



The Whiskey Rebels

David Liss

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David Liss's bestselling historical thrillers, including *A Conspiracy of Paper* and *The Coffee Trader*, have been called remarkable and rousing: the perfect combination of scrupulous research and breathless excitement. Now Liss delivers his best novel yet in an entirely new setting—America in the years after the Revolution, an unstable nation where desperate schemers vie for wealth, power, and a chance to shape a country's destiny.

Ethan Saunders, once among General Washington's most valued spies, now lives in disgrace, haunting the taverns of Philadelphia. An accusation of treason has long since cost him his reputation and his beloved fiancée, Cynthia Pearson, but at his most desperate moment he is recruited for an unlikely task—finding Cynthia's missing husband. To help her, Saunders must serve his old enemy, Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, who is engaged in a bitter power struggle with political rival Thomas Jefferson over the fragile young nation's first real financial institution: the Bank of the United States.

Meanwhile, Joan Maycott is a young woman married to another Revolutionary War veteran. With the new states unable to support their ex-soldiers, the Maycotts make a desperate gamble: trade the chance of future payment for the hope of a better life on the western Pennsylvania frontier. There, amid hardship and deprivation, they find unlikely friendship and a chance for prosperity with a new method of distilling whiskey. But on an isolated frontier, whiskey is more than a drink; it is currency and power, and the Maycotts' success attracts the brutal attention of men in Hamilton's orbit, men who threaten to destroy all Joan holds dear.

As their causes intertwine, Joan and Saunders—both patriots in their own way—find themselves on opposing sides of a daring scheme that will forever change their lives and their new country. *The Whiskey Rebels* is a superb rendering of a perilous age and a nation nearly torn apart—and David Liss's most powerful novel yet.

The Whiskey Rebels Details

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From Reader Review The Whiskey Rebels for online ebook

Misfit says

For over two months I have tried to get through this book and I am now calling *uncle*. I love historical fiction and I've not found many novels based on this period in US history so I was very much looking forward to this book. I have lost count of the times I have picked this book up and put it down for another. Unlikeable characters, a plot that takes too long to get moving and the worst sin of all (at least for me) is the alternating chapters with the first person point of view of Ethan and Joan. Phillipa Gregory and Alison Weir got away with it, but now it's getting very very old. Two stars.

Barbara says

I'd love to give this 4 & 1/2 stars - it's a rollicking tale from start to finish! The story, set in post-Revolutionary War Pennsylvania and New York, alternates between two engaging narrators: Joan Maycott, is a self-possessed young woman with who reads 'Wealth of Nations' and other economic treatises, and Captain Ethan Saunders, a spy for the American side during the war, falsely accused of treason and now fallen on hard times. Captain Saunders is a loveable rogue in the best tradition, an 18th century Capt Mal, and I'm sure if I met him in a Philadelphia coffeehouse, I'd recognize him immediately.

Throw them together with the questions of early American statehood - Federalism vs Republicanism, slavery, the developing economy, settling of the western frontier, taxation and financial speculation, and you have a hugely enjoyable historical romp. Not only did I love every bit of it, but now I've discovered a new author. If you enjoy fiction with a historical tang, then you will adore this one. I look forward to getting my hands on every single one of David Liss's books.

Kelsey Demers says

I now officially wish that I could give books half stars. When going back and forth between "I really liked it" and "It was amazing," I find myself somewhere in the middle.

I, myself am surprised that I liked this book so much as I did. For one, historical fiction is really quite hit or miss with me. (That isn't to say that I don't like it, rather that my tolerance can be low.) Also, I rarely ever like alternating chapters as a method to tell a story unless it is because there simply is no other way that the story can be told, as it is with Picoult's *Handle with Care*, and *My Sister's Keeper*, or Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*.

