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DOWNTOWN VERSUS NEIGHBORHOOD:
FOCUSING ON PHILADELPHIA IN
THE METROPOLITAN ERA, 1920–1980

Recently, Sam Bass Warner observed that the modern 20th century service-oriented city should be viewed as an artifact, its streets, sewers, schools and architecture monuments to the regimine of the past. Somewhat tremorlessly, this look at the literature on Philadelphia in the post-industrial era invokes the past—Antiquity and Saint Augustine—for its analytical model. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, scholars have been enticed by Saint Augustine's dualism of two cities. Victorians like Benjamin Disraeli, and non-Victorians—Lewis Mumford and Patrick Geddes come to mind—assiduously juxtaposed the good with the bad city. Today writers inexorably contrast the city of slums and poverty with the city of insouciant wealth.¹

Influenced by the prolificacy of the Chicago School, modern students have grafted an anatomical dimension onto Augustine's dualism. Urban cores of sin oppose a progression of increasingly righteous zones. Crowded downtowns compete with lower density uptowns, the inner city vies with the outer, the ghetto with the suburb, and so on. But a thread of consistency governed the texture of these polarities: the old city, whether titled core, slum, ghetto or inner city, invariably bore the stigma of decadence.²


Perhaps Philadelphia does offer a variant form. Although the scholarship of Philadelphia as a post-industrial city fits the dualistic mold, curiously, writers habitually have viewed the city's downtown—its inner city—as the abode of hope rather than despair. This examination of the studies of post-industrial Philadelphia, 1920–1980, focuses on both political and socio-historical monographs, and analyzes them according to their orientation to the downtown core as well as to the city viewed as a collectivity of neighborhoods. Not only does this approach afford insight into the historiography of the 20th century Philadelphia, but also, it illuminates the modern city itself.

To begin, several studies have emphasized the segmented character of post-industrial urbanism. In his *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth*, Sam Bass Warner treated the post-industrial metropolis as a segregated city with a "downtown" differentiated as the locus of business and wealth. Surrounding the core of wealth Warner discovered equally differentiated neighborhoods including working class districts like Kensington, Fishtown, and Richmond, ghettos and immigrant refuges like Southwark, Whitman, and Queens Village, and commuter suburbs like Haddington and Wynnewfield in West Philadelphia. Warner noted that the subway, trolleys, elevated trains and other expensive appurtenances of the city's costly transit system confirmed the city's dedication to privatism and reinforced the segregation of its neighborhoods by class, race and ethnicity.3

Likewise, William Cutler in the concluding chapter to Cutler and Howard Gillett's *The Divided Metropolis: The Social and Spatial Dimensions of Philadelphia, 1820–1975*, interpreted the dichotomies, core and neighborhood, wealth and poverty, residence and work as part of a "persistent dualism" involving the dynamic forces of centralization and decentralization. While events such as the suburban annexation of 1854, 19th century mass transit, and the city charter movement of 1951 abetted centralization, the popularization of the automobile, the road and highway acts of 1916, 1921, and 1956, plus the Federal Housing Act of 1933, engendered significant decentralization.4

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4. See William Cutler's "The Persistent Dualism: Centralization and Decentraliza-
The literature then, albeit sparse, suggests that in the play of macrocosmic forces shaping modern Philadelphia—centripetal versus centrifugal—urbanization versus suburbanization—the neighborhood more than the downtown was the trampled and scarred victim.

**The Downtown Connection**

Most studies of the social and political dynamics of modern Philadelphia have stressed the real as well as the symbolic significance of the city’s historic core: Vine Street to the north, South Street to the south, and bounded east and west respectively by the Schuylkill and Delaware rivers. In his study of the *Perennial Philadelphians* Nathaniel Burt detected the locus of the Wharton, Pepper, Drexel, Biddle, Cadwalder and Clark family fortunes and power in the downtown. Burt even pinpointed the spot—Broad and Chestnut streets—referring to the august assemblage of banking edifices—the Philadelphia National Bank, Girard Trust, and Pennsylvania Company—as the “nest egg.”

