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## Review of *Founders: The People Who Brought You a Nation* by Ray Raphael

Carl Robert Keyes  
Assumption College, ckeyes@assumption.edu

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protected the many species that were threatened or extinguished. This principle was demonstrated by Canadian fur trappers during the same time frame. The Canadians would trap a stream for a season and then move on to a different stream for two years before coming back. This ensured a constant renewal of animal population and consequently a never-ending source of revenue.

It now appears that humanity is on the brink of repeating our fur trade disasters with ocean overfishing. The earlier decimation of whales, the recent collapse of our cod fisheries, and the impending Bluefin tuna crisis seem to indicate that we are forever condemned to repeat the mistakes of history. Farmed shrimp and salmon will play the same role that farmed mink play in the modern fur industry due to the fact that they will have almost disappeared from the wild.

*Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America* is a fascinating, informative and well written history. It should be read by anyone interested in exploration, colonialism, the history of New England, the expansion of the West, capitalism, environmentalism or American History in general. The reader is likely to learn a lot about a topic one may have thought was familiar. And one will be entertained while being informed, which doesn't get much better for the general reader.

*Stephen Donnelly is a consultant for the insurance industry and a Westfield State University alumnus.*

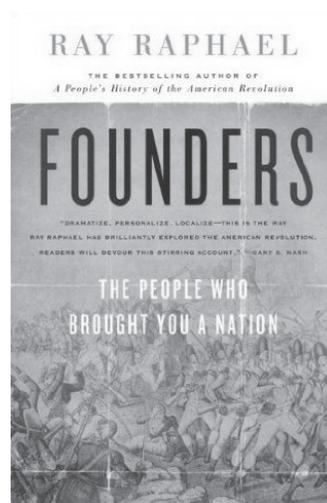
**Ray Raphael. *Founders: The People Who Brought You a Nation*. New York: New Press, 2009. 594 pages. \$29.95 (hardcover). \$21.95 (paperback).**

Ray Raphael presents a vision of the American Revolution that is both accessible to the general public and satisfying to scholars. *Founders* is not the "Story of the American Revolution" but rather stories of the Revolution as seen through the eyes of many of its participants. Raphael challenges traditional notions that limit the pantheon of founders to a handful of planters and merchants who served in the Continental Congress, commanded the army or local militia, or who attended the Constitutional Convention. Instead, he incorporates the perspectives of others whose actions and attitudes contributed to both a political and social revolution.

In so doing, Raphael structures a narrative that opens in the Ohio country in 1754, detailing encounters between English militia, led by a young George Washington, and French soldiers and their Native American allies. The diplomacy and fighting on the American frontier led to the French and Indian War, a conflict that Raphael considers imperative in understanding the chain of events causing the Revolution and eventually leading to ratification of the Constitution and Washington's election as the first president of the United States. Although Washington plays an important part in this presentation of the Revolution, his story is just one among many.

*Founders* traces the experiences of six other patriots who have not achieved the same prominence in popular memory: Joseph Plumb Martin, a Connecticut soldier in the Continental Army; Mercy Otis Warren, an author and historian from Massachusetts; Timothy Bigelow, a blacksmith from Worcester, Massachusetts; Robert Morris, a Philadelphia merchant with immense influence in the Continental Congress; Henry Laurens, a slaveholder and reluctant politician from Charleston, South Carolina; and Thomas Young, a doctor from rural New York. Raphael effortlessly moves from one of these founders to another, giving readers a more complete view of the events and ideas of the Revolutionary era.

An assortment of images and extended quotations from primary sources help readers to experience the Revolution as it unfolded around Raphael's selected founders and other residents of British North America. The book features forty-four images, including contemporary political cartoons that trenchantly critique British imperial abuses, broadsides that rally support for the patriot cause, and portraits that reflect each subject's sense of his or her place in the social and political order of the emerging nation. Some of these items, including a musket and a powder horn carved with a scene of provincial soldiers facing off against British regulars in front of a liberty tree, testify to the experiences of common soldiers and other members of the populace that were considered the "lower sort." The inclusion of such items nicely balances the perspectives presented in portraits commissioned by the elite.