With David Liss' story of the Whiskey Rebels however, I find myself completely taken in with the historical setting. He is truly a man in his element as he beautifully crafts the scene and time for his readers. He has created unforgettable characters in Captain Ethan Saunders and Joan Maycott, both of which lead the

alternating stories within this novel. While I do enjoy Joan Maycott as a character in this novel, I must say that out of all of the characters in all the books that I have read, Ethan Saunders will probably rank among the highest for the most enjoyable to get to know. He clearly steals the show and is absolutely hilarious in his dry wit.

The difficulty of alternating chapters in novels is the fact that sometimes you get so attached to one story that you wish that it would rather just forget the other and stay with your hero. I find that Whiskey Rebels falls into this trap. While Joan Maycott and her troubles in the west are definitely interesting and after they get going later on in the book definitely a page turner, I was always hoping for the next chapter with Saunders and his adventures. I felt as though I was reading two completely different novels though I knew in the end that these characters must of course meet.

And meet of course they do, but unfortunately it is brought upon the reader so quickly that it feels almost as a slap to the face. You do not see it coming nor have any idea of how it came to be. I know that on a second read through I would be more prepared for this but I did find it rather frustrating because while you are following two characters, you are not following them at the same moment in time, in fact, you are following them years apart from each other. It would have been helpful for his readers if the date and year appeared over each chapter, rather than just a few, for I had taken the year to mean that it was for both of my characters, rather than just one. Perhaps it was just my folly and no one else found it troublesome, but it is definitely something to be on the lookout for for future readers.

Also, at least a background of understanding the the workings of the stock market, especially during this time in the nation would help any reader work their way through this book. It definitely didn't stop me from enjoying it, but I rather felt that I read through portions of this book like I do when men talk about sports, simply smiling and nodding, going, "Oh yes, I was quite pleased with that..." or "My Gosh! is that so..?" without really understanding the entirety of what was placed before me. But no matter, it makes this book no less fun to read.

Yet other than the above stated, the book is really quite fantastic. While it is quite long, you don't really notice it but for maybe a few chapters near 3/4 in. It is fun, smart and a really good read. Where a lot of authors can write a good book yet fizzle out for their ending, Liss' ending is by far the strongest part of his book and he does not disappoint his readers. This will definitely be a book that I would like to pick up again in the future, though I think I shall brush up on the workings of the stock market before I traverse it's pages again.

Claire Monahan says

Hm. What a letdown.

The process of reading this book for me fluctuated like a sound wave: at times my interest was high, and in other parts I felt like this could not drag on any longer. If the book had not been an easy read, I suppose I

would have quit much earlier on.

My criticisms for this book are quite high in the historical side, since I disagree very much with the representations of Hamilton, Philadelphia, Burr, and other Federalist stars. Still, I could have forgiven this if I had truly enjoyed the plot and its fictional characters. Unfortunately this was not the case, and I'm left feeling even more unsatisfied. There was some major potential here, and Liss chose an incredible cast of characters. I'm disappointed how so many of them turned out. Also, was I supposed to be rooting for the Whiskey clan? This I never could decide either. Who were my protagonists?

My biggest complaint, however, has to do with the character of Joan. I never fully believed her, and I think this mostly stems from the fact that I did not believe Liss's writing as a woman. What she said, what she did - it just did not seem comprehensible and womanly to me. And as for the character Ethan, I also never found him worth my time and sympathy. In the end, what do we learn from either one of these characters? I have absolutely no idea, and I am very disappointed to admit so.

I like to think that even though this period was filled with turmoil and frustration with the budding government, there was still enough of a patriotic spirit left in the people to carry them through the challenges of an early nation. Perhaps this is an idealistic view of history that I have, but it's at least a conclusion that many historians have made. This? I can't decipher what Liss wanted me to conclude, and that sense of confusion is enough to make me disgruntled.

Kelly says

I loved Ethan Saunders in this book as much as I've ever loved a character in any book. He has a rakish and witty/sarcastic arrogance that is so engaging. No matter how bad things were for him (of his own doing or others), he never doubted he was all that. For some reason it made him so loveable.

