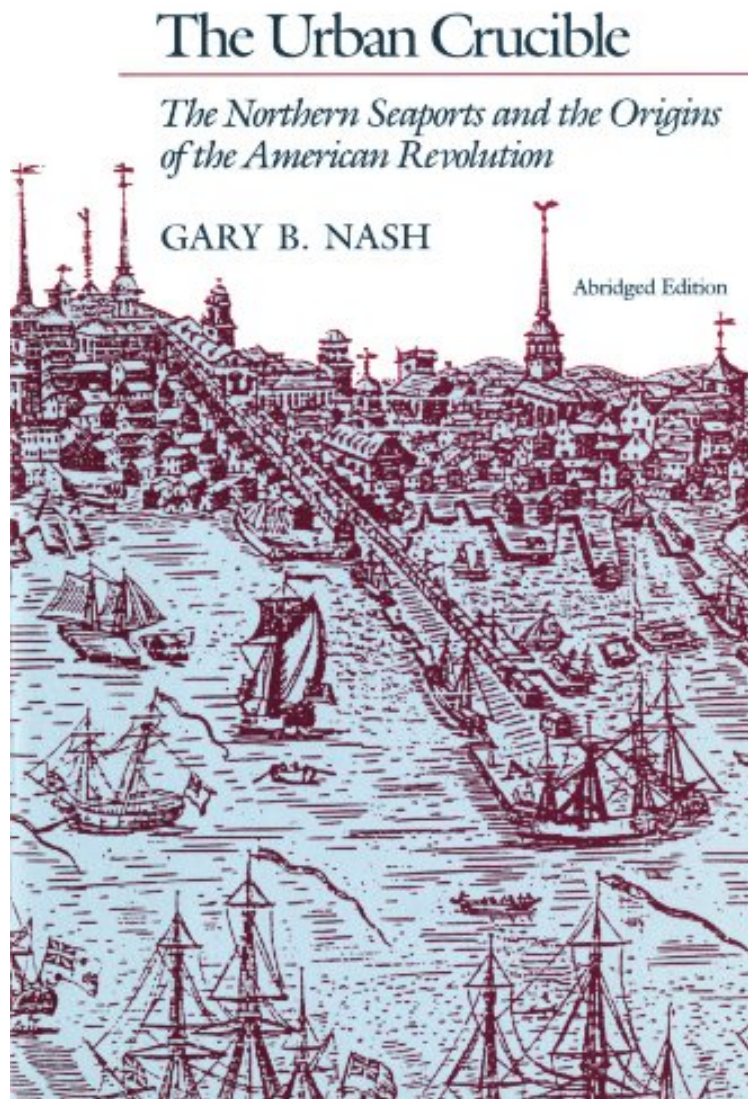


# The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution

Gary B. Nash

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**Gary B. Nash : The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution**

before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Tyler BrooksGood author. Not completely academic based.12 of 14 people found the following review helpful. The Urban Crucible reviewBy S. BellaviaIn Gary Nash's

book, *The Urban Crucible: Northern Sea Ports and the Origin of the American Revolution* (Abridged), he argues that urban importance is severely understated by historians looking at the revolutionary timeframe, and that changes which occur in the urban setting trickle down to the rural population. He says the socioeconomic state of the labor class, and the awakening of its political acumen in the three major northern seaports of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia created the revolutionary impetus. In seven chapters, each devoted to a specific timeframe, Nash tracks the evolution of the three cities into urban centers from 1690 until 1775. Nash argues that it was the changing socioeconomic interactions of urban life that eventually influenced rural colonial America and led to the American Revolution. He bases his research not only on the traditional primary sources, but also looks at nontraditional economic sources; such as tax lists, poor relief records, wills, and other legal documents. (xv) Nash focuses on the interaction between economic, social, and political change. He looks at how a change in one arena can drive change in the others. Nash uses estate inventories to show the relative wealth of an average urbanite of a particular social station at their death and then compares them with decedent's who were of a similar station in the other cities. His use of tax lists and poor relief records to point out the economic health of these urban centers adds a dimension not normally seen when talking about the colonial period. One criticism of the book is that Nash focuses primarily on Boston, even when Boston dropped in prominence to become the third-largest city in colonial America. A second criticism is that Nash does not tell how the changes that started in the cities, trickled down to rural society. A weak point of the book is in its presentation of the information. Nash states that he created the abridged version to make the book more available to undergraduates and the general public. (xv) Though written for the general public, it still comes across as a dry scholarly work, which interferes with processing the concepts that Nash offers. I was disappointed that something that showed such great promise was hindered by its inability to convey its message. 10 of 32 people found the following review helpful. *The American Revolution as a socioeconomic class conflict* By inthesouthwest In the *Urban Crucible*, Nash attempts to demonstrate that the American Revolution was a duel revolution against England and the traditional ruling classes. He shows how the economic effects of the boom and bust cycles following the various wars of the 18th century affected the colonies, specifically the port cities. The result of these increasingly disruptive economic cycles--especially after the French and Indian War--caused the colonists in the port cities to rebel against England and the American elites because of economic concerns. However, Nash offers very little evidence that socioeconomic factors were indeed the main motivation for revolution, and he offers no evidence that class warfare really existed.

*The Urban Crucible* boldly reinterprets colonial life and the origins of the American Revolution. Through a century-long history of three seaport towns--Boston, New York, and Philadelphia--Gary Nash discovers subtle changes in social and political awareness and describes the coming of the revolution through popular collective action and challenges to rule by custom, law and divine will. A reordering of political power required a new consciousness to challenge the model of social relations inherited from the past and defended by higher classes. While retaining all the main points of analysis and interpretation, the author has reduced the full complement of statistics, sources, and technical data contained in the original edition to serve the needs of general readers and undergraduates.

**About the Author** Gary B. Nash is Professor of History Emeritus, University of California, Los Angeles, and Professor and Director, National Center for History in the Schools.