

[Free] Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North-America, in the years 1759 and 1760

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Andrew Burnaby

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Andrew Burnaby : Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North-America, in the years 1759 and 1760 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North-America, in the years 1759 and 1760:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Look at Early AmericaBy J. S. KaminskiIf you ever wondered what America was like "in the beginning" - this is the book for you. In fact, it was written before the "official" beginning, as this book predates the Declaration of Independence by a good 15 years! In it you will find some striking differences, but also some remarkable similarities, to today's America.The author, Andrew Burnaby, was an English Anglican minister but also something of a world traveler, and the purpose of his trip was not at all a religious one. In fact, he never states the purpose of his visit, but instead discusses the reason for the book's publication. Originally written as a private memoir for friends but then published in London in 1775, the book was produced in "consideration of the present critical situation of affairs" - namely, the coming war for American Independence. Burnaby states that there is a lot of interest in England about the American colonies and hoped his memoirs would help to educate the English about their brethren overseas. That is the setting for the reader.The book itself begins with the author embarking on his sea journey, which takes him to Virginia. He spends close to the next two years in various American colonies, starting in Virginia and working all the way up to New Hampshire. During his travels, he witnesses or comments on many things with which modern Americans would be familiar: he notes a tribe of native Americans in Va. suffers from "intemperance and disease," two of the now well-documented reasons

for the decline of native Americans in this country (war being the other); also that many Virginians still partake in the ancient custom of eating meat for breakfast(!); and he labels the colony of New Jersey "the garden of North America," a sentiment reflected in that state's motto - "the garden state." Also interspersed throughout his travels, he takes note of several buildings or landmarks that still stand today: the troop barracks in Trenton, NJ; "in Princetown (Princeton, NJ), there is a handsome school and college;" Trinity Church in Newark, NJ; Columbia University was under construction during his visit to NY but Burnaby wrote that it "will be exceedingly handsome;" he mentions "Faneuils-Hall" in Boston; and several others. It was interesting to read the author mention these places when you realize that one can go and visit those same places today, nearly 250 years later. Not all has stayed the same however. The author takes note of several practices, cultural or culinary, that seemed to have fallen out of favor over time: "turtle-feasts" that were common in NY; wild pigeons were a staple of the diet of Rhode Islanders; whipping as punishment for breaking a sabbath law in Massachusetts; and a situation where the author decided not to venture into the Virginia countryside because "the Cherokees had been scalping lately." Clearly, some things have changed over the years! Burnaby closes his book with some final observations, some of which proved to be incredibly accurate. Among them are: he discusses the possibility of a war between England and her colonies, but claims that England would maintain a commanding position so long as she remains master of the sea. "The moment England loses the empire of the seas, she will be deprived of the sovereignty of America." (Truer words were never spoken, as the final blow in the Revolutionary War came when a French fleet was able to trap the British army at Yorktown, Virginia, while American and French land forces surrounded them on the ground.) He notes the condition of slaves in the colonies is "truly pitiable," but that some of the colonies are so determined to keep the institution of slavery alive that, "were they left to themselves, there would soon be a civil war." This is incredible foresight by Burnaby, especially when you consider that these words were written no later than 1775, even before the Revolution was fought. Five stars. Excellent, in-depth portrait of early America. For those looking to understand 18th century American life, this is a great place to start.

This is the 4th printing (1976) - good condition (front cover was bent in the past); there is writing in the margins because this was a textbook.