In a conversation with another man he promises "You have my word as a gentleman." The other man remarks that he is not a gentleman. He replies "Then you have my word as a scoundrel, which, I know, opens up a rather confusing paradox that I have neither the time nor inclination to disentangle."

So many places I laughed out loud at his arrogance when speaking to the reader; "Think you it is easy to get a well-known and beautiful woman alone, away from her husband, at so public a gathering? Think you that, in the company of dozens of guests and nearly as many gossiping servants, a man can just pull such a woman aside into a private closet? It would not be easy for any ordinary man--at least I suspect it would not. I cannot say how ordinary men go about their business." Another is "Needless to say, it was inconceivable that I would be welcome in, let alone invited to, their home. It was as well, then, that I did not limit myself only to those places where people might wish me to be."

I am definitely going to read the rest of David Liss' historical novels...the research he must have done for this book is astounding. I had no idea about the financial banking crisis this country went through so soon after its founding. Brilliant, witty, entertaining and interesting! My perfect storm!

Kirk says

So I wrote this about a month ago:

Looking forward to reading what I'm guessing is going to be another great historical fiction - this time set in the early founding days of the Good ol' USA.

And I was correct - it was both another great historical fiction from David Liss AND set in the early days of the US! A page-turning great historical fiction novel.

Without giving much away the story focuses on early America where going "west" meant Pittsburgh. Hamilton is in charge of our countries finances and to fund the Bank of the US imposes a tax on whiskey distillers...basically taxing the poor in the "west"(which they don't like too much especially since the tax enforcers is none too popular) Some bad things happen...revenge is plotted but to what extent and how...we have an tainted hero (a spy during the war)...falsely accused as a traitor in the Revolutionary War and is now a down on his luck drunk (great character, great dialogue) but under it all is really a great guy, the kind you wouldn't mind calling a friend...combine that with a interesting cast of characters that wants to either sort everything out or bring down a country - mix in intrigue, crossing and double crossings, finance, espionage, a superbly well researched account and feel of what it was like to live in that time and you have The Whiskey Rebels. I'm really not doing this justice right now....Just do yourself a favor and pick this book up...

Also I loved the line in the end of the book on the notes section on Aaron Burr being the 1st VP to be involved in a shooting scandal...

Mark says

Part potboiler, part history lesson, part financial treatise, part love story, part adventure tale, this highly entertaining novel by Goodreads author David Liss takes us back to the early days of America in the 1790s, when Alexander Hamilton was setting up the Bank of the United States, America was developing its first stock markets, and the frontier border was in the rugged woods of Western Pennsylvania.

"The Whiskey Rebels" is based on real historical events -- not only a financial crisis that struck American speculators in 1792, but Hamilton's highly contentious tax on whiskey manufactured by the frontier people of Western Pennsylvania, which eventually led to a brief rebellion that was put down by federal troops.

Despite some occasionally melodramatic foreshadowing, Liss knows how to weave an intricate tale, keep the story moving, and hold both the readers who like a plot-driven adventure and those who are drawn by a story of love lost and regained. And he does it with a very clever construction: two interwoven subplots following the two main characters, Ethan Saunders, a Revolutionary War veteran who has become a drunkard since being drummed out of the Army on false charges relating to his work as a colonial spy, and Joan Maycott, a woman who wants to write the first American novel but who has gone west with her carpenter husband, where they make fast friends but also encounter disaster. What's clever is not the interweaving device so

much as the fact that Joan's story predates Ethan's and doesn't catch up with his plot until well into the book.

Along the way, you will learn about whiskey making, pioneer life, the upper crust and seedier levels of Philadelphia society, the trade in bank stocks and government securities (never told didactically) and the details of early American life, from transportation to clothing to weaponry to food to drink (and plenty of it).

This is a wonderful read and is by far the most ambitious of Liss's novels. A page turner with benefits.