Digby Baltzell’s sociological odyssey, *Philadelphia Gentlemen in the Making of a National Upper Class*, traced the lineage, economic instruments, and social apparatus of the city’s aristocracy before and after the Schuylkill Expressway became the umbilical cord connecting “mainline” to center city Philadelphia. Like Burt, Baltzell acknowledged that the critical mass of mainline power remained concentrated in the old city despite the hegira to the suburbs. Warner noted that by 1930 the Central Business District (CBD) comprised the seat of Philadelphia corporate power and enclosed the ancillary communications and other tertiary functions which made the city a commercial and administrative hub. Nicholas
Wainwright’s studies of the Philadelphia Electric Company and the Philadelphia National Bank detail the nexus between the corporate power and the central city. Both John Reps and Mel Scott in their histories of planning explained how in the 1920s a harmonious alliance of Philadelphia wealth and boss politics graced the baroque designed Benjamin Franklin Parkway with City Beautiful embellishments while promoting the city efficient with the Broad Street subway. Warner contends that as the downtown became more functionally specialized to include corporate headquarters, financial institutions, exclusive specialty shops and large department stores, the center city increasingly became the domain of the middle and upper classes. Skyscraper office buildings, gilded theatres, fine restaurants, posh hotels (until the Legionnaires disease), upper class clubs, museums, and the Academy of Music differentiated the downtown as an exclusive neighborhood. However, with the intensification of modernization in the 1920s, Nathaniel Burt’s *Perennial Philadelphians* shared this specialized urban space with the new middle class of professionals, engineers, and scientific-minded bureaucrats who—like the old elites—commuted between the core and their suburban homes.

None of these historians overlook the city’s costly transit system of subways, streamline trolleys and interurban railroads which made the core of business, entertainment and shopping accessible. Interestingly, one of “perennial Philadelphia’s” most faithful


servants, J. Hampton Moore, recaptured the mayor's office in 1931 by complaining that the city's costly subway, parkway and sesqui-centennial stadium had bankrupted the city.9

**Politics**

The Moore reference emphasizes that the bulk of the standard scholarship on post-industrial Philadelphia explores the city's political life. And just as the downtown connection informs the history and sociology of Philadelphia's mainline elite, so any excursion into Philadelphia's political maze begins and ends in the downtown. In fact Digby Baltzell sees politics bulwarking Philadelphia's downtown elite institutions. In this interpretation (reinforced by the scholarship of Samuel P. Hays and Robert Wiebe) during the 1920s Philadelphia's boss-ruled Republican organization of Edwin and William S. Vare, in the tradition of its more proper forbearer, the Boies Penrose machine, stood guard over the nest egg of banks, Union League, and other exclusive clubs. Noting that in modern times Philadelphia lacked a blue-blooded or other leading municipal official, Baltzell states that it is "equally true that the local Republican party had for years been run to suit the business interests of the upper class in the city." No study of Philadelphia's post-industrial politics has deviated far from that position.10

Historians marvel at the magisterial orchestration of boss rule in Philadelphia. Yet, evidence demonstrates that boss rule in Philadelphia spawned not only vintage corruption, but also, concomitantly nourished the seminal ideas of scientific efficiency. Hays reconciled this bewildering contradiction in his classic article on "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era." As capitalists in the late 19th and early 20th century steadily oriented their business ventures outward toward national and international markets, Hays finds that they abjured active participation in local politics. To fortify their interests at home businessman sought regular, predictable linkages with urban government either through

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tractable bosses, efficient city managers or government bureaus. Philadelphia's old patrician and new bureaucratic elites sealed their commitment to this modern limited but regularized involvement in city politics by moving their residences to mainline communities like Radnor, Bryn Mawr, Glenside or Jenkintown.11

