

Each essay provides a wealth of information for the reader. Some of the information might not be commonly known and, as a result, this book helps to increase the depth of knowledge and understanding about Congress. The research also makes an attempt to delve deeply into each event and personality discussed in the book.

The American Congress is a collection of essays, so one might think that different writing styles would stand out and the flow of the book would be interrupted. This is not the case with this compilation of essays. While reading one essay to the next, it was easy to forget that each essay had a different author. The editor of this book did an excellent job in ensuring that each essay flowed into the one that followed with ease.

This book would be useful for a number of purposes. This book could be used in courses that cover Congress, events, and people. While mainly for history, this book could be used across disciplines. *The American Congress* could be used as a text, although it might be more useful as a supplement. This book might be more appropriate for a graduate-level seminar. The depth of information and some of the terminology might be a little challenging to undergraduate-level classes. It might be possible to attempt to use the book for upper-level undergraduate classes. Instructors can create an entire lecture or series of lectures on the content of this book. Instructors could also use the book to supplement current lectures.

The American Congress is an excellent collection of essays about the history of Congress and the nation. It goes beyond the sometimes stale stories of the formation of the institution and its function. The book provides the reader with an inside look as to how Congress really works, while providing the juicy details about the members and the deals that were made to advance the institution and the nation.

Georgia Highlands College

Teresa L. Hutchins

Richard Godbeer. *Escaping Salem: The Other Witch Hunt of 1692.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. xiv, 177. Paper, \$13.00; ISBN 0-19-516130-0.

Richard Godbeer, author of *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* and *Sexual Revolution in Early America*, makes a wonderful contribution to the field of early American witchcraft studies with *Escaping Salem: The Other Witch Hunt of 1692*. While most students are likely familiar with the more famous witch hunt that took place in Salem that same year, and as a result might well bring their own preconceptions to the topic, the lesser known scare in Stamford, Connecticut, might provide a better instructional opportunity.

Godbeer takes advantage of the Stamford witch hunt's anonymity. In clear and accessible prose, he offers a vivid portrait of Stamford, its people, and their varying responses to Kathleen Branch's fits and visions. By recreating the world of Stamford, Godbeer invites readers into colonial Connecticut and makes it possible for them to understand witchcraft from a different perspective and in a broader context. Witchcraft

emerged as one option among many that might explain Branch's fits. Some suspected she had been bewitched; some suspected she was mentally ill; some suspected she was faking the whole thing. Perhaps, as he suggests, readers should think long about whether or not the Salem episode created a "distorted perception" about New Englanders and witchcraft. Perhaps the Stamford crisis was more the norm than the events that took place in Salem. The sporadic outbreaks of witchcraft in other colonies certainly suggest this view.

Godbeer's success is due in part to the goals of the series of which *Escaping Salem* is a part, Oxford's New Narratives in American History. The authors chosen to write for this series have been asked both to experiment with new methods and to forego the "detached, often Olympian manner of much historical prose." In Godbeer's retelling of their tale, the men and women of Stamford emerge as real human beings possessed of real feelings, convictions, and emotions, not as so many characters in a lab experiment gone awry, analyzed until their humanity disappears in a fog of jargon.

The seventeenth-century world Godbeer recreates is filled with ambiguity and paradox—not insignificant themes for students to consider when thinking about the past. This stands out as one of the strongest facets of a strong book. Godbeer clearly demonstrates that the past was not simple, that the past did not speak with one mind, and that the people whom he wrote about are, more often than not, in many ways very much like the students who will be assigned *Escaping Salem* for their U.S. survey or American colonial history courses.

Escaping Salem also contains a helpful and instructive "Afterword" that not only allows Godbeer the opportunity to discuss his research and narrative methods, but also introduces readers to important elements of the historiography of magic and witchcraft—magic in the early modern world, women and witchcraft, and neighborhood tensions and witchcraft.

The irritating absence of an index notwithstanding, *Escaping Salem* is a very fine narrative that should find its way onto the reading lists of many classes.

Alabama A&M University

Edward L. Bond

Richard Buel, Jr. *America on the Brink: How the Political Struggle Over the War of 1812 Almost Destroyed the Young Republic.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp. 310. Paper \$17.50; ISBN 1-4039-6238-3.

It is ironic that the early republic's party of centralization, the Federalists, opposed what Walter Borneman has recently called "the war that forged a nation." Richard Buel explores this irony and analyzes the political struggle surrounding the War of 1812 in *America on the Brink*. Drawing from Federalist newspapers, private correspondence, and Congressional records, Buel asserts a revisionist interpretation of the war and events leading to it. He argues that self interested Federalist ideologues