

Web Exclusive **When London Was Capital of America**

Julie Flavell, Yale University Press., \$32.50 (336p) ISBN 9780300137392

Before the Revolutionary War, England had a complex relationship with its colonial properties, but one truth always held: London was the center of the British Empire and therefore, the center of the world, politically, culturally, and intellectually. As such, it drew students, merchants, intellectuals, and fortune hunters from all over the empire. Flavell's comprehensive examination of London's lure to colonists focuses on specific individuals, including a wealthy merchant, his scientist son, the slave who makes a gamble on freedom, and Benjamin Franklin. Through these sketches readers begin to derive a complex understanding of London's role in the Empire and its influence over colonial styles, affiliations, and racial attitudes. Having poured through manuscripts from the time, Flavell argues that the American colonies were a far more multicultural place than American history books tend to depict, and that the British perception of the colonies was not as simplistic as we've been led to believe. Flavell writes in a compelling and succinct style, and history fans will be intrigued by her interpretation of a tumultuous time that shaped the fate of nations. (*Publishers Weekly*, August 2, 2010)