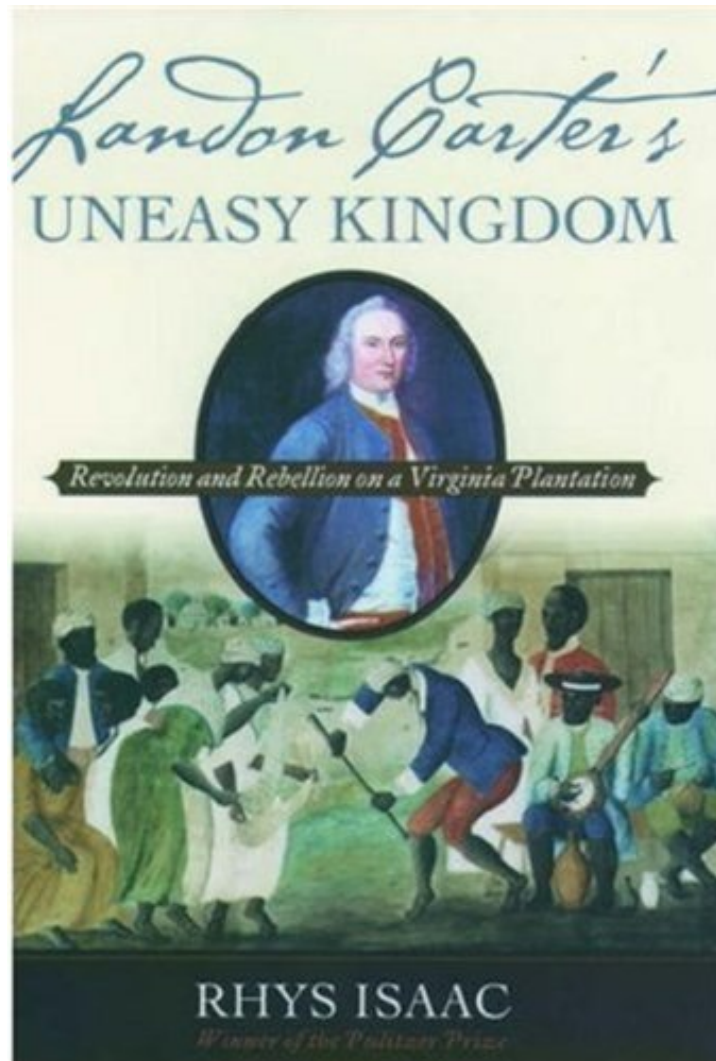


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Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a Virginia Plantation

Rhys Isaac

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Rhys Isaac : Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a Virginia Plantation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a Virginia Plantation:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A somewhat interesting book about an interesting time period.By Glenn D. RobinsonA somewhat dry book on the life of Landon Carter. Landon was part of the wealthy Carter clan and he owned a number of plantations on the Northern Neck and Middle Neck. Sabine Hall was his home and this era covers from right before the French Indian War to soon after the American Revolution. This book takes most of the

