiac's war and the Revolution, but Dixon's argument on this subject is underdeveloped. Pontiac's war was ultimately more significant for how it affected the attitudes of British leaders. The British army's campaigns from 1755 to 1764 confirmed the argument that the Stamp Act was a legitimate means of defending ungrateful and unruly American children. British officials such as Major General Thomas Gage were acutely frustrated by the seemingly inexorable spread of lawless hunters and squatters as well as the rash of murders that jeopardized peace. Gage believed that the aggressive Americans would provoke another Pontiac's war, which would mean more expenditures and deployments of British troops. Those fears and frustrations were punctuated by the simultaneous breakdown of imperial authority along the seaboard and in the Ohio valley in the late 1760s and early 1770s. The war's aftermath, then, conditioned some British officials and officers to believe that only raw force could compel the

² Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York, 1988), 200, 447–48.

³ John B. Frantz and William Pencak, eds., *Beyond Philadelphia: The American Revolution in the Pennsylvania Hinterland* (University Park, Pa., 1998).

colonists to obedience. By 1774 Gage despondently concluded that no such coercive military or civil power would exist unless twenty thousand troops were sent to America.