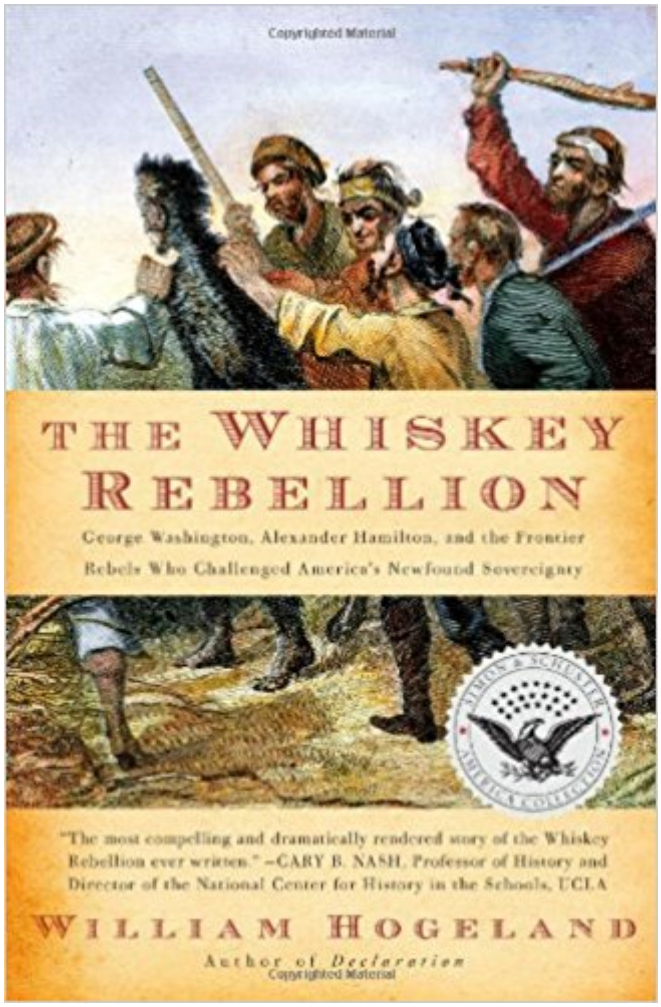
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The Whiskey Rebellion: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, And The Frontier Rebels Who Challenged America's Newfound Sovereignty (Simon & Schuster America Collection)




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Synopsis

A gripping and sensational tale of violence, alcohol, and taxes, The Whiskey Rebellion uncovers the radical eighteenth-century peopleÃ¢â ¬â„¢s movement, long ignored by historians, that contributed decisively to the establishment of federal authority. In 1791, on the frontier of western Pennsylvania, local gangs of insurgents with blackened faces began to attack federal officials, beating and torturing the tax collectors who attempted to collect the first federal tax ever laid on an American productÃ¢â ¬â •whiskey. To the hard-bitten people of the depressed and violent West, the whiskey tax paralyzed their rural economies, putting money in the coffers of already wealthy creditors and industrialists. To Alexander Hamilton, the tax was the key to industrial growth. To President Washington, it was the catalyst for the first-ever deployment of a federal army, a military action that would suppress an insurgency against the American government. With an unsparing look at both Hamilton and Washington, journalist and historian William Hogeland offers a provocative, in-depth analysis of this forgotten revolution and suppression. Focusing on the battle between government and the early-American evangelical movement that advocated western secession, The Whiskey Rebellion is an intense and insightful examination of the roots of federal power and the most fundamental conflicts that ignitedÃ¢â ¬â •and continue to smolderÃ¢â ¬â •in the United States.

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Customer Reviews

Soon after Americans ousted inequitable British taxation, Secretary of Finance Alexander Hamilton,

hatched a plan to put the new nation on steady financial footing by imposing the first American excise tax, on whiskey makers. The tax favored large distillers over small farmers with stills in the mountains of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia, and the farmers fomented their own new revolutionÃ¢â ¬â •a challenge to the sovereignty of the new government and the power of the wealthy eastern seaboard. In a fast-paced, blow-by-blow account of this "primal national drama," journalist Hogeland energetically chronicles the skirmishes that made the Whiskey Rebellion from 1791 to 1795 a symbol of the conflict between republican ideals and capitalist values. The rebels engaged in civil disobedience, violence against the tax collectors and threatened to secede from the new republic. Eventually Washington led federal troops to quell the rebellion, arresting leaders such as Herman Husband, a hollow-eyed evangelist who believed that the rebellion would usher in the New Jerusalem. Hogeland's judicious, spirited study offers a lucid window into a mostly forgotten episode in American history and a perceptive parable about the pursuit of political plans no matter what the cost to the nation's unity. (Apr.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

Most general U.S. history texts gloss over the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 as a minor, spasmodic outburst of violence by disgruntled farmers in western Pennsylvania. Not so, says Hogeland. In this uneven but provocative and interesting chronicle, he weaves in themes of class conflict, easterner versus westerner, and local control versus the newly strengthened federal government. This is not a scholarly tome. Hogeland is not a professional historian, and he takes unwarranted liberties by imagining the mental states of characters, including George Washington and Alexander Hamilton. He views the rebellion as the culmination of a "people's movement" in which debtors struggled against creditors and poor farmers struggled against a merchant elite and their allies--land speculators. Of course, this is the economic determinism of Charles Beard in the form of a nonfiction novel. Although Hogeland's analysis is short on verifiable data, he knows how to tell an exciting story, and some of his assertions are worthy of consideration by serious historians. Brad HooperCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

