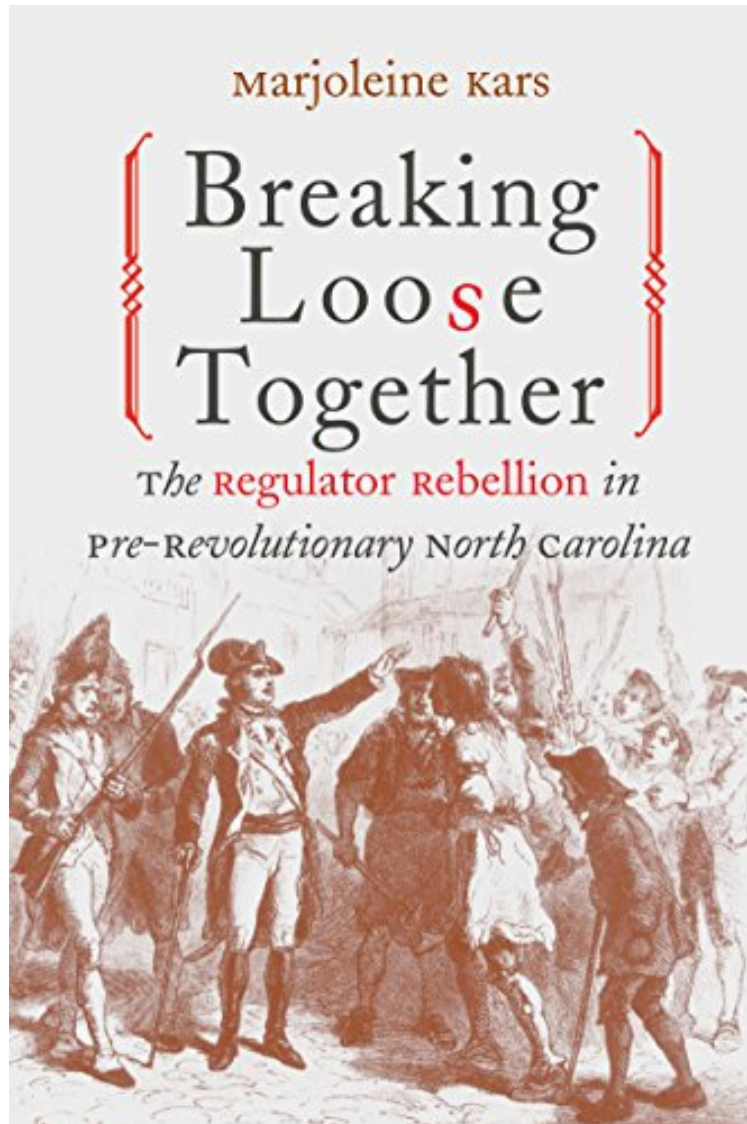


Breaking Loose Together: The Regulator Rebellion in Pre-Revolutionary North Carolina

Marjoleine Kars

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Ten years before the start of the American Revolution, backcountry settlers in the North Carolina Piedmont launched their own defiant bid for economic independence and political liberty. The Regulator Rebellion of 1766-71 pitted thousands of farmers, many of them religious radicals inspired by the Great Awakening, against political and economic elites who opposed the Regulators' proposed reforms. The conflict culminated on May 16, 1771, when a colonial militia defeated more than 2,000 armed farmers in a pitched battle near Hillsborough. At least 6,000 Regulators and sympathizers were forced to swear their allegiance to the government as the victorious troops undertook a punitive march through Regulator settlements. Seven farmers were hanged. Using sources that include diaries, church minutes, legal papers, and the richly detailed accounts of the Regulators themselves, Marjoleine Kars delves deeply into the world and ideology of free rural colonists. She examines the rebellion's economic, religious, and political roots and explores its legacy in North Carolina and beyond. The compelling story of the Regulator Rebellion reveals just how sharply elite and popular notions of independence differed on the eve of the Revolution.

The most thorough analysis of the Regulators in North Carolina, particularly in the evolving Piedmont society preceding their rebellion.--North Carolina Historical [Kars] shows how ordinary people struggled to establish dignity within complex class structures not of their own making. In a crisp, narrative style, Kars captures the local voices of resistance without losing sight of the larger social and economic forces that transformed personal frustration into organized violence. . . . A welcome contribution not only to the history of agrarian protest but also to the currently burgeoning field of Atlantic history.--Journal of American History This first complete narrative treatment of the Regulator rebellion . . . makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the Great Awakening and the nature of backcountry settlement in the Upper South.--Georgia Historical Quarterly A masterful work, truly required reading for a proper understanding of early North Carolina history. . . . A well-organized, delightfully written volume grounded in extensive research that unearths new material as well as judiciously reinterprets hitherto available information.--William and Mary Quarterly Kars has put the North Carolina Regulation at the forefront of American frontier history and underlined the crucial importance of the backcountry in understanding the role of ordinary people in the American past.--Journal of Interdisciplinary History This is social history of the highest order. . . . Kars's explanation of the uprising should cause a reevaluation of the origins of the American Revolution. This important book should command the attention of all students of the origins of the Revolution.--Historian Marjoleine Kars offers an engaging and richly detailed exploration of the North Carolina Regulators, illuminating the power of their folk Christianity. With insight and empathy, she recovers the Regulators' importance in the era of the American Revolution and to the creation of American populism.--Alan Taylor, University of California, Davis About the Author Marjoleine Kars is associate professor of history at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.