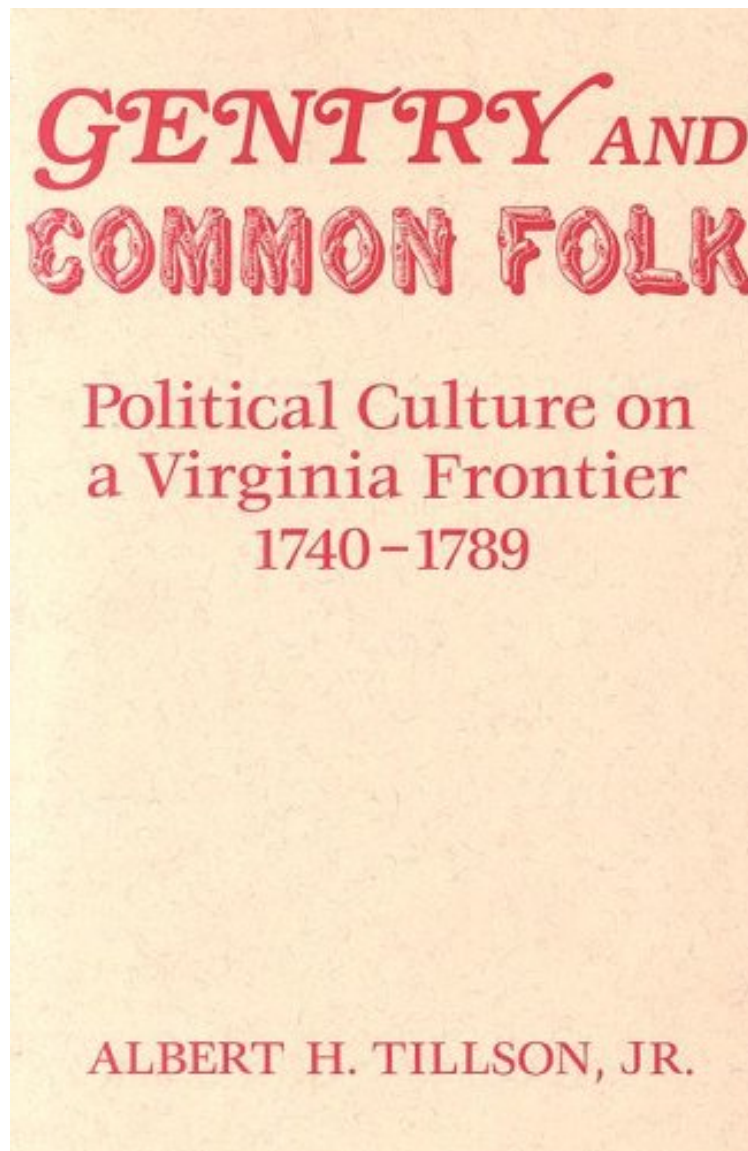


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Gentry and Common Folk: Political Culture on a Virginia Frontier, 1740-1789

Jr. Albert H. Tillson

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researched Virginia's history for this book that when I finished reading it I felt I could be considered a scholar on Virginia's history. This may seem like a book for graduate students, professors of history, and history-philes, but I am a lowly undergraduate student with an interest in history and appreciated and enjoyed this book. Any questions, comments, or concerns I had about the material while reading the book were answered quickly and thoroughly. If you are interested in this time period or are taking a class on early America, this is an excellent read. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Written about commonfolk, for commonfolk! By LukeRA
Albert Tillson could have easily written this book solely for the "gentry" of historical society, but instead took the brilliant path of penning this award-winning tome for the rank and file multitude of history buffs who relish the simple, compelling tour of Virginia's colonial commorants. He scrawls out a story so enchanting that I can only describe it as enchanting. Yes, the endnotes get rather long, but if you're like me you'll bask in the hedonism of his note structure and devour each of his many sources in the order he so masterfully lists them. Brilliance! 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Dazzling and fiercely hypnotic
By Joe Lawler
In my short time studying with him, Al Tillson instilled in me a love of this fertile time in history, as well as a love for four pocket Cuban shirts. The title may not grab you, but the gripping history and Tillson's flowing narrative style will. Less a book about a specific time in history than it is about all history, it speaks to us universally, and gives us a deeper understanding of what it is to be human.

In the late eighteenth century, the Upper Valley of Virginia experienced a conflict between the elitist culture of the gentry and the more republican values of the populace. Albert Tillson addresses here several major issues in historical scholarship on Virginia and the southern backcountry, focusing on changing political values in the late colonial and Revolutionary eras. In the colonial period, Tillson shows, the Upper Valley's deferential culture was much less pervasive than has often been suggested. Although the gentry maintained elitist values in the county courts and some other political arenas, much of the populace rejected their leadership, especially in the militia and other defense activities. Such dissent indicates the beginnings of an alternative political culture, one based on the economic realities of small-scale agriculture, the preference for less hierarchical styles of leadership, and a stronger attachment to local neighborhoods than to county, colony, or empire. Despite the strength of this division, the Upper Valley experienced less disorder than many other areas of the southern backcountry. Tillson attributes this in part to the close ties between the elite and provincial authorities, in part to their willingness to compromise with popular dissidents. Indeed, many of the subsidiary leaders in direct contact with local neighborhoods and militia training companies came to act as intermediaries between their superiors and popular groups. As Tillson shows, the events and ideology of the Revolutionary period interacted to transform the region's political culture. By creating tremendous demands for manpower and economic support, the war led to greater discontent and forced regional leaders to make substantial concessions to popular sentiment. The republican ideology sanctioned by the Revolution not only justified these concessions but also legitimated popular support for challenges to established leaders and institutions.

About the Author
Albert H. Tillson Jr. is assistant professor of history at the University of Tampa.