information from his diary and little more than that. What is interesting is his view of the government from 1760 onward and his hopes that King George III would be removed by the British and a better king placed on the throne—one that would honor and uphold the British Constitution as he did not want independence, just a better more honorable leader. The book discussed the slaves at length and his management of the slaves. A great deal of stress that he created for himself by having slaves. His son went on to free these slaves (see the book "The First Emancipator"). Mr. Carter disliked his son (the great ASS), hated the wife of his son and was not on speaking terms with his daughter (she married someone who did not meet his approval). He instead developed a somewhat trusting relationship with a number of his slaves who he taught medicine and surgery. He frequently felt slighted, especially when the slaves ran away. Compared to the monsters of other plantations, he seemed to be a softy (as owners can be called, which is never the right term), as he wrote in the diary "she keeps running away. I will have to do something the next time she runs away." A number of his slaves had drinking problems and smaller plantation owners or farmers took advantage of this by trading booze for farm tools and livestock. The book emphasized that he worked hard to make sure the elderly slaves were cared for, but it is hard to pinpoint how "I would stop by their cabins to see how their own gardens were growing. I learned a few things from them that I introduced out in the fields." Not a book that sensationalized the issue of the days. More a recap of the diary. I recommend this really for those interested in Colonial Virginia or plantations. I am not sure this will do it for anyone else.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Great Curmudgeon By Cabin Dweller This sequel to a shorter analysis of Landon Carter should lead to at least one of Richard Henry Lee, he of the burning effigies, and Frances Lightfoot Lee, whom currently I would confuse with Richard. But there is only one Landon Carter, although technically his grandson Landon is part of some memorable scenes at the dinner table with a sawcy mouth. Between Robert Wormely Carter and Landon, this book is everything that could have happened between George Washington and John Parke Custis taken to the extreme. It is also a study of plantation medicine, in surprising detail, plantation slavery, not so surprising but very detailed and enlightening, and also the author Rhys Isaac delves obligatorily into political wrangling from the Stamp Act, to include the Patrick Henry rivalry, to the patriarchal deconstruction found everywhere throughout the book. After finishing the book, I am not able to envision Landon Carter as a rebel. Did Isaac do a good job of leaving Carter ambivalent about revolution, or was Isaac ambivalent in his conviction that Carter could swallow so much widespread liberty? The book starts with the Eight. By extension it starts with personal animosity toward Governor Dunmore, who had promised freedom to slaves who would run to the Redcoats. Carter is near death during the Revolutionary War, troubled with colic, so the book starts with him at age 65 and older. The young Landon Carter is not in the book, since his diary began when he was over 40. Other than extra education afforded him in England, there is no record of behavior for this man who made a life out of uneasy intolerance. The first page I found worth marking was 47, where Samuel Richardsons literature was starting to become palpable and starting to challenge the male at the center of society. Clarissa and Pamela are two works that feminized sensibilities, and the first of these Carter rewrote from a different point of view. Tristram Shandy and Henry Fielding are also mentioned. The past, they say, is another country. I marked this somewhat familiar quote on page 105. It should be in widespread use now and then. Later in that chapter on Medical Science, I made note of so many details, such as the plant that is rattlesnake root, because I would think this topic the most telling of the times: the struggle to stay healthy among so many hatreds. It is my wild idea to have John Parke Custis sent to Sabine Hall out of frustration to apprentice with Carter and his slave doctor Nassaw, the alcoholic who is important enough to finish the book. Carter may have been more meticulous in his diary about inducing vomits and the study of bile because matters of health may have empowered him the most. 6 straight pages were of great interest because of their lorisish detail. The Politics, War, and Rebellion part to follow is dry by comparison, basically just rich men with French stock leanings versus rich men with English stock holdings. Here is contained the only mentor for Carter in the book: William Pitt was from Landon Carter perhaps the greatest man of the age. The book becomes incredibly interesting again with the 1766 appearance of Colonel Richard Henry Lee at the courthouse of Westmoreland County. Wilkes and Liberty and John Wilkes are brought into the spotlight in conjunction with the Stamp Act. This becomes Patrick Henrys chapter as well. Somehow fit into these topics is the whipping of little Landon at the dinner table, and the confrontation with Winifred Beale and Robert Wormeley: when she said that she might whip him, that he did not care if she did His father heard this unmoved. Unlinear as Isaac has chosen to be, this could still be depicted as the unraveling of the man into a tyrant over slave and family alike, a man largely unchecked by power but a man who nevertheless doesnt go many pages without some new slight or another. The WPA does not truthfully belong in this work. A reader of someone as obscure as Landon Carter is familiar with slaverys overview, and these oral testimonies found from the 1930s are gratuitous, especially since the book began with Carters sledgehammer approaches to the master-slave relationship with the Eight. By page 200, the book becomes sprawling in that its not linear and topics are repeated. Carters use of chains and whips and search parties and his close scrutiny of the workers and their overseers speak for itself, without a comparison to verify it. He was, however, never recorded by his diary to go to the ultimate extreme of executing a slave, nor did he practice the habit of breaking up families. The story of Tony, very vivid and drawn out by frustration, is on page 210. I also marked the name of Philip Fithian, a tutor who kept a diary in the household of Councillor Robert Carter, Landons nephew, living only ten miles to the north of Sabine Hall. Although Landon Carter

never is said to sexually repress his slaves, Robert, or his eldest son, was having a sexual liaison with a slave girl. Pages 266 to 281 are the most densely marked pages in the book. This is more of Winifred and Robert Wormeley, and the fathers great frustration at the downfall, by cards, of the younger generation. For a man who stood so much against equality, he lived and died from a syndrome of stubbornness with most everyone he could meet. 11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. More than the title suggests

