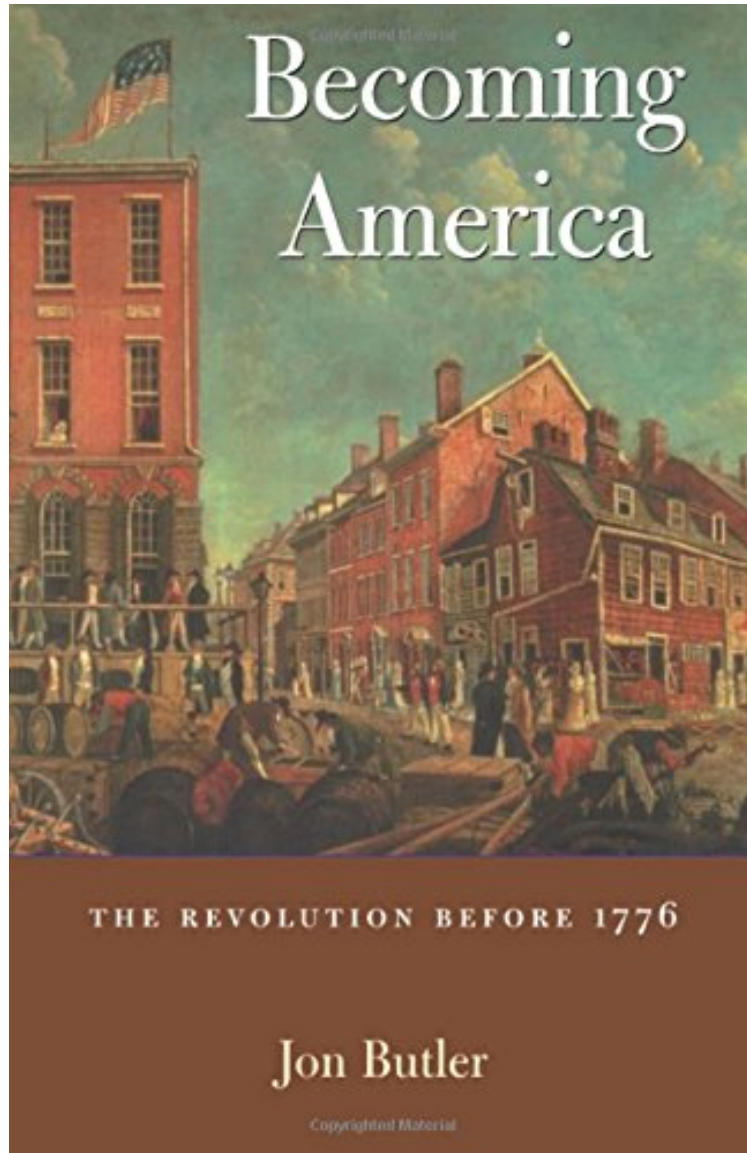


(Read ebook) Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776

## Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776

*Jon Butler*

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**Jon Butler : Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good readBy The HistorianJon Butler's book, Becoming America, covers a period in American history largely ignored by historians. According to Butler, an important transformation took place between 1680 and 1770, sweeping the nation towards modernity. Butler claims that the "American" colonies become distinctly modern during this time period. This modern society is characterized by five things; the

