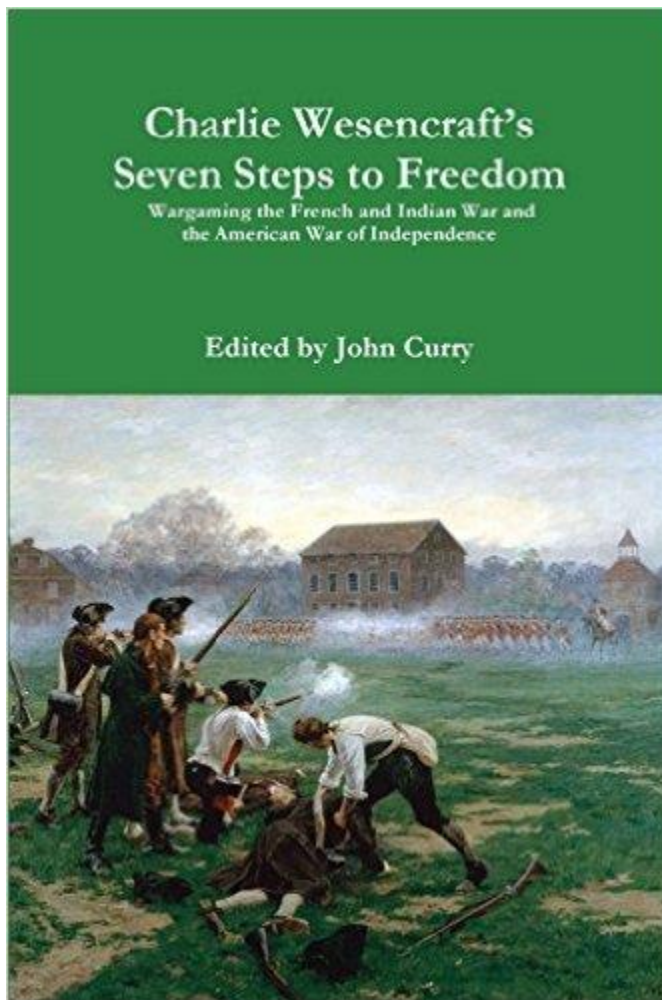


'Seven Steps to Freedom: Wargaming the French and Indian War and the American War of Independence'

By Charlie Wesencraft

Review by Paul Le Long

First of all, please forgive me for a little self-congratulation here. The manuscript upon which this book is founded was mentioned in an article about Charles Wesencraft in issue 370 of *Miniature Wargames with Battlegames*. It was just noted that the author had written the manuscript in the 1970s but that the publishers had turned it away. I got in touch with John Curry and asked him if he could use his influence to get the book published ó which he did.



Wesencraft published what I think is a seminal book ó *Practical Wargaming* ó in 1974. That was quickly followed by *With Pike and Musket* (both reviewed on this blog) which was a book of rules and scenarios for the English Civil War. *Seven Steps to Freedom* is really a sister volume to the latter, concentrating on battles in colonial America and the American Revolution.

After a brief introduction to warfare in America in the 18th century, we get into the heart of the book (pp.18-142) which is the scenarios. There are 29 of them ó 4 for the French & Indian War and the rest for the Revolution. Each is a few pages covering background, orders of battle, a map and advice on how to play it out. All the battles you would expect like Saratoga, Brandywine, Germantown and so on are here. The presentation is virtually identical to that found in *With Pike and Musket*, so if you

like that book, you'dl probably like this one too. Even if you are not intending to use the author's own rules, the scenarios are easily converted to whatever you are using ó by keeping it simple, he has encouraged flexibility.

The book then moves on to wargames rules (pp.143-181). These will offer few surprises to readers familiar with Wesencraft's other works. They are of their time and therefore necessarily dated (the book should have come out in about 1976, after all). Dated yes, but Wesencraft was nevertheless always pretty innovative for the time. My guess is that no one will be buying this book for the rules anyway; you'll buy the book for the scenarios.

I'd say that if you already have Featherstone's *Wargamer's Handbook of the American War of Independence* then *Seven Steps* will complement that volume nicely. Both are available from John Curry's History of Wargaming site.

This is an excellent book and it's a shame that it lay in a drawer for nearly 40 years. As a history of colonial America, there is better out there, but I would strongly recommend it to anyone who likes Wesencraft's work, or to anyone who wants simple scenarios that easily translate to the tabletop.

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This is a John Curry History of Wargaming book which is currently selling from £10.87 on Amazon.