By Jon L Albee
This book isn't as popular as it should be because the title makes it seem something of a dry academic tome and, let's face it, Landon Carter doesn't have the popular name recognition of Alexander Hamilton (i.e. Chernow), George Washington (i.e. Ellis) or Benjamin Franklin (i.e. Wood). The star of the show in this case is Carter himself rather than the author. Dr. Isaac does a wonderful job of framing and interpreting Carter's diary to make a coherent analysis of the profound social changes which occurred during the Revolutionary period. Carter was a first hand witness to the transformation of the American society from a rigid colonial society based on patronage to a participatory, republican society in which people made lives for themselves. The transformation is nothing less than a journey of existential self-discovery for Carter, which is something ANY person can appreciate. So this book is not just a biography of a member of the Virginia planter aristocracy, but a reflection of the undermining of the feudal, patriarchal social structure Americans largely rejected during the Revolution. And it illustrates that the highly dualistic interpretation of Americans of the period as either "patriot" or "loyalist" is largely a modern historical construct with little basis in truth. Marvelous work by one of the foremost historians of American colonial history.

Landon Carter, a Virginia planter patriarch, left behind one of the most revealing of all American diaries. In this astonishingly rich biography, Rhys Isaac mines this remarkable document--and many other sources--to reconstruct Carter's interior world as it plunged into revolution. The aging patriarch, though a fierce supporter of American liberty, was deeply troubled by the rebellion and its threat to established order. His diary, originally a record of plantation business, began to fill with angry stories of revolt in his own little kingdom. Carter writes at white heat, his words sputtering from his pen as he documents the terrible rupture that the Revolution meant to him. Indeed, Carter felt in his heart he was chronicling a world in decline, the passing of the order that his revered father had bequeathed to him. Not only had Landon's king betrayed his subjects, but Landon's own household betrayed him: his son showed insolent defiance, his daughter Judith eloped with a forbidden suitor, all of his slaves conspired constantly, and eight of them made an armed exodus to freedom. The seismic upheaval he helped to start had crumbled the foundations of Carter's own home. Like Laurel Ulrich in her classic *A Midwife's Tale*, Rhys Isaac here unfolds not just the life, but the mental world of our countrymen in a long-distant time. Moreover, in this presentation of Landon Carter's passionate narratives, the diarist becomes an arresting new character in the world's literature, a figure of Shakespearean proportions, the Lear of his own tragic kingdom. This long-awaited work will be seen both as a major contribution to Revolution history and a triumph of the art of biography.

From Publishers Weekly
Pulitzer Prizewinning historian Isaac (*The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*) offers an eloquent and unique look at the beginnings and consequences of the American Revolution as seen through the eyes of early America's finest diarist, Landon Carter. Carter, who owned the magnificent Sabine Hall plantation in Virginia, recorded his daily life from 1752 until just before his death in 1778. Originally used to record "plantation procedures," as Isaac points out, the diary soon grew from a collection of proverbs about when to plant to a journal of Carter's attempt to understand the meaning of the coming revolution for himself and his family. A supporter of the British, Carter nonetheless sided with the growing American quest for liberty. He thought of himself much like a king whose authority extended over the realm of his plantation. As the larger revolution approaches, Carter experiences smaller revolutions and rebellions on his own plantation: his son defies him by marrying against Carter's wishes, and eight of his slaves rise up in an armed rebellion. Angry that his authority is being challenged on all sides, Carter also exhibits perplexity at the changing world around him. Isaac weaves entries from Carter's diary with a splendid biographical narrative to provide a profound and intimate glimpse into one portion of early America. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "A detailed, persuasive picture of a world so different from our own as to be almost unimaginable."--Jonathan Yardley, *Washington Post Book World* "A poignant tale of crumbling patriarchy in a world of revolutions.... Unlike most historians, who try to maintain the appearance of objectivity, Isaac, like many anthropologists, feels that his personal perspective and subjective reactions should be made explicit.... The result is a very personal and intimate portrait of a Virginia patriarch."--Gordon S. Wood, *The New York Times Book Review* "A captivating view of a leading planter's personal life and political transformation during the Revolutionary era. Isaac deftly blends pungent extracts from Carter's diary with illuminating biographical details and historical commentary.... A splendid addition to our understanding of the Virginia gentry--and of ourselves."--David Shi, *Christian Science Monitor* "Full of rich cultural and psychological insights. Isaac sympathetically reveals Carter as a tragic figure, almost as cruel to himself as he was to others. Driven by a perverse but pervasive sense of duty, he alienated almost everyone in his angry wake."--Alan Taylor, *New Republic* "Offers fresh insights into the character of the plantocracy and its evolution. There is no doubt about the importance of Landon Carter's diary as a window on the

