

Passionate About The Past

Local author looks at American history in a new light.

Ten years in the making, Craig Bruce Smith's new book, "American Honor: The Creation of the Nation's Ideals during the Revolutionary Era," reexamines founding fathers such as Washington and Jefferson in a new light.

"The Revolutionary Era is perhaps the most important period in our country because it helped to establish what this nation would become," Smith says. "A lot of recent scholarship has moved away from key questions about how the revolution impacted the nation and a lot has been done to debunk the founders and focus on their flaws."

"American Honor" focuses on the ideas and beliefs of the founders and how they became the foundation of the United States.

"This book is important because the ideals of the American Revolution still have a tangible impact on modern day society," Smith says. "It has the ability to be applicable to our daily lives and modern politics."

A Columbia resident and assistant professor of history at William Woods University, Smith has always been interested in history. The book started as a research paper that he wrote while in graduate school.

"I wanted to write a book that put a fresh set of eyes on how our nation came to be," Smith says.

One of the main focuses of "American Honor" is looking at ethics as a cause and a guide for the American Revolution and its results.

Although Smith has always been interested in history, he decided to pursue it as a career because of his high school Advanced Placement U.S. history teacher.

"It wasn't just about names and dates and memorizing, and that was the first teacher I had that presented history in that way," Smith says. "That's the sort

of thing I try to convey to my students."

Smith did not discover his passion for teaching until during his undergraduate years when his stepdad asked him to name the people he respected or admired. "I threw out a few names and didn't think much of it," Smith says. "My stepdad said, 'You realize all of those people are teachers, right?' That was probably the moment I made the connection that the people I respected most were in the education field."

His passion for American history specifically comes not only from his citizenship here, but also the fact that our country has functioned with the same constitution for almost two and a half centuries.

"I believe that America is a country based on ideology, liberty, freedom and justice and that's something I wanted to bring out and highlight," Smith says.

The most challenging part of writing the book was the extensive research Smith conducted at more than 30 different archives in the United States and United Kingdom, especially since the book is a history of the entire revolution and not just one specific area.



Craig Bruce Smith

"It was the most challenging aspect, but also the most rewarding," Smith says with a laugh.

Smith and his wife moved to Columbia from outside of Boston about two years ago, and he says he was thrilled to begin working at William Woods. "I really like the close faculty-student interaction, and I know all my students by name," Smith says.

Currently, Smith is working on another book titled, "The Greatest Man in the World: A Global History of George Washington." Washington is viewed as the father of the United States, but he also had global influences, Smith says. "This book will look at how other nations have viewed Washington and his ideals." ©