Spuddie says

Historical fiction set in the immediate post-Revolutionary War period in Philadelphia and New York. The story is told from the point of view of two people: Ethan Saunders, a disgraced spy, and Joan Maycott, a young woman with literary aspirations. Ethan's story begins in the present time while Joan's starts in the past with her early life. Her and Ethan's paths begin their fateful crossing when she and her husband Andrew trade in his war debt for a parcel of land in western Pennsylvania, which was in essence the great frontier at that time. They find to their horror that they have been horribly cheated and Joan begins plotting revenge against all who have wronged her.

Ethan, meanwhile, in Philadelphia in 1791, is content to be a sloshing drunk and occasional thief, drowning his sorrows at being disgraced and (wrongfully) branded a traitor and his loss of the love of his life, Cynthia Fleet, to another man, and her father who was his co-conspirator as a government spy, who died in disgrace with him. I can't say too much without giving important things away, so I won't, but eventually Joan and Ethan's paths cross, and the stability of the whole of the new United States of America rests on what happens.

Let me say right up front that this time period in American history is NOT one of my special interests. I generally just don't care for it, haven't read much about it, so I have no idea how much of what the author imparts here is pure speculation, pure fiction and which parts are based on solid fact. There are many "real" historical figures in this book, but I have no knowledge of whether their portrayals were accurate. The book also dealt in large part with banking, finance and the early days of what became eventually the stock market, which, on the master lists of things I'm interested in, falls right down there near the bottom with politics, knitting sweaters for yappy little dogs and designer handbags. LOL

That said, once I discovered what the book was about, it rather amazed me that I DID keep reading—and I did so because the author made the characters and the story itself irresistible. I surmised rather early on that the lives of these two characters would intersect, I just wasn't sure when and how, and I wanted to find out! The book is a little slow and plodding in some parts and the plot was twisty and quite complicated—which, I suppose was ultimately what kept me reading. That, and wanting to find out what ultimately happened to the main characters. But I have found this slowness to be true of Liss's other books as well—and yet, when done reading and reflecting back, I have to say that I don't remember those slow points much and tend to think on the story as a whole as a very interesting, engaging one. Liss does not sugarcoat life in post-Revolutionary war America, and portrays it as the difficult, sometimes brutal, often fatal life that it was. Recommended especially for those who enjoy historical fiction in this time period, anyone interested in the early days of the U.S. banking system, and for those who've read and enjoyed the author's previous works. A- or four-and-a-half stars.

Richard says

The Whiskey Rebels

I'll tell you right off, I hate novels that are written in alternating chapters. My complaint is that one story is never allowed to develop without the interruption of another story, and though David Liss is a skillful writer, and the stories eventually intersect quite artfully, I still think it's a lazy way to put a novel together. I know, I know, "try it yourself and see how easy it is..." Well, no, I won't, but that doesn't make it any less an irritation. The double-edged saving grace is that each of the characters, Ethan Saunders, colonial super-spy, rake, and incipient (if not outright) alcoholic; and Joan Maycott, bright, independent, beautiful, strong, highly literate, and self-schooled in finance are interesting beyond equal. So even though I really wanted to skip one over the other for their equally great stories, I held my index finger to read in sequence, thus grumbling with every chapter end.

Not a major complaint, but if I try another of Mr. Liss's books and find the same strategy, I might just toss it unread.

Be that as it may, the story, the milieu, and the characters of this novel are all fascinating. It took me a while to catch up to the genre mixing, but *The Whiskey Rebels* is an historical fiction frontier/financial thriller, and it succeeds at each of its games. The Revolutionary War, Hamilton's bank, excise taxes, a nascent stock and security trading apparatus, the travails of frontier living (Western PA, near Pittsburg, my old stomping grounds,) the role of women in the colonies, the life styles of the rich and famous, and much more post colonial history gets covered in this entertaining volume.

