



Birth of the Bill of Rights: Encyclopedia of the Antifederalists, Volume I, Biographies

Jon L. Wakelyn

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Concise and informative biographical sketches of 140 of the most influential Antifederalists are complimented by nearly 100 of their complete and excerpted speeches, pamphlets, editorials, and letters. This two-volume set provides much hard-to-find information on the background of the Antifederalists and collects their scattered and neglected writings in an accessible and useful format. It will be critical for any Revolutionary, Constitutional, or Early American history collection.

They lost even their name to their opponents. But while the Antifederalists lost the battle against Constitutional ratification, they won the war by getting the Bill of Rights into the Constitution as its first ten amendments. In restraining the national government's power and guaranteeing individual liberties, the Bill of Rights has come to dominate modern U.S. politics and law. Freedoms of religious belief, speech, the press, assembly, and the right to bear arms are encoded because of Antifederalist efforts. It is to these individuals that Americans owe the hallowed prohibition against unreasonable search and seizure, the right to due process, the right to trial by a jury composed of one's peers, the right to privacy, and more. One can even argue that it was the Antifederalists who instituted national obsession with rights talk.

The first volume features biographies of 140 prominent Antifederalists, including Samuel Adams, George Clinton, Mercy Otis Warren, and James Monroe. Entries on each Antifederalist detail:

- Â· Personal and public life
- Â· Early political career
- Â· Revolutionary activities
- Â· Friends and enemies
- Â· Basis for opposing the Constitution
- Â· Subsequent historical reputation

The second volume collects important speeches and writings of the Antifederalists, and provides annotations to help the reader place these articles in their historical context. Primary documents include:

- Â· Major pamphlets
- Â· Broadsides
- Â· Newspaper articles
- Â· Speeches delivered in state legislatures

Â· Speeches delivered in the Philadelphia convention

Â· Speeches delivered in state ratification conventions.

Not only are many of these documents difficult to find, but they have never before been collected into one edition. Uniquely, this volume is organized by date of state ratification conventions, beginning with Pennsylvania on November 20, 1787 and ending with Rhode Island in 1790. This allows users to easily trace the on-going debate over the ratification of the Constitution, and to see how the Antifederalists' questions were formed, how their arguments were crafted, and why alliances were made and broken. In all this fascinating and valuable reference set covers a critical, neglected and enduringly important aspect of American history.

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