



Colonial America and the Earl of Halifax, 1748-1761 (Oxford Historical Monographs)

Andrew D. M. Beaumont

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Colonial America and the Earl of Halifax, 1748-1761 examines the governance of British America in the period prior to the American Revolution. Focusing upon the career of George Montagu Dunk, Second Earl of Halifax and First Lord of the Board of Trade & Plantations (1716-1771), it explores colonial planners and policy-makers during the political hiatus between the age of Walpole and the subsequent age of imperial crisis. As ambitious metropolitan

politicians vied for ministerial dominance, Halifax's board played a vital role in shaping British perceptions of its growing empire. A repository of information and intelligence, the board offered Halifax the opportunity to establish his own niche interest, for the good of the empire and himself alike.

Challenging the view that Britain's attitude towards its American colonies was one of ignorance compounded by complacency, this study explores those charged directly with governing America, from the imperial centre to its westward peripheries: the governors entrusted with maintaining the royal prerogative, and implementing reform. Between 1748 and 1761, Halifax sought to reform the America from a motley assortment of territories into an ordered, uniform asset of the imperial nation-state.

Exploring the governors themselves reveals a complex, modern network of professional and personal loyalties, bound together through mutual self-interest under Halifax's leadership.

Confronted by the Seven Years' War, Halifax saw his plans and followers dissipate in the face of global conflict, the results of which established British America, and also sowed the seeds of its eventual destruction in 1776.

Long overshadowed by the acknowledged 'great men' of his age, this study restores Halifax and his interest to its rightful place as a significant influence upon major historical events, illustrating his grand, elaborate vision for an alternative British America that never was.

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