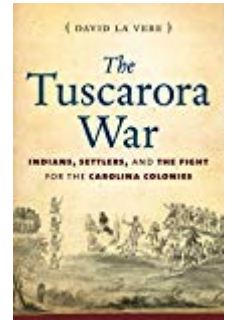


David La Vere. *The Tuscarora War: Indians, Settlers, and the Fight for the Carolina Colonies.* Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2013. 272 pp. \$30.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4696-1090-0.



Reviewed by Ethan A. Schmidt

Published on H-AmIndian (March, 2015)

Commissioned by F. Evan Nooe (University of North Carolina, Charlotte)

The Yamasee War of the early eighteenth century has become a very popular historical topic of late and has figured prominently in some excellent work on the colonial South by such scholars as Allan Galloway, William Ramsey, and Paul Kelton, to name but a few. However, this renaissance of interest in that conflict, which raged mainly in the Carolinas from 1715 to 1717, has, for the most part, treated the Tuscarora War immediately preceding it in that same region as simply a prologue or precursory chapter. David La Vere's *The Tuscarora War: Indians, Settlers, and the Fight for the Carolina Colonies* largely renders such an act impossible in the future.

As one of the few (if not the only) full-length monographs in over a century to focus solely on the Tuscarora War, this volume contains tremendous value simply for its account of the war's causes, its major events, and its repercussions. The value of La Vere's work does not end there. *The Tuscarora War* also provides valuable insights into ethnic, religious, and class tensions in early eighteenth-century North Carolina as well

as intercolonial and Native politics. Finally, La Vere achieves a very welcome balance between erudition and readability that eludes many but the most practiced writers of early American ethnohistory.

La Vere tells the story of the Tuscarora War by devoting separate chapters to the lives of seven of its most important participants. In the first full chapter, he chronicles the life of the baron Christopher de Graffenried, the cash poor Swiss nobleman who dreamt of the redemption of both his family fortune and the lives of the dissenting Swiss and German indigents he had led to North Carolina in 1710. Unfortunately, for both de Graffenried and his New Bern settlement, he was easily rooked. For despite the assurances of North Carolina surveyor general John Lawson that the land he and the colony's proprietors had sold de Graffenried was indeed free and clear of any other encumbrances, the baron soon discovered that he had seated his settlement in the midst of lands claimed by the Tuscaroras and their allies. Nevertheless, de Graffenried pressed on with the busi-

ness of creating what he viewed as nothing short of a feudal state with him as lord of the manor. Early on, it seemed as if his dream might actually come to fruition and for a time the colony thrived. However, that early success prompted both Lawson and de Graffenried to reach too far. When they embarked on a journey up the Neuse River in September of 1711 to find lands suitable for the colony's expansion, they were captured by warriors from the nearby Tuscarora town of Catchena where they would eventually be sentenced to death for their role in the dispossession of Tuscarora land. While de Graffenried would eventually be spared execution, Lawson, who had defrauded the Tuscaroras as well as their allies of land on more than one occasion, was not so fortunate. His subsequent death and the attacks of the Tuscaroras and their allies against North Carolina settlements immediately following sparked the Tuscarora War.

The second chapter explains the role played by internal Tuscarora politics in the decisions both to execute Lawson and to strike the North Carolina settlements. La Vere uses the opposing Tuscarora leaders King Hancock, an older and more accommodationist leader, and Core Tom, a younger man more in tune with the desires of Tuscarora warriors, to peer into the group's inner deliberations. In the end, a combination of abuse by traders, the effects of the Indian slave trade, disease epidemics, and the encouragement of their Seneca kinsmen from New York created a groundswell of support for action against English colonialism. In a political system based heavily on the idea of consensus, those who disagreed with the stance of the younger warriors were honor bound to throw their lot in with those clamoring for war. Therefore, even the most staunch accommodationist leaders (such as King Hancock) could not hope to hold out against the will of his people if he hoped to retain his authority.

Much like Virginia during the previous century, North Carolina was a paradise for men on the

make. These men often took advantage of disputes with Indians to further their fortunes. La Vere's third chapter profiles one such colonist in the person of William Brice. Brice, a longstanding rogue with a penchant for abusing Indians and pilfering their land, soon took over the leadership of North Carolina's defenses. Though he met with mixed success in his attempts to actually defeat the Tuscaroras, Brice's real motivation seems to have been nothing more than the procurement of Indian captives to sell into slavery, and at this objective he excelled much to the approval of many of his fellow colonists and the chagrin of leaders, such as de Graffenried, who sought a negotiated peace to the conflict.

