The American Revolution remains one of the most popular topics in American history. Throughout the past decades, scholars have tended to draw focus away from the East and give attention to other portions of Britain’s North American empire. One of these points of emphasis is on the Gulf Coast. Kathleen Duvall’s *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (2015) and Mike Bunn’s *Fourteenth Colony: The Forgotten Story of the Gulf South during America’s Revolutionary Era* (2020) are two good examples. Although Bunn defines the “fourteenth colony” as British West Florida, George Kotlik, in *East Florida in the Revolutionary Era, 1763-1785*, uses the term to describe the colony of British East Florida and draws upon existing scholarship to offer a synthesis of that colony’s experiences during the Revolutionary War.

With its capital in St. Augustine, East Florida was ceded to the British in the aftermath of the Seven Years’ War. This provided the British a strategic position that not only gave them continuous possession of the entire Atlantic coast of the North American continent down to the Florida Keys, but also served as a central location from which to protect and supply their possessions in the West Indies. East Florida remained loyal during the American Revolution and served as a refuge for loyalists escaping harassment from American patriots. For the most part, East Florida has remained an understudied theater of the American Revolution.

Kotlik observes that East Florida was “a hotbed of Revolutionary War activity” (p. 4). Although this is perhaps an overstatement, there were nonetheless significant military actions taken in East Florida during the war. After a chapter placing East Florida in its Revolutionary context, Kotlik spend the next three chapters systematically detailing the maneuverings, skirmishes, and raids that took place along the Florida-Georgia frontier and in the waters surrounding those colonies during the American Revolutionary War. Kotlik offers little analysis of why East Florida remained loyal but rather shows the actions taken by the loyalists residing in the colony, including the governor,
Patrick Tonyan, and the British general Augustine Prevost. In his final estimation, Kotlik concludes that East Florida was an important part of the American Revolution for three reasons: first, it continued to supply Britain's West Indian colonies after the outbreak of war; second, it served as a refuge for loyalists escaping retribution in the thirteen rebelling colonies; and third, it threatened the security of the southern colonies, drawing patriot resources away from the main theaters of war. Although these findings fail to establish East Florida central to the American Revolution, they nonetheless draw attention to this understudied area and its contributions to the conflict.

Throughout the book, Kotlik's writing is sometimes choppy, and the chronology is often inconsistent. Though the synopsis on the back cover claims that it is “the first comprehensive and detailed history of British East Florida,” Kotlik draws most of his information from just such comprehensive studies, including Roger Smith’s *Fourteenth Colony: The American Revolution’s Best Kept Secret* (2011), Wilbur Henry Seibert’s *Loyalists in East Florida, 1774-1785* (1929), Burton Barr’s *East Florida in the American Revolution* (1949), and others.[2] And here lies the main problem with this book: it offers nothing new in primary research. Indeed, apart from a few letters, this monograph employs very few primary documents. Instead, it draws together older scholarship to portray the tale of military expeditions in East Florida during the American Revolution in an updated narrative.

However, Kotlik compiles an extensive number of secondary sources to craft his narrative. As stated in the introduction, his goal is to provide an “accessible and detailed narrative of East Florida during the American Revolution” (p. 8). In this aspect, he undoubtedly succeeds. *East Florida in the Revolutionary Era* offers a concise account that will appeal to Floridians interested in their local history or budding historians interested in the far southern reaches of the American Revolution. Although it fails to place East Florida as a key theater during the Revolutionary Era, it nonetheless highlights the important events of Floridian history during the American Revolution.
If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at https://networks.h-net.org/h-war


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