



Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America

By Peter Silver

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“With remarkable literary skill, Peter Silver . . . provokes hard thinking about the basic themes of our history.”?Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*

Relying on meticulous original archival research, historian Peter Silver uncovers a fearful and vibrant early America in which Lutherans and Presbyterians, Quakers, Catholics and Covenanters, Irish, German, French, and Welsh all sought to lay claim to a daunting countryside. Such groups had rarely intermingled in Europe, and the divisions between them only grew?until, with the arrival of the Seven Years’ War, thousands of country people were forced to flee from Indian attack.Silver reveals in vivid and often chilling detail how easily a rhetoric of fear can incite entire populations to violence. He shows how it was only through the shared experience of fearing and hating Indians that these Europeans, once irreconcilable, were finally united under the ideal of religious and ethnic tolerance that has since defined the best in American life.13 illustrations; 2 maps

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The mid-Atlantic colonies of 18th-century America were home to a remarkable diversity of immigrants—Germans, Quakers, Moravians, Englishmen and French, among others. In this exhaustively researched and elegantly written study, Princeton historian Silver asks how all the Europeans lived side by side. The answer, Silver says, is that they were solidified into a single people during the Seven Years' War in the 1750s by the fear of Indian attack. The motley Europeans morphed into white people, defined in opposition to Indians. (An intriguing appendix reveals that colonial newspapers tended to use the adjective white to describe people principally during bouts of Indian war.) But not everyone with pale skin became part of this new people—the most fascinating sections of the book explore why some European settlers, such as Quakers (who were accused of betraying white people's interests), were excluded from the collective. Silver also shows how fears of Indian menace were taken up during the Revolution: patriots shored up a distinctive American identity and claimed that the British were engaging in Indian-like atrocities, such as scalping and cannibalism. Silver's study will change the way scholars think about whiteness and will reshape our understanding of how 13 distinct colonies were knit together into one nation. 13 illus., 2 maps. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Review

“Penetrates searchingly into a dark chapter of Colonial history.”

- *Boston Globe*

About the Author

Peter Silver is an assistant professor of history at Princeton University. He lives in Princeton, New Jersey.

Users Review

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Theresa Piercy:

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