The next two chapters detail the intercolonial rivalries and political intrigue endemic to all interactions between England's North American colonies. Utilizing South Carolina colonel John Barnwell and North Carolina Council president Thomas Pollock, La Vere demonstrates the way in which the tactics and strategy of both Carolina colonies were more often determined by the desire of their respective governments to outdo the other and by the personal whims of those they placed in command of their expeditions. The outcome of all of this was a series of failed campaigns and sieges which ended in defeat more than once for Barnwell and prompted him to sign a peace treaty with the Tuscaroras, which he then immediately broke either at the behest of such North Carolinians as Pollock who felt it akin to an admission of defeat or because he (Barnwell) gave in to his desire to take Indian captives home with him to sell as slaves. Either way, what might possibly have been the beginnings of a peaceful resolution to the conflict was swept away by the vanity, greed, and bloodlust of those in the leadership of both the North Carolina government and its military allies.

As much as anything, Virginia governor Alexander Spotswood's refusal to militarily support the North Carolina government while also

cutting the Old Dominion's trade ties with the Tuscaroras did as much as anything to end the war. Virginia's refusal to trade with them forced those Tuscaroras who were either opposed to the war or at best lukewarm supporters to eventually abandon their more militant brethren altogether. On the other hand, the withdrawal of South Carolina forces under Barnwell coupled with Spotswood's reluctance to commit Virginia troops forced North Carolina leaders, such as Pollock, to consider a negotiated settlement once again. It was at this point, however, that a new force of South Carolinians, this time under the command of Colonel James Moore, arrived in the colony and forced the remaining Tuscarora holdouts to the table. La Vere uses the personas of the Tuscarora negotiator King Tom Blount and Moore to relate this sequence of events over the last two major chapters of the volume.

In a concluding chapter, La Vere provides his assessment of the results of the conflict. He writes, "the war broke the power of the Tuscaroras and other eastern Indians and allowed the colony to expand west and south at a phenomenal rate" (p. 206). Additionally, he concludes that while the war temporarily united warring factions within the colony's government, its end brought about the downfall of the religious dissenters (mainly Quakers) who had exerted considerable power in the years prior to the war and strengthened the hold of those politicians friendly to the original proprietors of the colony. Finally, La Vere provides a corrective to the assumption that the Tuscarora War ended Indian North Carolina for good. Quite the contrary, despite the departure of many Tuscaroras for New York at the invitation of their Seneca cousins, North Carolina today still boasts well over one hundred thousand Native inhabitants. This population stands as a testament to their perseverance and resolve.

La Vere's painstaking research and excellent writing rescues a topic that often only serves as a preamble to discussions of the earlier mentioned

Yamasee War. It is on the whole a very successful work of history. However, there are a few minor issues which even the most supportive of readers cannot fail to notice. The smallest of which relates directly to La Vere's writing style. While on the whole, his prose is highly readable and exciting, there are sections in which the delivery comes off as rather formulaic and simplistic. Those sections read much more like tropes from Hollywood depictions of Indian/settler contact or fanciful English popular writings of the era rather than the analysis required of the modern-day historian. Granted, these instances are few and far between, but their appearance is jarring nonetheless. On the other hand, La Vere's choice of organizational schema represents a much greater issue. As stated above, La Vere chose to organize the book as a series of mini-biographies of the Tuscarora War's major figures. However, the story of the war cannot be contained within the confines of such a narrow organizational framework and therefore each chapter contains long stretches in which the supposed central object of analysis does not even appear. For example, Brice is mentioned in the first paragraph of the chapter that bears his name, but then promptly disappears for fifteen pages of a twenty-six-page chapter. In reality, what La Vere has done is to provide an excellent chronological account of the Tuscarora War, yet he forced that chronological account into a biographical framework. To solve this problem, he simply should have titled each chapter in some way other than with the name of one of the principal participants. The confusion caused by this decision detracts somewhat from an otherwise excellent volume. Though this issue is significant enough to mention, it is not significant enough to prevent me from wholeheartedly recommending the *The Tuscarora War* to students and scholars of colonial America, early American ethnohistory, and the Atlantic world. It is indeed a welcome addition to these historiographies.

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Citation: Ethan A. Schmidt. Review of La Vere, David. *The Tuscarora War: Indians, Settlers, and the Fight for the Carolina Colonies*. H-AmIndian, H-Net Reviews. March, 2015.

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