The Whiskey Rebellion is a much overlooked episode in American history - sad since it is so important. William Hogeland does a wonderful job of telling the story and bringing to life all of the key players in this real life drama. But for my purposes the entire episode turns on Chapter 2 in which Hogeland puts the whiskey tax, against which the frontiersmen of the west rebelled, in the

context of the Federalist scheme to establish a hierarchical society in the mold of Great Britain.The Federalist position, embodied in the person of Alexander Hamilton, was one that believed in an elite ruling class, and the extent to which one did not yet exist in the young United States he was intent on creating one. The mechanisms by which Hamilton would create and empower this ruling class were largely financial, and so Robert Morris was recruited to establish a central bank and to help create and expand a wealthy class out of speculators in war debt. Every move the federalists made was one that benefited the rich at the expense of the poor. And as Hamilton moved to establish a strong federal government, the basis of it was to be the power of taxation. The authority to tax, as well as to print or "coin" money, was to move from the states to the central government. And federal taxation needed to become direct taxation levied by means of federal marshals instead of going through potentially uncooperative state governments.The poor farmer bore the brunt of the American Revolution. The rank and file of the revolutionary army was small farmers whose farms suffered for their absences. If you were unlucky enough to have a farm in one of the counties that surrounded Philadelphia at the time of the Valley Forge encampment, then your harvest and anything else, tied down or not, was likely to be commandeered by Washington's army. If you received chits in exchange - IOUs to be paid after the war - these pieces of paper quickly devalued to the point of worthlessness. Speculators, often with inside information, bought them up for next to nothing. It was Hamilton's idea for the federal government to buy these and other war debt instruments back at face value in order to establish creditworthiness of the federal government. But part of the plan, too, was to establish a wealthy elite that could better manage the country's affairs than a true democracy of the people. So rather than default on the debt, made up of various bonds, chits, and continental currencies, paper that had largely gone worthless anyhow, Hamilton wanted to establish by legislative fiat that the emperor had clothes - that these scraps of paper now in the hands of speculators were worthy of the full faith and credit of the United States. But to honor this debt to the creditors, taxes must be imposed upon those same farmers and soldiers whose backs the war was won on.So the excise tax on whiskey was essential to the Federalist plan to finance the government - financing that would have gone largely unnecessary had the decision been made to just let the paper debt continue on its course to valuelessness. Hogeland explains just how key whiskey was to the primitive economy that existed on the frontier - key to the point that it was used as local currency. And the fact that the way the law was written the tax burden on the small distilleries was heavier than on the larger ones. Once again, Hamilton demonstrated that his idea was to concentrate wealth into the hands of the few.A large army was gathered to march westward with Washington at the lead, and the manner in which this campaign was conducted was most

telling. The plan from the beginning to provision this army was to live off the land, so as the army marched westward it requisitioned provisions from the farms unlucky enough to be on the way. The stripping bare of farms that occurred during the 1776 rebellion was repeated during the putting down of this one. To an appalling extent the reader sees how the ends justified most horrible means. The callous attitudes towards those at the bottom rung of the social ladder bear tribute to the sense of rank and privilege the likes of Hamilton and Washington felt. The fathers of our country were anything but champions of the people.

Anyone interested in the founding of the United States should find this book engrossing. Thoroughly researched, well written and with deep insight into relatable people and the early years of the Republic, this work takes what history books typically dismiss as a minor uprising and explains how it might instead easily have become the undoing of the new United States and George Washington himself. Surprising elements include a self-appointed militia burning down the plantation of western Pennsylvania’s most prominent slaveholder, how deeply the personal financial interests of George Washington himself were caught up in the Pittsburgh area and affected by the rebellion, and how that region and parts of Virginia agreed to form their own nation and created their own large army.The non-fiction narrative flows smoothly and builds characters in a way that keeps you wanting to know what happens next. Fast and fascinating read.

This is a very good book for someone who has heard of the Whiskey Rebellion, but never really learned about it. The book starts off discussing the financial condition of the nation after the American Revolution (broke), then goes on to discuss Hamilton’s plans to fund the nation and pay off war bonds by developing tax plan that hurts the poor, which in this case happened to hurt most those living in western PA. According to this book, anyway, the Whiskey Rebellion was not about taxes, but about Hamilton specifically taxing the poor to pay the rich. Hamilton helped rich bankers buy up what at the time were worthless war bonds for pennies on the dollar, and then Hamilton got the US gov’t to pay those bonds at full value by taxing the poor.Although I had expected to read a book entirely about Washington leading troops into Pittsburgh, the book only devotes a few pages at the very end to Washington and the troops. The first 95% of the book is devoted to the events, over several years, leading up to Washington and the troops; but I must say this makes more sense and actually is more interesting to read.Overall a very good book; fairly quick to read, no slow or boring chapters, and no over use of statistics like a lot of history authors do. Highly recommended!

Excellent**

husband orderd it & liked it

Very well written book. Great look into the history of the Western Pennsylvania region.

Historically significant issue had new dimension.

Great job. Thank you

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