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_____, “‘The Steadfastness of a Free People’: Vermont in World War I,” *Vermont Magazine*, 27, 3 (July/August 2015): 74-78.


Letters to the Editor

A Few Lawless Vagabonds

To the Editor:

Ennis Duling, in his review of my book, *A Few Lawless Vagabonds*, takes it that my work is predominantly a biography of Ethan Allen (*Vermont History*, 83: 1 [Winter/Spring 2015]: 89-90). Thus, a few biographical and geographical mistakes are enough to dismiss the book as lacking “the depth of research and the concern for detail necessary to have a major impact.”

In reality, the major theme of the book is the unrelenting opposition of Ethan Allen to the power and pretensions of New York, 1770-1784. The culminating episode was the protracted, secret attempt of the Allens in the Haldimand Negotiations to turn Vermont into “a separate Government under the Crown.” This is based on exhaustive, detailed research in the Haldimand Papers and is, I believe, the first systematic examination of primary documentation to show that the Allens were utterly serious in their efforts to secure the autonomy of a Greater Vermont. Other contentions are similarly based on primary sources: that Matt B. Jones was quite wrong in his argument that Benning Wentworth’s land grants were illegitimate; that the Allens were successful in warding off the enemies of Vermont on all four sides; and that successive Governors of Quebec handled the issue of Vermont and the “Northern Department” with great diplomatic skill and military enterprise. Where Ethan Allen made a mess of things, I say so, in particular that he was not at all a great military commander and that his diplomacy was sometimes arrogant, clumsy, and inept.

None of these aspects of *A Few Lawless Vagabonds* appear in Ennis Duling’s review.

DAVID BENNETT