

Naval Documents of the American Revolution.
Volume IV, American Theatre: Feb. 19, 1776-
Apr. 17, 1776; European Theatre: Feb. 1, 1776-
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George Athan Billias

The American Historical Review, Volume 75, Issue 7, 1 December 1970, Pages 2125–2126, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/75.7.2125-a>

Published: 01 December 1970

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PATRICK HENRY: PATRIOT AND STATESMAN. By *Norine Dickson Campbell*. (New York: Devin-Adair Company. 1969. Pp. xvii, 437. \$10.00.)

BIOGRAPHERS of Patrick Henry, from William Wirt to the present, have all shared certain frustrations. The oral traditions have been numerous, but the facts have been relatively few. As Wirt complained in 1815, “not one of his speeches lives in print. . . .” Nor was there much in the way of revealing information on Henry as a military man, governor, or working politician. “In short,” Henry was “as hopeless a subject as man could well desire.” Indeed, it may well be true, as the late Douglass Adair once suggested, that Henry is an impossible subject for a narrative biography. Instead, Adair urged scholars to raise analytical questions about the so-called “Forest-born Demosthenes” that seek to explain his activities within the framework of eighteenth-century Virginia society and politics.

Yet it is the character of the man and the formative influences of his youth that continue to attract—and baffle—historians. Robert D. Meade’s recent two-volume life of Henry, based on exhaustive research, fills out the public record, but it scarcely reveals the inner man. The year 1969 witnessed the appearance of two additional biographies of Henry: George F. Willison’s *Patrick Henry and His World* and Norine Dickson Campbell’s *Patrick Henry: Patriot and Statesman*. Unfortunately, neither book escapes the romantic influence of Wirt, despite the authors’ claims to the contrary.

Mrs. Campbell, a resident of Henry’s own Hanover County, Virginia, has long maintained an interest in her subject. She played a large part in securing and restoring the ancestral Henry home, Scotchtown, for the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities in 1958. Perhaps for these reasons she writes with a good deal of

Virginia antiquities in 1950. Perhaps for these reasons she writes with a good deal of warmth and charm about Henry family matters and local affairs. Persons with an antiquarian interest will no doubt find much to enjoy in this handsomely illustrated biography. Scholars, unfortunately, will discover it to be just another Henry biography, heavily footnoted but offering little that is new and repeating too much that is old.

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

DON HIGGINBOTHAM

NAVAL DOCUMENTS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. Volume IV, AMERICAN THEATRE: FEB. 19, 1776–APR. 17, 1776; EUROPEAN THEATRE: FEB. 1, 1776–MAY 25, 1776; AMERICAN THEATRE: APR. 18, 1776–MAY 8, 1776. *William Bell Clark*, Editor. With a foreword by *John H. Chafee* and an introduction by *Ernest McNeill Eller*. (Washington, D. C.: [Navy Department.] 1969. Pp. xxxi, 1580. \$14.25.)

I HAVE been critical of the *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* project in the past on various grounds: the use of inaccurate transcripts when copies of original documents were available; the failure to make a systematic search of all available manuscript collections; the breadth of the project that encompasses naval warfare on inland lakes when coverage of activities on the high seas might have been an ambitious enough scope for the series; the Whig bias betrayed by the editorial staff in its selections and commentaries; and the inadequacy of the index as a research tool to reveal important categories contained in these volumes. Although the Naval History Division has corrected many of these shortcomings, the project still does not measure up to the high editing standards established by the magnificent Adams Papers, Jefferson Papers, Hamilton Papers, Franklin Papers, and Madison Papers, among others.

One reason for the continued criticism of this project is its tendency to perpetuate old errors. Transcripts are still being reproduced where the original documents, no

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