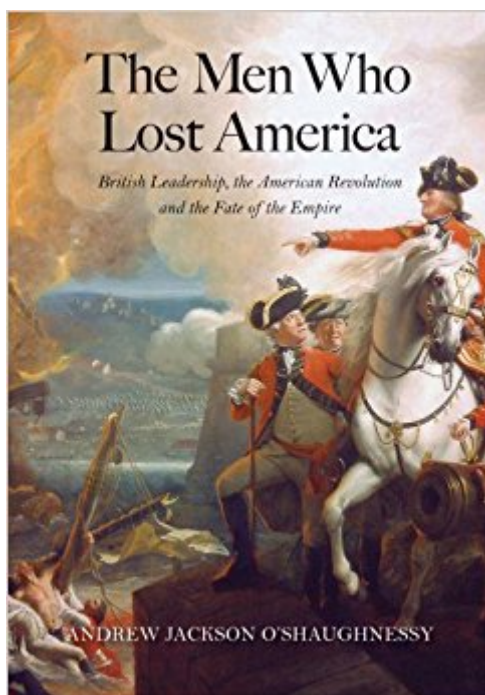


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# The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, The American Revolution, And The Fate Of The Empire (The Lewis Walpole Series In Eighteenth-Century Culture And History)



## Synopsis

The loss of America was a stunning and unexpected defeat for the powerful British Empire. Common wisdom has held that incompetent military commanders and political leaders in Britain must have been to blame, but were they? This intriguing book makes a different argument. Weaving together the personal stories of ten prominent men who directed the British dimension of the war, historian Andrew O'Shaughnessy dispels the incompetence myth and uncovers the real reasons that rebellious colonials were able to achieve their surprising victory. In interlinked biographical chapters, the author follows the course of the war from the perspectives of King George III, Prime Minister Lord North, military leaders including General Burgoyne, the Earl of Sandwich, and others who, for the most part, led ably and even brilliantly. Victories were frequent, and in fact the British conquered every American city at some stage of the Revolutionary War. Yet roiling political complexities at home, combined with the fervency of the fighting Americans, proved fatal to the British war effort. The book concludes with a penetrating assessment of the years after Yorktown, when the British achieved victories against the French and Spanish, thereby keeping intact what remained of the British Empire.

## Book Information

Series: The Lewis Walpole Series in Eighteenth-Century Culture and History

Paperback: 480 pages

Publisher: Yale University Press; First Edition edition (September 30, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0300209401

ISBN-13: 978-0300209402

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1.3 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 134 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #87,754 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #115 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > American Revolution #213 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Great Britain #230 in Books > History > Americas > United States > Revolution & Founding

## Customer Reviews

"[An] engaging study." —Brendan Simms, Wall Street Journal "An extensively researched, gracefully written study." —John Taylor, Washington Times

"[O'Shaughnessy] shatters entrenched stereotypes." — William Anthony Hay, *The National Interest* "A delightfully myth-shattering book." — Open Letters Monthly "[A] superb new study . . . the work of an historian in thorough command of his sources who writes with admirable grace and acuity. Since this is only his second book, we can all look forward to many more good things from Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy." — Edward Short, *The Weekly Standard* "Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy has written a remarkable book about an important but curiously underappreciated subject: the British side of the American Revolution. With meticulous scholarship and an eloquent writing style, O'Shaughnessy gives us a fresh and compelling view of a critical aspect of the struggle that changed the world. This is a great book." — Jon Meacham, author of *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power* "Scrupulously researched and superbly written, these humanizing portraits of conventional cardboard figures from American history offer, like all great history, lessons for today: military might does not guarantee political success; do not try to govern that which you do not own; and resist empire's temptations." — Gary Hart, United States Senator (Ret.) "Deeply researched, carefully argued, and clearly written, *The Men Who Lost America* cuts through the thick crust of romantic myths to cast the American Revolution in a refreshing new light. Blessed with an impartial, open mind, Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy reveals the talents as well as the human foibles of a rich cast of intriguing characters including America's last king. In the end, O'Shaughnessy gives the American revolutionaries exactly what their story has so long needed: worthy adversaries who fought hard and well." — Alan Taylor, author of *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* "Beautifully written and deeply researched, *The Men Who Lost America* is a great achievement. It will provide any interested reader with a delightfully user-friendly way of understanding how and why the British lost the revolutionary war." — Pauline Maier, author of *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* "Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy brings the human experience of the Revolutionary era to life in these graceful sketches of ten British political and military leaders. To see the period from the perspective of the able, earnest men who struggled to hold the British Empire together is to understand the origins of the United States in ways that Americans have seldom tried to imagine them. It's about time we did, and there's no better place to start than with this book." — Fred Anderson, University of Colorado, Boulder

