

As preceding quotations should have made clear, it is not that May fails to provide a broad interpretive framework or a specific thesis. The 1950s, she says, were not solely 'an age of conformity and stagnation.' The 1960s were not as revolutionary as they may have appeared. And the two were linked in critical ways (1). Yet in *Golden State, Golden Youth* the nature of such connections takes on a particular quality. The cultural dynamic at work in California between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s involved, May implies, a kind of socio-psychological return of the repressed: the state's initially optimistic mood and image being in part the means and in part the result of a collective 'denial [of] the problems that emerged in the sixties with a more satisfying and less threatening picture of its youth' (4). California, in this sense, served (as more broadly the west had done for previous generations) 'as a safety valve for generational fears' (5) – another familiar American Studies myth (in Henry Nash Smith's definition, an 'intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image') that casts shadows even as it illuminates.³

In its defence, if such readings raise as many questions as answers then in doing so they also provides a valuable agenda for further debate. Indeed, one of the great strengths of *Golden State, Golden Youth* is that it places cultural, social and political developments within a common framework, enabling light to be thrown beyond the remit of the book itself on much of its subject matter. Anyone with more than a passing interest in the music of The Beach Boys may reflect, for example, on the extent to which Disneyland could have provided a ready-made cultural lexicon for their early hits. In pedagogic terms, meanwhile, Kirse Granat May's book will prove welcome to students and teachers of American popular culture and media history. Its prose style, vocabulary and thematic form are likely to make it attractive to an undergraduate audience, while the primary resources it pulls down from the pop culture attic for sustained attention ought to appeal to any teacher or researcher ever prone to spates of California Dreaming.

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Emily J. Teipe, *America's First Veterans and the Revolutionary War Pensions*. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002. vi + 245 pp.; ISBN: 0-7734-7100-6; \$109.95, cloth.

After the initial *rage militaire* of the early phases of the American Revolutionary War, the patriot cause was faced with a serious shortage of manpower. Realising that appeals to abstract and vague notions of liberty and rights were not enough to convince most Americans to risk their lives for independence, the Continental Congress reluctantly agreed to offer a number of financial incentives to those enlisting in the army. One of these incentives was the granting of limited pensions. Traditionally,

3. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), xi.

classical republicanism had viewed such measures with suspicion, as it was believed that pensions corrupted citizens and undermined the political vitality of the republic. Consequently, pensions were initially restricted to officers and those disabled during the war. A general service pension extending to all those who participated in the conflict, irrespective of rank or disability, was simply too much for the republican minded congressmen to accept. This hostility towards pensions continued long after the American victory and persisted well into the nineteenth century. It was not until 35 years after the formal ending of the conflict that non-disabled rank and file Revolutionary War veterans were entitled to apply for a service pension, and even this was not awarded for service alone but on the basis of need.

American misgivings about military pensions and those seeking them meant that those veterans who were eligible for one were often seen in a dubious light and subjected to a thorough examination to reduce the likelihood of fraud. As Emily J. Teipe shows in her book, *America's First Veterans and the Revolutionary War Pensions*, the application process for a Revolutionary War pension could be incredibly frustrating for the individual veterans concerned. The tough and demanding regulations regarding the submission of supporting evidence laid down by Congress and the War Department frequently led to delays and complications that drove some veterans to despair. Their trials, however, are our fortune as their efforts to secure a pension have provided us with an incredibly rich historical source for the study of ordinary Americans in the Revolutionary and early national period. In order to prove their Revolutionary service and the justice of awarding them a pension, veterans were required to submit affidavits detailing their personal circumstances during and after the war, along with the supporting testimonies of a variety of credible witness. This led to the creation of a vast quantity of documentary evidence relating to the lives of tens of thousands of Revolutionary veterans and their families. The resulting pension files, now held in the US National Archives, contain information about a veteran's wartime service, his place of residence at the time of application, and any special circumstances he might have felt strengthened his claim in the eyes of government officials. In addition to this basic information, many files include details of the veteran's health, family, wealth, occupation, geographical mobility, and any other sources of assistance that he may have had to draw upon to survive. As these facts were frequently corroborated by other witnesses and checked by pension clerks, the pension files are usually fairly accurate reflections of key elements of the veterans' lives. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that historians have long been excited by the prospects they present for research.

