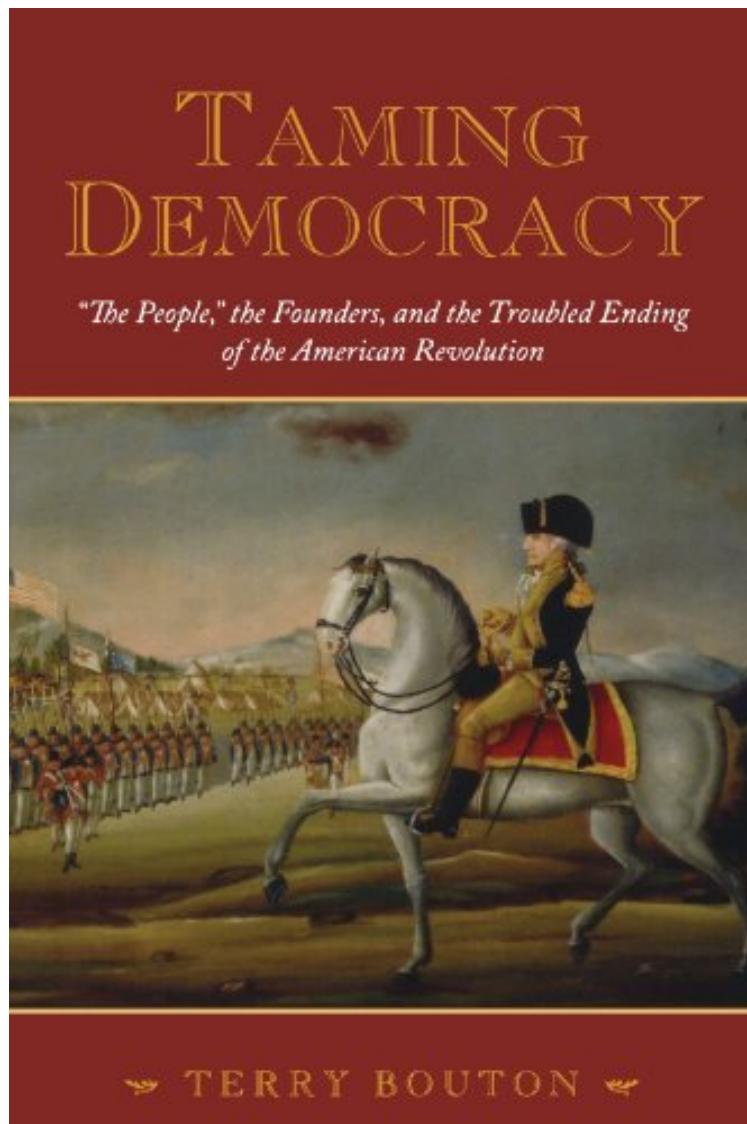


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# Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution

*Terry Bouton*

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**Terry Bouton : Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. ... is staggeringly insightful and counts as one of the best and freshest books I've ever read on American history ...By Thomas J. BusseThis book is staggeringly insightful and counts as one of the best and freshest books I've ever read on American history (and I've read many). Profound in its revision of the best sort, Bouton's work exemplifies how original primary scholarship can lead to reconsideration of a society's most sacred cows. In light of recent debates about income inequality, voter apathy, and the motivations of an entrenched elite, Bouton's work deepens a wider pessimism on the American Experience. Moreover, it is a joy to read. Bouton's ninth chapter on the closure of roads should be held up as a model of narrative history. Among the many academic books published every year, this should emerge as required reading for anyone concerned for the future of our country.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Well researched and very interesting readBy Jerseyite67And excellent history developed from the primary legal courthouse documents from the period.I would recommend it to anyone who hopes to understand the whiskey rebellion.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerGreat stuff

Americans are fond of reflecting upon the Founding Fathers, the noble group of men who came together to force out the tyranny of the British and bring democracy to the land. Unfortunately, as Terry Bouton shows in this highly provocative first book, the Revolutionary elite often seemed as determined to squash democracy after the war as they were to support it before. Centering on Pennsylvania, the symbolic and logistical center of the Revolution, Bouton shows how this radical shift in ideology spelled tragedy for hundreds of common people. Leading up to the Revolution, Pennsylvanians were united in their opinion that "the people" (i.e. white men) should be given access to the political system, and that some degree of wealth equality (i.e. among white men) was required to ensure that political freedom prevailed. As the war ended, Pennsylvania's elites began brushing aside these ideas, using their political power to pass laws to enrich their own estates and hinder political organization by their opponents. By the 1780s, they had reenacted many of the same laws that they had gone to war to abolish, returning Pennsylvania to a state of economic depression and political hegemony. This unhappy situation led directly to the Whiskey and Fries rebellions, popular uprisings both put down by federal armies. Bouton's work reveals a unique perspective, showing intimately how the war and the events that followed affected poor farmers and working people. Bouton introduces us to unsung heroes from this time--farmers, weavers, and tailors who put their lives on hold to fight to save democracy from the forces of "united avarice." We also get a starkly new look at some familiar characters from the Revolution, including Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington, who Bouton strives to make readers see as real, flawed people, blinded by their own sense of entitlement. *Taming Democracy* represents a turning point in how we view the outcomes of the Revolutionary War and the motivations of the powerful men who led it. Its eye-opening revelations and insights make it an essential read for all readers with a passion for uncovering the true history of America.