Its flight notwithstanding, the mainline retained a vested interest in the latent-function of urban politics to insure a salubrious environment for private enterprise. In Quay-Penrose tradition during the 1920s the Vares performed yeoman service for downtown business. According to several accounts of Philadelphia politics by writers like Marquis Childs and John Coburn Turner, J. T. Salter and none other than George Wharton Pepper, the brothers ably served such downtown economic interests as the Pennsylvania Railroad. City funds maintained the extensive rights-of-way of the Pennsylvania and Reading lines, and also provided city industrialists full protection in periods of labor unrest.12

For the same reasons powerful business organizations like the Philadelphia Board of Trade and the Chamber of Commerce easily tolerated the one-party domination of the city's Old Guard Republican Party. J. T. Salter in his numerous Political Science Review articles and Boss Rule: Portraits in City Politics, and David Kurtzman in his 1935 dissertation on "Methods of controlling votes in Philadelphia," described how the Vare machine secured political control over the city by engineering regular landslide election victories in the city's river wards. Assigning to the ward leaders he interviewed fictitious names such as Tony Nicollo, Sam Lit, and Nicholas Fishbourne, Salter explained how the machine used favors to erect an


almost indomitable political organization. Not ignoring the key role of favors, Kurtzman emphasizes how bosses utilized patronage to purchase the loyalty of a solid cadre of committeemen and ward workers.\(^\text{13}\)

While Salter and Kurtzman’s colorful portraits of boss politics in Philadelphia accent the fortress aspects of the machine, more recent accounts have spotlighted the chinks in its armour. Philadelphia’s machine exhibited the classic spatial structure found by Zane Miller in *Boss Cox’s Cincinnati* and by Wendt and Kogan in Bathhouse John Coughlin’s Chicago. Like Cox and Coughlin the Vares consolidated their power in the ancient neighborhoods of the urban core. However, elsewhere, on the urban periphery, independent Republicanism appealed to sections like Chestnut Hill and Mount Airy, the home of J. Hampton Moore, Mayor from 1920 to 1924 and again mayor from 1931–1935.\(^\text{14}\) A search of Moore’s extensive papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania supports Robert Drayer’s picture of Moore as a middle class gadfly who gloated at hobnobbing with Philadelphia’s wealthy business and civic leaders. Drayer’s 1961 dissertation portrays Moore in the early 1930s valiantly championing Philadelphia as a bulwark of Republicanism against desecration by the New Deal. However, Drayer wrongly depicted Moore as an “old fashioned Republican.” Moore exemplified particularly the bureaucratic-minded passion for efficiency and economy which infused Philadelphia business and industrialism in the 1920s. Accordingly, Vare’s immigrant-based politics assaulted the sensibilities of independent Republicans like Moore who lived in peripheral Mount Airy.\(^\text{15}\)


During the 1920s Vare’s city witnessed the flowering of interest in science and efficiency. Both Frederick W. Taylor and Morris L. Cooke, who coupled industrial efficiency and employment regularization with the associational movement of the decade, lived in Philadelphia. Roy Lubove in his *The Professional Altruist* established the city’s place in the annals of scientific casework. Furthermore, during Philadelphia’s “seedtime of reform,” efficiency based organizations like the Philadelphia Housing Association (PHA) strove to strengthen the city’s housing codes. According to Mel Scott in the 1920s Philadelphia’s Russell Van Nest Black played a prominent role in advocating regional planning as an antidote to incipient suburban sprawl.16

Significantly, as Cutler observes in his article on “The Persistent Dualism,” the work of regional planning agencies, the PHA, and the National Municipal League and other professionally conscious bureaucratically based organizations attempted to impose efficiency and order through centralization. Nowhere was Philadelphia’s commitment to efficiency and centralization more apparent in the 1920s than in the area of social welfare. Leading city social workers such as Arthur Dunham and Karl DeSchweinitz, crusaded to modernize the state’s poor laws. Spurred on by the professional altruists employed in family societies, and settlement houses, by 1930 city voluntary social agencies boasted an efficient Social Service Exchange and solicited funds through a city-wide United Campaign.17