Consisting of seven chapters and a lengthy appendix, *America's First Veterans* attempts to exploit this valuable source by subjecting it to a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The book's introduction and first two chapters introduce the reader to the pension files and the process by which Congress was persuaded to grant more and more Revolutionary War veterans pensions, even though Americans of the early national period were traditionally opposed to such measures. Unfortunately, the introduction does not adequately define the scope of Teipe's study or situate it within the

relevant historiography. This gives the impression that she has not done all the requisite reading to embark upon such an ambitious project. Indeed, this suspicion seems to be confirmed upon reading what follows. Although there is brief reference to John P. Resch's 'pioneering' (v) work on the pension acts and their consequences, Teipe does not seem to be familiar with other important research into the pension files by historians such as Theodore J. Crackel and Lawrence A. Peskin. As the literature relating to this topic is not particularly large, and most of it was published in the early 1980s, it is hard to understand why Teipe has not consulted it. This failure has left her with serious gaps in her knowledge and undermines her efforts to make a truly valuable contribution to the historiography of the early American republic.

The beginning of the book gives a good overview of the relevant pension legislation passed between 1776 and the middle of the nineteenth century. For those new to the pension files, this will prove a useful starting point for determining what kind of pensions were granted, but, for those seeking a much more thorough treatment of the relevant legislation, it is simply no substitute for the authoritative work of William H. Glasson, upon which it is based. Teipe then goes on to discuss the role of what she terms 'veteran advocate groups' (37) in securing pensions for Revolutionary soldiers. She rightly stresses the importance of politically influential veterans such as George Washington, James Monroe and Andrew Jackson in advancing the cause of military pensions, but misses the opportunity to examine the mechanisms through which they worked. We are told little, for instance, about the specific methods or strategies of lobbying that veterans and their representatives used, or the language in which they addressed their claims. Instead, Teipe primarily explains the success of the pension lobby in terms of the actions of great and powerful men. Unlike Resch, she does not fully appreciate that something much bigger was going on at this time. Rather than the result of the achievements of a few key personalities, as Teipe's account tends to imply, the creation of an extensive military pension establishment was the product of a fundamental change in political culture that occurred around the time of the War of 1812.

For most of the rest of *America's First Veterans*, Teipe analyses the pension files themselves. Having extensively used this source myself, this was the part of the book in which I expected to find Teipe's discussion come alive. To some extent, this proves to be the case, especially when she allows individual veterans to speak for themselves through their pension applications. This is 'history from below' at its best and we get a very real sense of the suffering and poverty that many elderly veterans had to endure. These accounts of distress help us to remember that, for much of the first four decades of the United States' existence, Revolutionary War veterans were not accorded the heroic status that subsequent generations of Americans have bestowed upon them. For emphasising this, *America's First Veterans* should be commended.

Teipe's account, however, sometimes suffers from her over-reliance on the pension files. Reading this book, I got the impression that she has been overawed by her undeniably rich source and thought it could stand alone. Thus, instead of utilising a wide

array of primary and secondary material to sharpen her findings, she has concentrated almost entirely on the pension files themselves. This leads her to see the lives of veterans in a vacuum, defined solely by their quest for pensions and nothing else. More worryingly, it sometimes leads to her making basic errors of fact because she has not checked her pension file findings with other sources. For instance, she claims that Jeremiah Everett from Columbia County, New York, 'never received' (81) a disability pension, even though he clearly appears on a number of easily accessible and readable Congressionally-approved pension lists dating back to the 1790s. This is just one of many such poorly supported statements to be found throughout her text.

In terms of her quantitative analysis, Teipe's findings (derived from an examination of over a thousand pension files) appear to be sound, but, again, they do not tell us anything we do not already know. Resch had already come to similar conclusions over twenty years go. This, of course, helps to validate his work, but it does not move the field any further. Moreover, it is very difficult to ascertain just how Teipe has gone about generating her statistics, as she does not make it clear, even in her endnotes, what methodology she has used. For the general reader, this is not a major problem, but for those engaged in similar research it is rather frustrating. Given the general scholarly sloppiness displayed throughout *America's First Veterans*, I would have been more confident of her findings if I could have seen how she derived them. Without such explanations, the statistics she has presented raise methodological questions that should be answered in an academic monograph such as this.

Overall, *America's First Veterans* can be seen as a useful, though flawed, introduction to the Revolutionary War pensions and those who benefited from them. Where this book really falls short is in its treatment of the wider historical picture. Teipe does a good job of highlighting the difficult conditions in which many veterans lived, but she does not relate these to the broader history of the early American republic. The creation of a pension establishment was a radical break with the past that, for the first time in US history, established the federal government as a major source of public welfare. Teipe, however, hardly acknowledges this. This is a shame, as it is only by doing so that we can fully appreciate the significance of Revolutionary War veterans as a force for change within America. Not only did they help win American independence as young men, their suffering as old men forced the government to get involved in taking care of some of its most needy citizens. It would seem, therefore, that these men truly deserve the title 'Revolutionary' veterans, almost as much for the latter achievement as for the former.

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Maria Holmgren Troy, *In the First Person and in the House: The House Chronotope in Four Works by American Women Writers*. Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1999. 235 pp.; ISBN: 91-554-4532-2; \$50.50, paper.