planter class and Carter himself. It reveals a man who saw himself as a link in the long chain of patriarchy, whose history stretched back to time immemorial."--Ira Berlin, *The Nation*"In Isaac's hands the story of the Revolution in a small corner of Virginia breaks into multiple competing narratives that reveal the rich interplay between the local and the Atlantic, between the personal and the political, and, above all, between lost stories told by subalterns and the recorded stories of a patriarch-master."--James Sidbury, *The Journal of Southern History*"A major contribution to the study of the American Revolution.... Readers will be fascinated by Carter's impassioned narratives, masterfully placed in their time by Isaac's brilliant analysis. This admirable study joins Claire Tomalin's *Samuel Pepys* as an example of the finest scholarly analysis of personal diaries."--*Library Journal* (starred review)"An outstanding work of history.... An extraordinary, fascinating set of firsthand accounts from the revolutionary era."--*Kirkus* (starred review)"If for nothing else, we should read Landon Carter because he was an honest man, and Rhys Isaac's *Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom* because it is a skilled and honest depiction of the man, his place, and his age."--*Christianity Today*"An eloquent and unique look at the beginnings and consequences of the American Revolution as seen through the eyes of early America's finest diarist, Landon Carter.... Isaac weaves entries from Carter's diary with a splendid biographical narrative to provide a profound and intimate glimpse into one portion of early America."--*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)"As an expert and incredibly knowledgeable editor, Rhys Isaac guides us through the diaries of the great and deeply human Virginia patriarch, Landon Carter, ultimately the owner of over 700 black slaves, as he responds with both joy and furious anger to the coming of the American Revolution and to the seismic shocks it brought to Virginia's old regime and to his own authoritarian family."--David Brion Davis"Isaac convincingly portrays Carter, one of Virginia's twelve richest men, as a figure ensnared by contradictions: In his energetic defense of American liberty, Carter appreciated that he was helping to destroy a hierarchical world to which he was intensely attached.... Isaac is a sensitive guide to Carter's world, and reading his systematic exploration is the only way for the layman to comprehend the diaries properly."--Ben Schwarz, *Atlantic Monthly*"By creatively exploiting the remarkable diary of the eighteenth-century Virginia planter Landon Carter of Sabine Hall--a character out of a Fielding novel if there ever was one--Rhys Isaac has written an extremely imaginative book that brings to life the world of this well-meaning but often ludicrous slave-master in all its humanity and inhumanity. From Isaac's rendition of Carter's story-filled diary we learn, among other things, how rebellions against patriarchal authority both in Carter's own household and in the British empire were transforming American society."--Gordon S. Wood"A lively portrait of a busy, prolific character who went from being a monarchist to a reluctant revolutionary in the course of one lively adulthood. An irascible figure among neighbors, a respected member of Virginia's pre-Revolutionary House of Burgesses, and an often-brutal, sometimes-charitable master to his slaves and children, Carter embodied the paradoxes of his age. Carter was a dutiful chronicler of this changing world. And Mr. Isaac, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1983 for *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-90*, proves to be a strong advocate for Carter's voluminous musings."--*New York Sun*"Masterfully, creatively, Rhys Isaac uses the words of one of America's great patricians to tell the story of the birth of the new republic and the psychological traumas that resulted. Deftly, Isaac moves between the public and the domestic, the political and the psychological in a tale as complex, nuanced and fascinating as was the figure it describes." --Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Mary Frances Berry Collegiate Professor of History and American Culture, University of Michigan"Landon Carter's diary is an unedited literary masterpiece full of Faulknerian stories. Now it has found a worthy editor and commentator in Rhys Isaac, a great storyteller in his own right. The result is a fascinating tale of public storms and personal furies that illuminates not only the dying world of the eighteenth century slaveholder but the dawning age of democratic revolution. Landon Carter's *Uneasy Kingdom* is itself a literary and historical masterpiece." --John Gillis, Rutgers University, author of *A World of Their Own Making: Myth, Legend and the Quest for Family Values*About the AuthorRhys Isaac is Distinguished Visiting Professor at the College of William and Mary and a Research Associate of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1983 for *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*. An Emeritus Professor at La Trobe University, he lives in Melbourne, Australia.