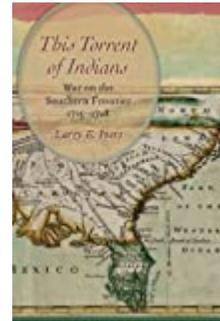




Larry E. Ivers. *This Torrent of Indians: War on the Southern Frontier, 1715-1728.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016. 292 pp. \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-61117-606-3.



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The Indian Trade War Reconsidered: Morris on Ivers

If South Carolina's Yamasee War is ever given a subtitle, it could rightly be called the Great Indian Trade War. Larry Ivers, a lawyer by training with a military background, notes in his preface that his intent was to fill a void in the history of the Yamasee War and to provide a more detailed analysis of the military operations of the war. To that end, he clearly succeeds in recreating the story of a colony at war aggravated by professional Indian traders who trafficked in Indian slaves to pay their debts. Ivers reveals an incredibly detailed account of the debacle and this detailed analysis is both a major strength and a minor weakness of the work.

The book is divided into seventeen chapters and a conclusion covering the war from its causes to the high-point of military conflict and lingering on its impact on everyday lives. Ivers uses a significant number of solid primary and secondary sources to tell the story, including the Colonial Records of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida as well as period diaries and journals. Ivers references some four pages of maps used to locate both tribes and forgotten forts. His secondary works run the gamut

from Verner Crane's 1959 classic, *The Southern Frontier* to William Ramsey's 2008 work, *The Yamasee War*.

The first three chapters set the stage for conflict by discussing the Indian agents and traders who caused the crisis by enslavement of debtor Indians, and one of its strengths is naming people who are otherwise shadowy figures in backcountry history. The Yamasee leadership clearly warned traders Samuel Warner and William Bray of a planned murder of all traders and an attack on the colony if the South Carolina government did not intervene to stop Indian enslavement and trader abuse (p. 2). The work's second chapter is a detailed analysis of South Carolina culture at the time of conflict. The material might have been better placed as a first chapter to provide necessary background information. It is a comprehensive look at the culture, climate, and population of the colony and eventually explains the Indian trade as an integral part of the economy, carried out by some two hundred traders.

Similarly, the third chapter provides a detailed back-

ground of the tribes found both within the borders of South Carolina and nearby. Ivers not only covers the tribes whose names are only remembered in the names of rivers, but locates them geographically for the reader, paying special attention to the Yamasees and Guale (pronounced Wally). Chapter 4 sets up the conflict by focusing on trader abuse of Indians, a topic most historians ignore when covering colonial history. The author does a good job of placing the traders intimately in village life as power brokers, with native wives and biracial children (p. 38). He highlights trader mistreatment of native women, ranging from rape to murder, with enslavement for a husband's debt falling in the middle. Some traders in early 1715, pressured by their own creditors, began telling Yamasee customers that a slave ship was anchored at Port Royal Island, ready to take them away. Native peoples would have no reason to doubt such an ominous threat.

Chapters 5 and 6 cover the initial murder of Indian agents and traders by Yamasees who then raided surrounding homes via canoe, killing everything English as Governor Charles Craven activated the militia. Chapter 7 examines the response of other Indians to the Yamasee attack, noting that other tribes also had killed their traders but not all of them were committed to aiding the Yamasees in war. Ivers focuses on the reaction of Muscogee Creek leader, Brims. He speculates, since there is no way to know for sure, that Brims believed the Yamasee strike to be a reckless and ill-considered act. As mentioned, Ivers provides some social history of the war in chapters 8 and 11. One story includes the origin of his title, linked to a statement by Reverend Francis Le Jau of Goose Creek, South Carolina, who wrote during the conflict that Carolina could not resist the "torrent of Indians" falling upon it (pp. 88-89). More than once, the author mentions the charitable activities and reactions of clergy during the conflict and gives further examples in chapter 11 with the mention of a Reverend Gideon Johnston opening his home to some 105 refugees displaced by the war. Although the later summer harvest of August 1715 provided bountiful crops, Carolinians could only attempt to harvest it by using armed parties because of Indian raids.

The author highlights in chapter 11 an interesting power play between Carolina officials and the Board of Trade during the war. The former besieged the Board of Trade for military aid and basic supplies while the Board of Trade encouraged the proprietors to cede the colony to King George I during the crisis. The British government, it seems, was already measuring the conflict in pounds and pence and looking for opportunity. The middle chap-

ters (12-16) analyze the slow entry of the Cherokee nation into the war as allies of South Carolina, noting that an Indian trader was the envoy sent to the Cherokees to begin such discussions. The Cherokees entered the war by inviting a Lower Creek delegation to the town of Tugaloo ostensibly to talk peace, but then executing them for the benefit of Carolina. Whatever other motivations the Cherokees may have had, they certainly wanted to replace the Yamasees as Carolina's official trader partner, an issue not given much attention by the author.

The final chapters (17-conclusion) focus on the relocation of Yamasee survivors and the Lower Creek towns away from Charles Town. Ivers notes that South Carolina was truly unprepared for the conflict, but its soldiers eventually rallied and the Yamasees did not get the help for which they had hoped from other tribes. The author rightly blames the war on the colony Indian traders for their "bigotry, cruelty and greed," while blaming the South Carolina government for failure to control these men. Ivers concludes by noting that Yamasee survivors, like seeds in the wind, scattered to the Okefenokee swamps of South Georgia as well as to the island of Cuba and to Veracruz, Mexico.

An initial reviewer quoted on the book cover claims that the Yamasee War was the most consequential war in American colonial history. It is probably more accurate to say it was the most influential Indian trade war in the South before the American Revolution. Larry Ivers does provide a highly detailed military analysis of the war that is bound to please military historians, who will enjoy reading the accurate locations of long-forgotten forts and militia movements as these are the strengths of Mr. Ivers's work. The author offers the names and positions of many elusive backcountry participants which will delight backcountry enthusiasts. Further, the work validates current research trends that explore how influential and dangerous backcountry Indian traders could be.

The book's weakness is also tied to that attention to detail. Because the author devotes some time and attention to virtually every backcountry player or event in the Yamasee War, readers can find themselves distracted from the main theme of a chapter. For example, Ivers discusses not only backcountry fortifications, but their construction materials at length. This attempt to cover all things interesting happens enough to occasionally throw the reader's focus away from the very important material being discussed.

The author does make the occasional mistake in lan-

guage, as well. While he thankfully avoids calling native soldiers âbraves,â he does speak of them as being âon the warpathâ (p. 86), implying a culture whose only focus was to make war, rather than fighting for their land and way of life. Ivers clearly demonstrates the Yamasees tried to do this with their conflict. To his credit, Ivers includes the names of many small tribes caught in this conflict, a brief description of their cultures, and a location for them. On a grammatical note, the author writes using

a heavy passive voice construction. Despite these minor problems, *This Torrent of Indians: War on the Southern Frontier 1715-1728* joins earlier important works on this conflict like William Ramseyâs *The Yamasee War*. Enthusiasts of South Carolina history, Native American history and military history will be satisfied with this detailed study. They will certainly discoversome fact or incident, previously unknown to them, that surprises them in this work.

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