You can get the plot points elsewhere, if you need them. I recommend this one for quality writing, with dialogue and description that seem true to the period, and a good story.

Lisasue says

This author never disappoints. He truly understands the historical fiction genre. Everything is meticulously well-researched, and the story is always tightly written. I have read nearly all of his books, and not one has been a stinker.. This is actually more of an accomplishment than it sounds. It's impressive to be consistently excellent!

This particular book is actually a 4.5 star book in my opinion, but I've rounded up, because, you know...no 1/2 stars here at Goodreads.

I found the characters in this book, especially Joan Maycott, to be fascinating and believable. It's rare to have a good female character who has an equal amount of good and bad qualities, and Joan is done very well. And, although trivial, I do appreciate the included details of her dresses.

One of the thing that I enjoyed the most about this book was portrayal of the early American financial maneuvering. It takes a good writer to convey the complexities of finance.

Reading excellent historical fiction like this has basically ruined me for authors like Philippa Gregory and Michelle Moran. Now those kind of novels just seem uninspired to me. They simply aren't as clever as David Liss.

As a side note, if you enjoyed this book, you may also enjoy *Gallows Thief*. It takes place in roughly the same time period, and has equally compelling characters. (less)

Mick says

So, you're into historical fiction. And, on occasion, you truly enjoy a political thriller. Yet you also tend to savor a good mystery. Should that be the case--along with the added bonus of engaging, clever writing--may I recommend *THE WHISKEY REBELS*?

Set in America's infancy--a 1792 that saw the fragile American Experiment in danger of being torn asunder by the Hamiltonian Federalists and the Jeffersonian Republicans--author David Liss presents two protagonists, both with compelling, and quite bitter, stories to tell. Captain Ethan Saunders, a Revolutionary War hero falsely accused of treason, has fallen on some very hard times; Joan Maycott, who has embarked on a new life on the western Pennsylvania frontier, has lost everything she holds dear due to outright corruption and greed back East. Alexander Hamilton's infamous whiskey tax--a scandalous scheme to snatch revenue for his prized Bank of the United States--sets the wheels of the plot in motion, and sends Saunders and Maycott on an inevitable collision course.

Liss tells a grand tale of manipulation and deception; his good guys (gals) have true feet of clay, while his villains tend to be one-dimensional caricatures of evil incarnate. The story does take one devil of a time to get going, yet the payoff is worth the investment (pardon the monetary pun)--even though it comes across as a tad too farfetched. Yet *THE WHISKEY REBELS* is a fun, informative read bringing thrills, intrigue, and suspense to the reader. For another foray into historical fiction that, too, is extremely well written, I would also recommend *The Dante Club* by Matthew Pearl.

Siobhan says

This is my first book by David Liss, but it won't be my last. I enjoyed every second of it. I consider myself to be fairly knowledgeable about history, but knew little of the years after the Revolutionary War. The book encouraged my interest in learning more facts upon which the fiction is based. I listened to the audio version of it, and the reader does an excellent job.

Richard Derus says

Rating: 4.5* of five

Liss in true Liss form! I adored *A Conspiracy of Paper* and *A Spectacle of Corruption* and enjoyed greatly *The Coffee Trader*. Mr. Liss is a writer with several gifts, and seemingly displays them to their best advantage in works of historical fiction. (I was no fan of *The Ethical Assassin* since it felt undeveloped and

unfinished to me.)

Most unusually, Mr. Liss can take any business conflict and make it into a story. He tells us the story of the business panic that in part led to the Whiskey Rebellion in this novel (I grossly oversimplify the twists and turns, but that's the penalty of wanting to keep this under 5000 words!) from the points of view held by two victims of honor. Ethan Saunders and Joan Maycott have wildly diverging aims in this novel; their conflict is completely believable; they are characters representing very real conflicts in American society at that time, and they do so without feeling like invented mouthpieces for a particular cause or view. This is Mr. Liss's extraordinary gift to historical fiction, that his characters breathe enough life to seem as though their actions are inevitable outgrowths of their described and/or demonstrated interests. This talent above all others should win Mr. Liss a place on the bestseller lists, since he competes against authors of creative facility and character-building imbecility (eg, James Patterson, John Grisham) for male readership.