Yet, what Thomas Philpott found true of Chicago’s settlement houses and other welfare services in the 1920s Bauman found true of Philadelphia’s agencies in the early 1930s. Although professionalism eclipsed 19th century philanthropy, the mainline values and prerogatives of *noblesse oblige* persisted in the board rooms of city charitable agencies. Professionalized services were tailored to the needs of the deserving poor, not the undeserving masses who haplessly

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slipped through the "slats" into the myriad of political and unprofessional soup kitchens and ward charities which characterized the neighborhoods.\footnote{Thomas Philpott, \textit{The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle Class Reform, Chicago, 1880-1930} (New York: Oxford, 1978); Leah Hannah Feder, \textit{Unemployment Relief in Periods of Depression: A Study of Measures Adopted in Certain American Cities, 1857-1922} (New York: Russell Sage, 1936); Bauman, "The City, The Depression and Relief."}

Although Herbert Hoover's President's Organization on Unemployment Relief lauded it as an epitome of voluntarism, Bauman, Clark Chambers, and Bonnie Fox (Schwarts) showed how Philadelphia's celebrated Committee on Unemployment Relief (CUR) failed. As head of CUR, mainline Drexel and Company partner, Horatio Gates Lloyd, marshalled Philadelphia's banking and business establishment to combat the relief crisis of the early depression. But, despite its professionalism, CUR collapsed under the weight of massive unemployment. In a magnificent transmogrification, between 1932 and 1934 private relief and public relief in Philadelphia merged into the County Relief Board, a highly centralized system which gratified the professionals, but conceded little to the social or psychological needs of the jobless.\footnote{Albert U. Romasco, \textit{The Poverty of Abundance: Hoover, the Nation, the Depression} (New York: Oxford, 1965); Bonnie Fox, "Unemployment and Relief in Philadelphia, 1930-1932: A Study of the Depression's Impact on Voluntarism," \textit{Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography}, 93 (January 1969); see also, Robert D. Cuff, "Herbert Hoover and the Ideology of Voluntarism and War Organization During the Great War," \textit{Journal of American History}, 54 (September 1977): 358-372.}

Historians have viewed New Deal relief as much from the political as from the social perspective. Unquestionably, the Bauman, Priscilla Clement, and Searle Charles studies of New Deal relief, particularly the Works Progress Administration, have found more politics in Philadelphia than accomplishment. As elsewhere, work relief in the city helped revive the once moribund Democratic Party. Irwin Greenberg's 1972 dissertation, "The Philadelphia Democratic Party, 1911-1934," and John Shover's two articles, "Ethnicity and Religion in Philadelphia Politics," and "The Emergence of a Two-Party System in Republican Philadelphia," have investigated the rebirth of Democratic politics in the city. For decades the party was a Republican captive with offices paid for by the Vare machine. Using voting, housing, and ethnic data, Shover impugns the significance of the 1928 Al Smith campaign as the critical election which revived the city's Democratic Party and restored two-party politics.
in Philadelphia. Instead Shover found that after 1936, not before, the attraction of Democratic ethnic politics lured significant numbers of Italians, Jews, Poles, and blacks. On the other hand Greenberg espies 1933 as a pivotal year when a coalition of splinter Republicans turned Democratic, namely John B. Kelly, Albert M. Greenfield and editor J. David Stern, elected a full slate of Democratic candidates to city row offices. Nevertheless, as Shover observes, the 1930s in Philadelphia politics represented a critical epoch more than a time of critical elections. In fact, in the face of Franklin D. Roosevelt's popularity, the Republican Party managed to retain control of the city's political machinery until 1951.20