In addition, Raphael does not simply distill letters, pamphlets, newspaper items, and other texts down to key passages accompanied by an analytical description of the original source. Instead, he frequently inserts extensive quotations that allow readers to observe eighteenth-century minds at work, experiencing the emotions and the language of the period. Like the many images, this may be a particularly fulfilling aspect of the book for general audiences who likely do not have the same experience working with primary documents that many scholars consider a regular part of their professional responsibilities. The copious quotations that accompany Raphael's analysis and smooth narrative also present an opportunity for high school and college instructors to assign selected chapters in their courses, though the length of the book may make it impractical to incorporate all twenty chapters into a syllabus.

Throughout the volume, Raphael uses these sources to tell a broad story of America, not a single region. His seven founders come from the lower South (Laurens), the Chesapeake (Washington), and the middle Atlantic (Morris and Young). All the same, the story often concentrates on New England, both because so many of the events that led to the Revolution were centered around Boston and its hinterland and because Raphael's other three founders (Bigelow, Martin, and Warren) were children of New England (and Young migrated to the area, accomplishing the bulk of his political activities throughout the several colonies and states in the region). Readers interested in New England history will be satisfied with the way that Raphael often focuses on the region while simultaneously integrating it into a more expansive story of the Revolution by presenting connections to other founders and their activities throughout the thirteen colonies that became states.

Many readers, especially armchair historians, may find *Founders* especially illuminating since Raphael departs from traditional narratives of the Revolution that privilege the political and military accomplishments of relatively few men. But some scholars may still find his selection of narrators frustrating. Mercy Otis Warren, an elite woman married to a prosperous merchant and prominent politician, represents the only female voice among Raphael's seven founders. None of them are slaves, free Blacks, or Native Americans. This can certainly be explained by the lack of extant documents that would allow historians to reconstruct their lives, especially letters, diaries, and other manuscript material that would reveal their thoughts as well as their actions. Perhaps as a means of making his work accessible to the general public, Raphael chose to focus on individuals who left behind significant documentary evidence that allowed him to fully develop their stories in their own words.

This is not to say that Raphael does not deal with people who were not members of the elite. He repeatedly turns the rhetoric of the Revolution on its head to investigate how slaves thought about the events taking place around them. Though he may not have sources written in their own words, Raphael effectively analyzes the defection of slaves, including several owned by Washington, to British lines when offered their freedom by Virginia's royal governor. Indeed, two of Raphael's founders, Laurens and Washington, were Southern slaveholders whose human property provided fertile ground for examining the promises and the limits of calls for freedom from enslavement during the Revolutionary era. Raphael also provides glimpses of the Revolution from the perspective of Native Americans, though these are fleeting and less frequent than his attention to Black experiences. Unfortunately, he does not do quite as well meshing the rich historiography of women's political activism during the period into his narratives.

The strongest element of the book, however, is Raphael's commitment to exploring a revolution within the Revolution, an ongoing contest between elite patriots and their more common counterparts over popular sovereignty, power, and authority. Three of Raphael's founders—Martin the soldier, Bigelow the blacksmith, and Young the country doctor—represent the "lower" sort, people who advocated and fought for their own say about their relationships to their government and to their fellow citizens, whether affluent, poor, or middling. The Revolution, Raphael stresses, was not an unambiguous contest between patriots and the British Empire. Instead, those who favored the American cause often strived toward very different goals. Elite men like Washington, Morris, and Laurens usually assumed that they were best suited to lead the new nation, often distrusting "the people" and equating them to a mob. Founders like Martin, Bigelow, and Young, on the other hand, frequently believed that their needs and concerns had been overlooked by the same self-interested patriot leaders who did not recognize the inconsistency in demanding their own freedom while continuing to own slaves. In telling their stories, Raphael demonstrates that it is not enough to think about a single American Revolution. Instead, Americans participated in many revolutions in the second half of the eighteenth century.

*Carl Robert Keyes is an assistant professor and coordinator of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships in the history department at Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts.*