Another of the gifts Mr. Liss brings to the table is his deftness of plotting. It takes a writer of skill to make a complex issue like a bank failure (and how timely is that choice of plot point!) into something exciting to the reader and highly personal to the characters. I was riveted to the descriptions of one character's machinations to achieve a particular result to the failure of the Million Bank and the reasons for that character's venomous hatreds and callously indifferent behaviors was both cause and effect in the spiraling, stomach-churning race that forms the last thrilling 40 pages of this novel.

Really highly recommended for anyone looking to find a fine writer with a gift for storytelling coupled to a sense of timing that cannot be beat.

Scot says

For historical fiction fans who enjoy a plotline rather complicated with intrigue, usually offering opportunity for some reflection on how the forces of capitalism affected political and social change in another time and place, David Liss is an author you need to check out. I thoroughly enjoyed one of his earlier books, *A Spectacle of Corruption*, and looked forward to this volume with some eagerness, as western Pennsylvania has long been dear to me, and I anticipated a tale offering a view of politics, daily life, and social customs in late eighteenth century Pittsburgh.

There is some of that, however, the focus of the novel is not on the Whiskey Rebellion itself, which actually occurred in 1794, but rather on the development of banking and commercial trade under Alexander Hamilton's influence in the period 1789-1792. Much of the story transpires in Philadelphia, which was the nation's temporary capital while the city of Washington was being built. Some chapters do present life in transit to Pittsburgh and New York, and the very dissimilar lives people led in those two places in this period.

The tale is told by two very different narrators, in alternating chapters, and though their concerns and experiences seem worlds apart at first, as the book goes on Liss adroitly weaves their plotlines more closely together, so when we get to the ultimate climax (after about 500 pages) we have very layered understandings of the range of perspectives and concerns in a significant confrontation, and everything comes to a head. One of the narrators is Ethan Saunders, a dashing rascal and former spy for the patriot forces during the American Revolution, while the other is Joan Maycott, a deep thinking and formidable woman not afraid to take on a challenge. Part of the charm of any historical fiction is when and how we encounter real historical characters worked into the story, and the ability of the author to present these persons in a complex yet fair

way, so we see them as well rounded characters and not just flat ones, given the story's structure, but also as accurate (as much as possible) given what knowledge the readers might have of the historical moment. As expected, Liss does a fine job here, and among the recognizable figures we meet for those conversant with the Federalist period are Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Aaron Burr, Anne Bingham, Philip Freneau, and of course General Washington himself. In addition, I was quite pleased to see some positive sidekick characters (representing people of African descent in one case, Jews in another, and those involved in same sex relationships in a third) who would have truly been present in some of the historical situations described. Let me also mention, Saunders' witty dialogue as he encounters a wide array of scoundrels, dangers, and ordeals is often delightful. There is one truly vile villain, so worthy of a theatre full of hisses at a melodrama, that I now realize I enjoyed his continuing and growing evils, confident that the more I came to hate him, the sweeter would be his demise.

Laura says

I really enjoyed this book. I learned a lot about the Revolutionary period, and like any solid work of historical fiction, this book piqued my interest in learning even more. I enjoyed Liss's writing style and his humor. I was very surprised by how much of this wild story is actually based on reality.

This book was a five for me for probably the first third, but I docked it a star for what, at times, felt like anachronistic humor (very funny, but still) and for too many characters who felt a bit one-dimensional. The audiobook was also good, but not great.

Having said that though, I think if you're interested in Colonial America, you would likely really enjoy this one. I'm looking forward to reading Liss's others.