This unique account of the American Revolution, told from the perspectives of King George III, Lord North, General Burgoyne, and other British leaders, brings to light the real reasons behind the

British Empire's stunning and unexpected loss. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a fascinating book that is written so well that the reader need NOT be particularly knowledgeable about its characters to enjoy its content: even so the book is clearly a serious work digging well below the superficial and aimed at a serious, if not scholarly, readership. Author Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy (a compelling name for an author, if ever...) is a professor of history at Mr. Jefferson's venerable University of Virginia and offers with this book, "something completely different" for those interested in early American history, especially the Revolutionary War. In four parts, consisting of nine chapters and 361 pages, Professor O'Shaughnessy introduces his readers to each of the ten men who played a part in the political or military prosecution of the war - all British and their participation explained from the perspective of the British - without American partiality. This book is a, "what went wrong?" postmortem of the events of 1775-1783... even so, the parallels to the U.S. conflicts of 1955-1975, or 2003-2011, or 2001 to present - are hard to miss regardless of your politics. Little if anything is the "warmed over" of past reads. The book is full of first discoveries and fresh perspectives. Its writing flows easily and the author thoughtfully reintroduces the second-tier characters for his (American?) readers as they reappear in the separate parts and chapters of the book, many of whom may be, "household names" in the UK... are less so in the US! There are over 100 additional pages of citations, bibliography, index, afterward materials (in the scholarly fashion) for those who may care to further pursue a point, or continue their reading on the topic. And, bound in the center of the book are very interesting color plate portraits of the principals, reproduced from the originals in the British National Portrait Gallery and the Royal Collection of HM Queen Elizabeth II. This is clearly a 5-star book, but that said, its story, as its title implies, is finely focused and a perfect read IF that focus matches your interest. Highly recommended, but not for all. See also Harlow Giles Unger's account, *An American Tempest: How the Boston Tea Party Sparked a Revolution* for some empathetic sense of Great Britain's consternation with the Colonies, in a nuanced and non traditional look at the spark that brought about the American Revolution.

In this exceptional book, Author O'Shaughnessy undertakes to tell the story of the American Revolution from the viewpoint of the ten British overseers who actually managed it, if managed is the right word in this context. And he very definitely succeeds. None of the many, many other books I have read on the rebellion have portrayed as well

the challenges facing those who took up the colonists' challenge and sought to counter it from their remote location with all that its isolation portended for miscommunication, misunderstanding, erroneous presumptions, and manpower and supply challenges that ultimately doomed them to defeat. The reader gets an invaluable look at the three primary reasons that the war was not only lost, but doomed to failure before it commenced. First, the British grossly misjudged the number of loyalists among the American population, their commanders waiting time and again, against all hope, for pro-British colonists to come forward to fight with them. Second, and despite the fact that a good map would have revealed the truth of it, they under-appreciated the sheer size of the theater they were trying to conquer and hold, essentially never succeeding in first taking and then being able to secure any sizeable chunk of territory. Third, and perhaps most crucially, they simply could neither afford nor transport enough men and materiel to overwhelm the opposition. Add to these reasons the more subtle but nonetheless crucial inability of the leadership to set and adhere to priorities among Britain's Caribbean holdings, the continuing threat of French and/or Spanish intervention, and other pressing demands, and you have all the makings of the disaster that inevitably ensued. The book does present a couple of issues, though. The first and most important is the difficulty faced by any author who undertakes to fashion joint biographies of contemporaries engaged in the same enterprise, repetition of events and attitudes. For instance, by the time the reader has completed the portraits of George III and Prime Minister Lord North, he understands many times over that North early on really, really, absolutely, urgently, and honestly to goodness wanted to resign. Indeed, the reader understands so well that he is tempted to resign himself, resign, that is, from reading the rest of the book. Second, the author is a pedestrian writer who while he does a decent job of portraying the respective roles of the subjects, lapses into Wikipedia-like flatness when he sets out the "after-action" lives of the protagonists. Finally, and as I wrote in my review of "The Siege of Fort William Henry," I guess authors don't want to take the time to consult Mapquest or Google Earth when citing locations and distances. On page 142, Shaughnessy writes, "The delay allowed the enemy force to strengthen their fortifications at Crown Point and Ticonderoga, the former situated at the north end of Lake George and the latter near the southern end of Lake Champlain." Uh, no. Ticonderoga is indeed located at the southern end of Lake Champlain, and Crown Point is located approximately 10 miles NNW, just a bit farther up Champlain's western shore and relatively nowhere near Lake George. All in all, this a most worthwhile read, and not only because you won't find the same amalgam somewhere else. It stands alone as an excellent

and unique piece of scholarship, innovative and long overdue.

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