people, the economy, the politics, things material, and things spiritual. In his own words, Butler traces these social, economic, political, and cultural changes and explains how he thinks this defines a modern society. The first of Butler's claims is that the social diversity of the colonies make them modern. The colonies are ethnically and nationally diverse rather than homogeneous when compared to Europe or colonies of France or Spain. He points to four immigrating groups, the Huguenots, Scots, Jews, and Germans, as the types of immigrants who came willingly to the colonies between 1680 and 1770. Through the first chapter, Butler walks us through each immigrant group's assimilation into American society, from the quickly assimilated Huguenots to the large quantities of Germans. Butler also works in the changes in labor during this period, with the dramatic increase in slaves in Jon Butler's book, *Becoming America*, covers a period in American history largely ignored by historians. According to Butler, an important transformation took place between 1680 and 1770, sweeping the nation towards modernity. Butler claims that the "American" colonies become distinctly modern during this time period. This modern society is characterized by five things; the people, the economy, the politics, things material, and things spiritual. In his own words, Butler traces these social, economic, political, and cultural changes and explains how he thinks this defines a modern society. A decrease in indentured servants after 1680. Butler claims that this diversity moves the colonies into modernity. Next, Butler details the changes in the economy of the colonies between 1680 and 1770, and points to why he thinks these changes made it a modern society. The first changes Butler talks about is the change in agriculture. Farming became more commercial after 1680, with farmers paying attention to "markets." Farmers no longer only produced for local consumption, but for a larger market, mainly Europe. Producing more product meant a need for more labor (slave) and for more land (Indian land). Another change in the economy after 1680 that Butler points out was the enormous increase in the number of merchants. Merchants sold a wide variety of goods throughout the colonies in rural areas and in cities. Artisans and craftsmen became common in the colonies where they were scarce before. These artisans and craftsmen produced large amounts of a wide variety of goods, and many more goods were imported from Europe. Butler also points out things that did not change economically. Wealth belonged to men, not women, and the poor were still poor. In chapter three, Butler tackles the complexity of colonial politics. He states that only in New England and in a few other middle colonies are local officials elected by voters, and outside these areas, officials were appointed. Despite different ways of appointment, local governments functioned similarly. According to Butler, after 1680 changes swept through the colonial political arena that led to a more modern state. Major changes to the court system took place after 1680. Courts offered new places to conduct politics, and offered settlements of disputed through lawsuits. Courts became the center stage of local politics. There was a dramatic increase in the number of lawsuits. Politics also became more professional, as lawyers received professional training in law. They replaced the "amateur" lawyers that handled legal work during the sixteenth century. Another political aspect that Butler points out as modern is the organization of local political interest groups. These political parties had the power to transform local politics. An example would be the Quaker party in Pennsylvania. The Quaker party was very active in Pennsylvania politics, fielding candidates, securing votes, and providing leadership. Other colonies also organized political groups, that according to Butler, move them towards modernity. Modernity is also seen, according to Butler, in the material positions of the colonists after 1680. First he notes that some of these changes seem contradictory to modernity, as colonists imported "Old World" (p. 133) objects from Europe such as cloth, dishes, silverware, and furniture, but he then notes that industry in the colonies also flourished with their own goods going out to consumers throughout the colonies. Another modern aspect noted of the colonies was what they ate. The colonists' diet was typically healthier than their English counterpart, this due to the amount of land and meat available. Along with a modern diet, colonists' clothing also became more modern. Cloth imports from Europe increased, as did the domestic production with the rise of spinning wheels and looms. Along with what they ate and wore, their housing and furnishings are argued to have been more modern. After 1680 housing expanded dramatically in size and sophistication. Wealthy colonists built mansions, larger than any constructed in the seventeenth century. Butler also notes that the increasing amounts of material goods seen in households indicates a more modern society. Colonists had increased amounts of clothing, household goods, paintings, clocks, and furniture. Furniture, according to Butler, represented a huge step towards modernity, with colonial furniture makers producing pieces of equal or better quality than that produced in London, London being the epitome of modern during the eighteenth century. Lastly, Butler explains how the colonies become modern spiritually. According to Butler, the religious pluralism that was created between 1680 and 1770 is the identifying aspect of modern American culture. After 1680 the increase of different denominations was very different than the previous government-supported Christianity. There was an explosion of different denominations including Quakers, Presbyterians, Baptists, German Lutherans, Catholics, Jews, and others. Churches began to pop up everywhere. The churches even exuded Butler's ideas of a modern society with their hand-carved pews, velvet seat cushions, and silver communion plates. Between 1680 and the mid-eighteenth century there were also what Butler refers to as "modern revivals." These revivals signified "new birth" and a renewed commitment to Christ. According to Butler, these revivals stemmed from cultural diversity, thus making them modern. Butler walks us through the diverse mix of people in the colonies, the economic developments, the emerging politics, the material goods, and the unprecedented religious pluralism that he claims identifies modern society. He then concludes with a chapter on 1776, arguing that the

American Revolution can be called the first modern revolution; that the transformation into a modern society influenced the revolution, but did not cause it. Was this a modern society? I'm not sure if I completely agree with his idea. This was a society who considered themselves British, and who despite attempts to be more like the British, were becoming distinctly different. Butler provides a good argument that they are becoming modern, and American. I enjoyed reading this book. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Allan Campbella great book on the society before the Revolution 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Boring By Read this for my AP US History class. Description of American history is a bit dull, but still provides great information about the era.

In his panoramic view of Britain's mainland American colonies after 1680, Jon Butler reveals a strikingly "modern" character that belies the eighteenth-century quaintness fixed in history. Multinational, profit-driven, materialistic, politically self-conscious, power-hungry, religiously plural--the colonies in this epoch became a society the earliest colonists never imagined, a "new order of the ages" that anticipated the American Revolution.