Stacey says

The character of Ethan Saunders was rather entertaining and I enjoyed this author's witty writing. It did take me a little while to get in to the dual storyline as one is told from the perspective of Ethan Saunders in the novel's "present day" and the other from the perspective of Joan Maycott, which starts about 10 years prior. The story slowly builds as the two story lines come together. The author shows you how events can change a person and how the line between good and bad can become blurred. I ended up enjoying this book and would recommend it. I will be looking for more from this author.

Carrie says

This was another Early Reviewer book and the second I've read by Liss. He writes historical fiction and this particular book is set in America, shortly after the end of the Revolutionary War and deals with actual historical events and figures from the time. I thought it was really well written, and I found it much more engaging than *The Coffee Trader*, his other novel that I have read. (*The Coffee Trader* wasn't bad, I just found it dull at times). In any event, this book was quite good and has made me interested to go back and read his two earlier novels. If you like historical fiction, give this one a try.

J.R. says

I remember liking "The Coffee Trader" when I read it many years ago, and I'm trying to get more into historical fiction. This started strong and I liked both of the main characters - sure, shambolic drunken rogue who still manages to be preternaturally talented and/or lucky when the plot calls for it is a cliché, but it's a cliché that works. Unfortunately, this is a 500+ page book where there's only about 300 or so pages of plot. The book runs out of steam and becomes repetitive and the finale doesn't really build to much of anything. Still, I enjoyed it, but this was a let down after The Coffee Trader

Rich says

This. This is what a historical fiction novel should be. This is what a spy novel should be. I absolutely loved The Whiskey Rebels.

The Whiskey Rebels takes place after the Revolutionary War when America was just starting to flex it's muscles and find out what it was to become. References to historical events, and wonderful fictitious plotting combined with truly fascinating characters kept the pages turning. The Whiskey Rebels reads as much like a thrilling spy novel as it does historical fiction, which I find rather unique.

The writing is tight and precise and the plot is intricate and puzzling. Usually when there are so many characters in novels such as this, it becomes cumbersome and confusing. Not here. David Liss does such a wonderful job in avoiding those problems that it wasn't until nearly the end of the book that I truly appreciated the genius of Mr. Liss to write with such clarity. You have my word as a gentleman. I'm no gentleman? Well then you have my word as a scoundrel.

This era is not an era that I have read much about in the fiction world and this may not be a book for everyone. But if you like historical fiction, especially American historical fiction, this is a must read.

And I almost forgot to mention, two of my favorite characters in a long time, Ethan Saunders and Joan Maycott.

Tim Weed says

This book is good entertainment. Liss is an excellent writer, with a good sense of humor and an admirable ability to construct a lively, immersive scene. And he clearly did his research. The book as a whole, though, is frustratingly flawed. I found the plot too complex, too arcane in its attempted fidelity to the financial details of the period, to the extent that the main emotional thrust of the story gets lost. But a more serious problem for me had to do with the book's characters, its dual protagonists.

It's narrated in the alternating first-person POVs of Ethan Saunders, a Revolutionary war veteran and drunkard, and Joan Maycott, the wife of a settler in western Pennsylvania who becomes the head of a group of rebels attempting to disrupt the U.S. financial system. The risk of this dual approach is that if one or the other of your narrators is weak or implausible, the whole edifice of the story collapses, and unfortunately this

is what happens. Saunders is great—believable, entertaining, proactive—but Maycott is not. The first part of her story, the abuse she and her husband face on the frontier, is believable and compelling. But her apotheosis—when she is supposed to become the charismatic leader of the rebellion—is not well done, and for most of the second half of the book she is an incomprehensible character. Her motivations are unclear, her voice is inconsistent, and she becomes a kind of zombie or marionette character who seems to exist merely for the convenience of the author's interest in portraying the financial machinations that dwell at the center of his over-complicated plot. This is obviously a big problem for the integrity of the book, or at least it was for me.

Still, as I said, this was otherwise well written and entertaining. Recommended if you're interested in the period.
