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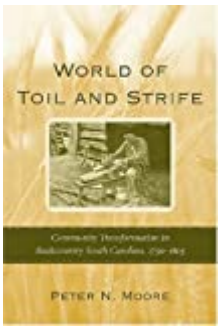

Peter N. Moore. *World of Toil and Strife: Community Transformation in Backcountry South Carolina, 1750-1805.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007. 175 pp. $34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57003-666-8.

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Published on H-SC (July, 2008)

The Case for Micro-history: The Wonderful Waxhaws

Local histories have always been useful in fleshing out the broad and oftentimes overly general interpretations of different regions of the country during the late colonial and early Republic eras. The towns and communities of New England and the mid-Atlantic regions have been particularly rich fodder for historians for several decades. It is only in more recent years, however, that scholars have begun to add to this important field of study in terms of the southern backcountry. In his book *World of Toil and Strife*, Peter N. Moore contributes to this field in a study that adds much to our knowledge of community development during this period. He also sets a standard of in-depth research and analysis for historians of the Carolina backcountry to follow.

Moore argues that traditional interpretations of the backcountry during this period have overgeneralized its economic and social development, using interpretive models developed in studies of other areas without consideration of significant local ethnic, racial, or religious variation. While Moore does not discount the usefulness of these models, he points out that, at the community level, the differences become apparent, allowing for a more nuanced portrait of the development of backcountry settlements in the Carolinas. He contends that, rather than the backcountry being an area where different ethnic, religious, and national groups came together to form a unifying common economic and social identity, such communities as the Waxhaws continued to face divisions and conflicts that often left them as divided at the end of this period as they were in the beginning, if not always for the same reasons.

The focus of Moore's community study is the Waxhaws, a community begun by white settlers in 1751 on land that had originally been occupied by the Waxhaw Indians near the modern border of South Carolina and North Carolina. He traces the origins of the original white inhabitants and points out the early social cohesion brought on by a life on the frontier as well as the common ethnic makeup and kinship ties that bound many early communities together. He begins very quickly, however, to describe the differences between the disparate groups drawn to the region. Presbyterians and non-Presbyterians, whites and a slowly increasing number of black slaves, old settlers and new arrivals began

to produce an "adversarial and ambiguous relationship between the core group and outsiders ... [that] gave definition to backcountry communities like the Waxhaws" (p. 34). In subsequent chapters, Moore describes and analyzes the numerous evolutions that changed the social and economic structure of the region. Increasing economic ties to the larger Atlantic world, the growing importance of legal institutions within the colony and later the state, the disruptions of the Revolution, the growth of slavery and development of a distinct slave culture, and religious disputes arising out of the revivalism of the Great Awakening all play their roles in the complex and detailed portrait that Moore presents.

In that very detail lays the greatest strength of Moore's work. The research evidenced throughout the book is exhaustive in its scope, and the study is impressive in the manner with which Moore presents a personal picture of the inhabitants of the Waxhaws. He effectively blends travel narratives, such as John Lawson's, with statistical data derived from a thorough analysis of local church records. Journals, such as Oliver Hart's account of a trip through the backcountry, balance state records and investigations into land titles. In short, Moore does not allow what could be a dry account of marriages, farm records, or government land deeds get in the way of what is actually a fascinating story of the changing life of a small community, one from which he is able to provide much-needed balance to the larger historiographical interpretations based on other regional or national histories.

Another great strength of Moore's work is the way that he is able to take just what he needs from the larger historiography of the southern backcountry while not losing his larger point about the complexity of life in the Waxhaws. A wonderful example of this ability is seen in his discussion of market transitions underway in the backcountry. He begins by introducing the key concepts of a market revolution and change to an Atlantic World economy, best represented in the works of Allan Kulikoff and Charles Sellers, among others. Building on this in the main body of his analysis, he delves deeper into the actual transformations as witnessed in the Waxhaws, dealing with such issues as the commercialization of agriculture and its effect on the community as well as changing land policy and its effect on evolving kinship ties. Throughout the story, Moore blends general interpretations of other studies with his local accounts, allowing a much more complex understanding of life in the backcountry.

Overall, this book is a welcome addition to our understanding of the southern backcountry. What minor blemishes it might have (do we really need the bit on the Spanish expeditions through the region in the sixteenth century?) are overwhelmed by the richness of the analysis. It is a book that will be useful to student and teacher alike. It, thus, should be considered for inclusion in any class on the backcountry.

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Citation: Tim Grade. Review of Moore, Peter N., *World of Toil and Strife: Community Transformation in Backcountry South Carolina, 1750-1805.* H-SC, H-Net Reviews. July, 2008.

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