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Wampum Belts and Peace Trees: George Morgan, Native Americans and Revolutionary Diplomacy. By Gregory Schaaf.

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frontier army had at least some grounding in fact.

Lowe's verbal treatment of Native Americans indicates that he was very much a man of his times. Nonetheless, while he thought many Indian practices "savage" (the war dance he observed in a Sioux camp, for instance), there is no question that he admired many of their qualities (particularly military, of course). At the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty Council, he was so impressed by the discipline of the Snake—warriors, women, and children alike—that he described it as "a lesson for soldiers who might never again see such a grand display of soldierly manhood, and the lesson was not lost. Every dragoon felt an interest in that tribe" (p. 67). On another occasion, he described a war party of Cheyenne by observing that "[o]ne would think them all picked men, from twenty to forty years old—perfect specimens of the finest and handsomest Indians on the plains, in war paint, fierce and confident-looking. . ." (p. 33). Finally, in connection with a description of the martial qualities of the Kiowa and Comanche, he stated flatly, "To say that such men given equal arms and supplies, are not the equals, as rank and file soldiers, of any race known to history is bald nonsense" (p. 89).

This book, one of the best of its kind, belongs among the holdings of anyone with an interest in the history of the trans-Mississippi West during the nineteenth century.

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Wampum Belts and Peace Trees: George Morgan, Native Americans and Revolutionary Diplomacy. By Gregory Schaaf. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Press, 1990. 272 pages. \$27.95 cloth.

In the biography of George Morgan written by Max Savelle (1932), Morgan is presented as a merchant entrepreneur, a land speculator, an Indian trader, and a forest diplomat. "Colony builder" is the most expansive designation given Morgan by Savelle. Gregory Schaaf, however, departs from the traditional approach by depicting Morgan as a visionary peacemaker working with dedicated Native American leaders to build a lasting peace on the western frontier. Schaaf bases his reinterpretation on an unpublished manuscript, reportedly a missing section of the journal that George Morgan kept at Fort Pitt from April to November 1776.

Fortunately for interested scholars, microfilm copies are available at the University of California, Santa Barbara, California State, Chico, and the Grand Council, Iroquois Confederacy.

As the primary actor in this story, George Morgan is portrayed as inspired, determined to realize a permanent frontier peace. He is abetted, Schaaf argues, and honored by these western peoples; he is given the name *Tamanend*, *Affable One*, by the Delaware, while the Shawnee name him *Weepemachuckthe*, or *White Deer* (p. xx). Furthermore, contends the author, Morgan's influence was so well known that the Continental Congress entrusted him with the awesome task of establishing peace with all the native peoples of the Ohio country. The author concludes that "Congress ordered Morgan westward on an Indian peace mission, because Indian nations held the balance of power in their hands. A united force of Indian warriors could either support or crush the Revolution" (p. xx).

About Morgan's appointment as a negotiator the author is basically correct: George Morgan was named the principal agent for the Middle Department by the Continental Indian Commissioners, a board appointed by the Continental Congress; he was to seek peace with the Indian peoples of the Ohio country. The purpose of his mission, however, was peace as a means to neutrality on the part of the native peoples.

Congressional leaders understood that if the forest soldiers remained inactive, the continental armies might be spared the burden of fighting on two fronts. Morgan's involvement in diplomatic negotiations also was prompted by personal interests; he was influenced by his long-standing business investments in trade and land speculation. As he knew from his earlier experiences, war often canceled both activities. By acting as a peace broker, he served not only the aspirations of his fledgling country but also his personal ones.

