



Revolutionary Generation: Harvard Men and the Consequences of Independence

Conrad Edick Wright

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What was life like for the young men who came of age in late eighteenth-century New England? How did the American Revolution and its aftermath shape their outlook and experiences? This book offers a collective biography of the 204 members of the Harvard College classes of 1771 through 1774, men whose lives intersected with the War for Independence and the other formative events of the founding years of the American Republic. The names of a few of these men are still familiar, including painter John Trumbull and Congressman Fisher Ames, but this study's principal importance lies in these schoolmates' shared experiences?experiences that were also common to a much wider group of youths who reached adulthood in the 1770s.

Conrad Edick Wright draws on extensive research on the classes that graduated from Harvard immediately before the start of the war to follow their members as they passed through life's common and predictable events from birth and childhood through youth to maturity, careers, marriage, the increasing civic and family responsibilities of midlife, old age, and death. He is also sensitive to his subjects' thoughts and feelings. Unusually articulate and frequently reflective, the men of the Harvard College classes of 1771 through 1774 often revealed their ambitions and concerns through their letters and diaries.

Revolutionary Generation provides the most sustained application of life course and life cycle analysis to be found in any study of late-eighteenth- or early-nineteenth-century America. At the same time, it shows on a personal level through the lives of its subjects many of the most important consequences of the War for Independence.

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