



This is a book about the Paxton massacres of 1763. However, as the title suggests, the Paxton vigilantes associated with this tragedy are peripheral to our story. This volume introduces new interpreters and new bodies of evidence in order to foreground indigenous victims and survivors in ways that eighteenth-century printed records – with their attendant focus on colonial elites – cannot do alone. In doing so, this book confronts several challenges that accompany studies of early America. How, with only an incomplete set of records written by Euro-Americans, can we tell difficult stories that don't reproduce past assumptions? Can we recollect tragedy without eulogizing it? And how can acts of artistic reinterpretation reveal the fluidity of history, memory, and collective mythology?

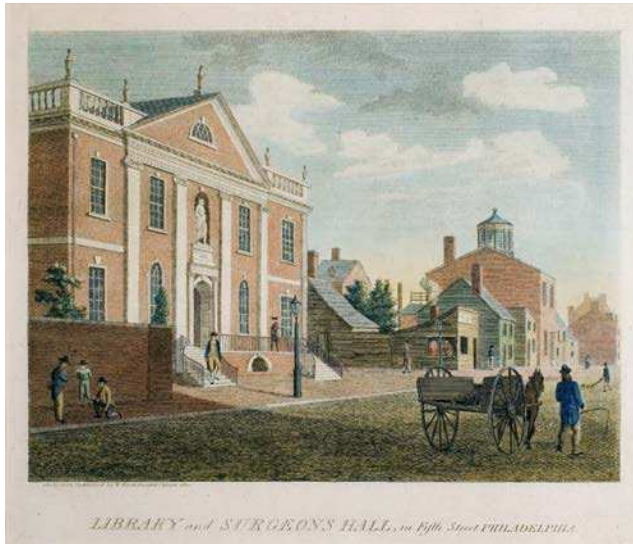
The massacres that give rise to this story unfolded in rapid succession and with far-reaching ramifications. In December 1763, a mob of settlers from Paxtang Township, not far from what is today Harrisburg, murdered 20 unarmed Conestoga Indians in Lancaster County. A month later, hundreds of these

so-called “Paxton Boys” marched on Philadelphia to menace refugee Lenape and Moravian Indians who had been taken under the protection of the Pennsylvania government. The Paxton mob was halted in Germantown, just six miles north of the city by a delegation led by Benjamin Franklin, who persuaded their leaders to disband and publish their grievances in the preferred media of the day — a pamphlet.

Inexpensive and quick to produce, pamphlets answered pamphlets as Paxton critics and defenders rushed to battle in print. The “pamphlet war” that followed was not so different from the social media wars of today. Defenders accused the Conestoga people of colluding with the other groups who had attacked settlers on Pennsylvania's borderlands during the Seven Years' War (1756-63), a charge predicated upon the racist assertion

that the Conestoga—like other Indigenous Peoples in the colony—were “savages” who could not be trusted and whose presence could not be tolerated. Critics accused the Paxton mob of behaving more “savagely” than the Native Peoples they had killed. Pamphleteers waged battle using pseudonyms, slandering opponents as failed elites or racial traitors. At stake was much more than the conduct of the Paxton murderers. Pamphleteers staked claims about westward settlement, representation, and white supremacy in pre-Revolutionary Pennsylvania.

This rich print debate is well-preserved at places like the Library Company of Philadelphia, which was founded by Franklin decades before the Paxton massacres as the first subscription library in the American colonies. Printed materials include dozens of pamphlets, large sheets (also called broadsides), newspapers, and political cartoons. Given that Philadelphia was the center of the colony's print media, these records give outsized voice to Philadelphians. Notably, such records barely mention the



William Birch, *Library and Surgeons Hall, in Fifth Street Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: William Birch, 1800).
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Conestoga people, their traditions, or their vital history in the mid-Atlantic region.

The Conestoga people lived peacefully alongside settlers at Conestoga Manor (sometimes referred to as “Indiantown”), on a tract of land set aside by William Penn at the founding of the colony. From the beginning, Conestoga Manor was an ethnically heterogeneous community comprised of Susquehannock and Iroquois peoples, including Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, and Tuscarora. Many of those residents were Christian, spoke English, wore English clothing, and had English names. But long before the Paxton murders, disease, and displacement had diminished the number of people living at Conestoga Manor. To categorize the Paxton massacres, however, as a “genocide” is misleading, insofar as the term fails to account for the resiliency that this community had achieved through