To present George Morgan as a visionary peacemaker is to claim too much. If Morgan's motivation as mediator is overstated, so is the assertion about the potential role of Indian warriors in the American Revolution. It was unlikely that any combination of warriors could "crush the rebellion." Yet the continental government could not ignore the presence of these potential adversaries. Preferably, the government wanted the support of the Indian peoples, perhaps even military aid; even if that was impossible, efforts to keep the native peoples out of war did not forbid recruitment of specific auxiliaries or attacks on particularly noto-

rious or dangerous adversaries. Thus, tribal leaders were courted by continental commissioners seeking peace through neutrality (Morgan was one of several agents working all along the western frontier), while military leaders sought Native American recruits for mobile units that could serve as scouts and raiders; at the same time, punitive expeditions against Detroit and Niagara were considered. The ultimate goal was winning the war; if the Indians could be neutralized through peace, however brief, then peace was the objective; on the other hand, if the commanders needed experienced riflemen or scouts, those recruits were sought.

In addition to his reinterpretation of Morgan's frontier diplomacy, the author follows other less traditional approaches. In his description of Iroquois tribal polity, Schaaf perceives a pattern similar to that of the United States government. He depicts the Onondaga as the "executive branch," the Mohawk and the Seneca as the "senate," and the Oneida, Cayuga, and Tuscarora as the "Iroquois house of representatives" (p. 51). Such a description does not coincide with the standard accounts of the Iroquois Confederacy in the eighteenth century. Nor is there a matching description provided in Elisabeth Tooker's essay, "The League of the Iroquois: Its History, Politics, and Ritual" in the *Smithsonian Handbook*, volume 15. As appealing as the author's notion might be that the new government of the United States was fashioned after Iroquois governmental structure, there is no substantial body of documentary evidence or scholarly argument to support this view (Grinde and Johansen are equally unconvincing).

Readers familiar with the revolutionary frontier may also find puzzling the author's view that the presence of the western Seneca leader Conneodico in the Ohio country was a "mystery" (p. 122). Like his fellow tribesman Tachnechdorus (Logan), Conneodico was part of the relocation westward by Iroquois, Delaware, and other peoples seeking refuge from imperial wars and expanding European settlements. Ultimately, they found no refuge in the Ohio country, for by 1776 they were threatened once more. As Logan explained to Morgan and the Continental Congress in August 1776, he and Conneodico were threatened with death by sacrifice, with their throats slit and their bodies hung on poles like dogs.

Other readers may encounter difficulty in accepting the author's characterization of Native American leaders as well as some aspects of Native American life. At times, the author seems to be writing from a decidedly presentist view. As a result, he

portrays the Indians in the Ohio River valley as opposed to slavery, "condemning the practice as against the divine plan of the Creator" (p. 33). Unfortunately, he gives no source for this assertion. Equally puzzling to some readers may be the designation of Kentucky as an "International Indian Hunting Preserve" (pp. xxvi, 58). Likewise, those who appreciate the keepers of an oral tradition recognize wampum as powerful metaphoric and mnemonic devices useful in confirming historic occasions. Yet significant and treasured as they are, they can hardly be considered "an Indian version of a legal covenant equal in importance to a Declaration of Independence or a Constitution" (p. 139; cf. Tooker article cited above).

This reviewer finds no joy in expressing such misgivings about what should have been an interesting book. There is, for example, no pleasure in pointing out what one hopes are oversights in proof-reading. The quotation attributed to John Heckewelder in *Narrative of a Mission* (Philadelphia, 1820) is not included on pp. 156-57 of that source. Nor, furthermore, is the quotation in paragraph two of page 189 from the Morgan journal; it is from a well-known secondary source on the southern Indians in the American Revolution (p. 43).

Since Savelle's biography of Morgan is almost sixty years old, and because George Morgan's career as merchant, Indian trader, diplomat, and expansionist so reflects the lives of numerous colonials, a modern treatment of his life is overdue; the recovered manuscript needs to be a part of the story. *Wampum Belts and Peace Trees* does not provide a balanced account because of the author's inconsistency in reading both the sources and the secondary literature. A well-edited, carefully documented publication of the journal itself would go a long way toward giving scholars a fresh look. Gregory Schaaf has the training and the ability to assist us all by fulfilling this much-needed task.

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