

BOOK REVIEWS

Eric G. Grundset, *Rhode Island in the American Revolution: A Source Guide for Genealogists* (Washington, D.C.: National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, 2014, xvi + 257 pp., illustrations, map, index. Hardcover, \$25 postpaid). Available from the DAR Store (888-673-2732) or at www.dar.org/darstore.

From the title of this book, *Rhode Island in the American Revolution...*, you might imagine that it would appeal only to the descendant of a Revolutionary War soldier, and you would be very wrong. This book, one in a series on individual states, is a toolbox for the historian or genealogist studying the period. The first chapter "Developing a Research Strategy for Rhode Island" provides a structure for what follows. Each of the subsequent chapters offers an immense bibliography of sources, both primary and second, on a different topic, including general histories, Rhode Island's government, land and military records, spies, prisoners of war, military papers, veterans, individual towns, ethnic and professional groups, and prominent individuals, maps, and more. While the Revolution is at the center, much material extends to the decades before and after. There's no plot, no story, no evaluation of the merits of different published works, just lists and lists of sources. Just? The immense benefits are immediately obvious: dedicated researchers and authors will have references to thousands of books, articles, and manuscripts at their fingertips without searching. Reinvention of the wheel should drop precipitously. Armed with these references, editors of journals can check that authors of future submissions on Revolutionary War era have properly studied previous scholarship. Editors can rejoice for another reason. The Rhode Island book includes lists of tempting manuscripts at Newport Historical Society and Rhode Island Historical Society that have never been published. If this journal were twice its size, we could not include transcriptions of all these valuable documents in the next decade.

The NSDAR's commitment to such scholarly publications is greatly to be applauded by historians and genealogists alike. This remarkably inexpensive book should be on the shelves of every library in Rhode Island and on those of every passionate student of the period.

Deborah M. Child, *Soldier Engraver Forger, Richard Brunton's Life on the Fringe in America's New Republic*. Boston, Mass.: NEHGS, 2015. Softcover, xi + 125 pages. Illustrations, maps, index. Available at New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston and americanancestors.org. \$19.95.

As with the previous book, the title of this one, entertaining as it is, only hints at the breadth of the story inside. Deborah Child's latest book focuses on the

biography of a most unlikely participant in the Revolutionary War, Englishman Richard Brunton, who served as a grenadier with the British before deserting in 1779. He took up his peacetime occupation of engraver in Boston and Providence before sliding into a disastrous career as a counterfeiter and forger. He was not long in Rhode Island, spending many years—voluntarily or otherwise—in Massachusetts and Connecticut. The ease with which he slipped from state to state reminds us all to broaden our search for disappearing ancestors. Aside from his forays into the dark side of engraving, Brunton has an unexpected connection with many families' most treasured legacies from the past, as he designed and produced the very first pre-printed family registers in America. The book traces his experiences in the Revolution and its aftermath in a way that effortlessly incorporates a great deal of history from a fresh and personal point of view. Deborah Child, an art historian, has hunted down every object and image connected with Brunton, carefully evaluating authenticity. The lavish color illustrations make the story uniquely easy to visualize and a pleasure to read.

—*Cherry Fletcher Bamberg*