From Publishers WeeklyThis is a rare book scholarly yet written with verve, readable for pleasure as well as for knowledge. It reasserts what historians have long argued: that the American gentry during the period from 1776 to roughly 1800 succeeded at stunting the meaning and practice of democracy for ordinary white men. Bouton's familiar arguments about thwarted popular ideals are drawn only from Pennsylvania. That's because the Keystone State, having gone through the most democratic revolution in 1776 and written the most democratic constitution, had turned by about 1790 and, under its second constitution, fell back under the control of the elite. Yet even if distinctive, Pennsylvania was decently representative of much of the early nation. Up to a point, therefore, Bouton's argument is convincing. What's more, he relates this disappointing history partly through the stories of individuals, like the Black Boys and Jimmy Smith, who'll be unknown even to most scholars. But like so many historians, he applauds the common people acting their democratic part while implicitly condemning the gentry for acting like gentry. This inconsistency mars an otherwise fine book. (July) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "The overall story is convincing, not least because Bouton strikes an admirable balance between quantitative and qualitative evidence...Bouton writes with quiet passion, laying out evidence in careful sequence, creating sympathy for ordinary people without romanticizing them...*Taming Democracy* brings social conflict and economic analysis back to the center of Revolutionary historiography."--J.M. Opal, *Interdisciplinary History*"Bouton has written an important and good book. He skillfully combines discussions of social history, finance, and political economy to show just how catastrophic the 1780s were for most Americans. *Taming Democracy* is, to date, the best introduction to the worldview of small property holders during the postrevolutionary period."--Andrew Shankman, *William and Mary Quarterly*"Bouton clarifies murky economic concepts in a lively fashion and, above all, projects the reader's mind into the lives of ordinary citizens who felt betrayed and frustrated by leaders they themselves had set up and followed faithfully through the dark years of the Revolution."--T.S. Martin, *CHOICE*"This is a rare book--scholarly yet written with verve, readable for pleasure as well as for knowledge."--Publishers Weekly"With keen insight and deep research, Terry Bouton recovers a lost world: the agrarian democracy of revolutionary America. His vivid prose illuminates the struggle of common people to fulfill the promise of the

American Revolution. By retelling their story so fully and fairly, Bouton renews their cause in our present day."--Alan Taylor, author of *The Divided Ground*"In thoughtful, readable prose Terry Bouton shows us what the American Revolution meant for one group who counted: the small-scale farmers of Pennsylvania. They struggled; they thought; they fought. Ultimately they lost what they believed what they had won, a world that would be good for them and their families. The Revolution belonged to Bouton's kind of people, ordinary Americans living through an extraordinary time, as much as it did to the Founding Fathers."--Edward Countryman, author of *The American Revolution*"For many ordinary Americans living in Pennsylvania, the Revolution did not turn out as they had hoped. Committed to the creation of a more egalitarian society, they resisted British rule, only to discover that the rich and well-born had no interest in supporting serious democratic reform. In this compelling study, Bouton brings passion and insight to the bittersweet story of the betrayal of a truly revolutionary society."--T.H. Breen, Director, Center for Historical Studies, Northwestern University"The 'whiskey rebellion' clearly has been misnamed: Bouton argues convincingly that it grew out of two decades of struggles by Pennsylvania's farmers with 'moneyed men' for the fruits of the Revolution. He tells their story in gripping scenes of the sheriff's wagon carting off the belongings of debtors and of farmers defiantly closing down roads. This is a book about the Revolution that breaks new ground."--Alfred Young, author of *Liberty Tree: Ordinary People and the American Revolution*"Prominent citizens like George Washington and Alexander Hamilton considered the American Revolution an unruly steed, and they devoted considerable energy to reining it in. Terry Bouton's superbly-written account of how they achieved that feat leaves us wishing they had failed. The focus of Bouton's startlingly-original book is nothing less than the struggle for the soul of America."--Woody Holton, University of Richmond"Taming Democracy will have a major impact on early American historians and further the re-evaluation of the entire Revolutionary period. Bouton's book will revitalize the economic interpretation of the era."--Allan Kulikoff, University of Georgia

About the Author Terry Bouton is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.