From Publishers Weekly Historians have often argued that the colonies became "Europeanized" in the century before the American Revolution, but in his latest book, Yale historian Butler (*A Wash in a Sea of Faith*) contends that we need to pay close attention to this slice of early American history. The decades in between the Puritan-dominated 17th century and the market-revolutionizing early 19th century were a formative period, he suggests, during which a distinctly "American" society--and, as Butler would have it, the first "modern" society--developed. It was a culture "simultaneously aggressive and willful, materialistic as well as idealistic, driven toward authority and mastery." Butler examines the Americanizing process in the realms of politics, economics, religion and material culture. In the first chapter, "Peoples," Butler reminds readers that late colonial society was polyglot and diverse--including Germans, French, Scots, Ibo, Ashanti, Yoruba, Catawba and Leni-Lenape. The rest of the book is marked by Butler's characteristic innovation. Regarding politics, for instance, he suggests that Americans were no longer harmoniously self-governing through the town meeting; it was the colony itself, rather than the local microcosm, that was the center of political life. Likewise, distinctly American decorative arts began to develop during these years: after 1680, the relatively simple public buildings of the 17th century were "replaced by far larger, more elaborate facilities." Butler's original analysis is important reading on 18th-century America; he shows that the colonies were developing distinct ways of spending, building, praying, decorating and politicking even then--a cultural revolution that anticipated the political revolution that was to follow. (Apr.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. In a thoughtful, erudite survey of colonial history, Butler traces the formation of many of America's modern social characteristics in the crucible of pre-Revolutionary society...Americans today think of the colonial period, if at all, as a time remote from modern America, in which society was unimaginably different from ours. Butler argues persuasively that America during the late colonial period (1680-1776) rapidly developed a variegated culture that displayed distinctive traits of modern America, among them vigorous religious pluralism, bewildering ethnic diversity, tremendous inequalities of wealth, and a materialistic society with pervasively commercial values...A sweeping, well-researched analysis of the transformative changes wrought by immigration, war, and cultural change in colonial America. (Kirkus s) We must congratulate Butler for [bringing] under control (a) profusion of scholarship and [making] sense of it in fewer than 250 pages. His book is a tour de force ... Compelling and readable. (Gordon S. Wood *New Republic*) The decades in between the Puritan-dominated 17th century and the market-revolutionizing early 19th century were a formative period, [Butler] suggests, during which a distinctly 'American' society--and, as Butler would have it, the first 'modern' society--developed...Butler's original analysis is important reading on 18th-century America; he shows that the colonies were developing distinct ways of spending, building, praying, decorating and politicking even then--a cultural revolution that anticipated the political revolution that was to follow. (Publishers Weekly) A terrific book, filled with human interest and the kind of detail that makes abstractions meaningful. A commendable weaving together of themes and materials from political history, social history, and cultural history. Butler offers us a firm foundation for further exploration. (Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Harvard University*) An engrossing, important book. It promises to provoke and inspire. Jon Butler's *Becoming America* is an ambitious examination of Britain's mainland North American colonies between 1680 and 1770. The scope of the book is really quite broad; it covers nearly a century of development across thirteen widely varying colonies, and considers six formidably large aspects of early American life: migration and settlement, politics, economics, religion, the material world, and the origins of the Revolution. Butler's book revolves around, and advances, a coherent, critical thesis: that 'the vast social, economic, political, and cultural changes' of this period 'created a distinctively 'American' society.' The surprise of the book is that this society was modern; indeed, as Butler claims, it was the world's 'first modern society.' The world Butler portrays in his often vivid, and always highly readable prose is an America of fantastic diversity, an America of many languages, different customs, and dissenting practices of piety. Butler's *Becoming America* is a world of bustling politics and economic revolutions. (Jill Lepore, *Boston University*) In yet another provocative challenge to the conventional wisdom, Jon Butler argues for the 'modernity' of eighteenth-century America. He provides a lively and readable account of how transatlantic commerce, participatory politics, religious pluralism, and ethnic and racial

diversity put colonials on the path to 'becoming Americans' during the decades before the Revolution. (Christine Heyrman, author of *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*) In *Becoming America*, Jon Butler examines the less examined period of American colonial history from 1680 to 1770 to argue that distinctive traits of modern America were already in place. The book makes a strong case for the early modernity of American society, helps to delineate the evolution of American identity, and serves as a good overview for the period. (Joel Hodson *American Studies International*) Writing in a deceptively simple style, Butler builds creatively on complex historiographical debates and masterfully synthesizes vast amounts of specialized research, both by himself and by others. Indeed, one of the book's great virtues is its accessibility, and both its exclusively American focus and its stress on concrete social processes contribute to the clarity and forcefulness of the account. By all reasonable measures, this is a highly successful synthesis that manages to be at once enjoyable and provocative. (Ruth H. Bloch *William and Mary Quarterly*) Butler divides his approach to the period into well-studied categories before considering the implications for the Revolutionary era. His chapters on "Peoples," "Economy" and "Politics" provide a helpful synthesis of recent historiography without the tedious name dropping that characterizes so much historiographical literature. Butler will prompt us all to think more clearly about the structural relationships that evolved during these years. (John Ritchie Garrison *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*) A terrific book, filled with human interest and the kind of detail that makes abstractions meaningful. A commendable weaving together of themes and materials from political history, social history, and cultural history. Butler offers us a firm foundation for further exploration. (Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Harvard University)