More important for the perspective of this essay, city Democrats and Republicans alike pursued a core-oriented program. Democrats like Kelly persuaded conservative businessman that only the infusion of federal dollars could rescue Philadelphia from the precipice of bankruptcy and refurbish the quality of city life. Aping Philadelphia's mainline Republican oligarchy, the Irish overloads of the fledgling Democratic party discussed by Dennis Clark in his *The Irish in Philadelphia* dogedly equated urban vitality with the soundness of the Central Business District. According to Clement and Bauman, John B. Kelly, Matthew McCloskey, and John McShain helped garner millions of WPA and PWA dollars for downtown post offices, customs houses, airports and City Hall scrubbings. Meanwhile, however, neighborhood housing and neighborhood services, particularly water, sewerage and lighting, deteriorated.21

Kelly, McCloskey and Greenfield shared with the Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade the fear that an irrevocable pattern of blight was overtaking the downtown. Any interest business and civic leaders evinced in housing reform stemmed more from the urgency of slum clearance, the control of crime and delinquency, and the containment of the spreading black community, than from any ideal that the working class needed decent housing. That vision


of a redeveloped, revitalized downtown burned even more brightly in the midst of World War II when planners like Edmund Bacon and Walter Phillips incanted and extolled scintillating visions of a post-war city.\footnote{22} Few studies surpass either Mel Scott's description of wartime planning or Mark Gelfand's discussion of planning and the federal-city wartime entanglement in his \textit{A Nation of Cities}. As Roy Lubove tells us about wartime Pittsburgh and Martin Schiesl explains about World War II planning in Los Angeles, the war afforded a new legitimacy and respect for professional city planning. In 1941 Walter Phillips and Dean Holmes Perkins of the University of Pennsylvania School of Fine Arts joined business and civic leaders to form the Citizens Council of City Planning (CCCP). A second group of businessmen, fearing the vitiation of the downtown, founded the Greater Philadelphia Movement. By 1945 nonprofit organizations like the CCCP and the GPM, the Pennsylvania Economy League, the Housing Association, and the Philadelphia Housing Authority inspired zealous young middle-class and mainline Philadephians to reform and redevelop Depression and war weary Philadelphia.\footnote{23}

The major studies of post-war Philadelphia—and indeed there are few—contend that, like Pittsburgh, the core-based business and financial elites joined middle class ring neighborhoods to institute reform and initiate coordinated planning. Kirk Petshek in his \textit{Challenge of Urban Reform: Policies and Programs in Philadelphia}, James Reichley in \textit{The Art of Government: Reform and Organization Politics in Philadelphia}, and Joseph Fink's dissertation, “Reform in Philadelphia, 1946–1951,” sympathetically if not affectionately portray the Joseph Clark, Richardson Dilworth administrations as the effective agents of critically needed urban reform. Yet, not a single interpretation denies that the Clark-Dilworth reform movement focused most of its energies on restoring the vitality of the down-


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town. Presumably, invigorating the urban heart would unclog the filth congesting the arteries of the neighborhoods.  

Not many Philadelphians (elites or non-elites) trusted the city's Republican machine to perform such surgery. Philadelphia's Republican machine survived World War II, but in seriously debilitated form. What Reichley calls the machine's "Patrician overlordship" ended in 1948 with the death of Thomas S. Gates, President of the University of Pennsylvania and a mainline luminary. Without Gates the wealthy, but socially credential-less Joseph Pew proved powerless to restrain the excesses of the machine. Moreover, between 1946 and 1951 political graft and corruption in the city reached scandalous proportions, arming young socialite Democrats like Dilworth and Clark with the political ammunition needed for victory. In 1951 indignant Philadelphians voted for both a home rule charter and a Democratic administration pledged to carrying out a comprehensive program of social and economic reform.

Petshek and Fink extoll the Clark-Dilworth era as a triumphant moment—"a sunlit hour"—in the history of urban reform. Petshek sees Clark and Dilworth forming a coalition of reform-minded businessmen, and young professional and civic-minded Philadelphians with residences in the downtown or in such historically independent middle class neighborhoods as Germantown, Mount Airy, Chestnut Hill and West Philadelphia. By 1954 Clark's championship of civic rights, particularly his record of support for fair employment practices, welded the black voting community to his coalition.

However, as Petshek sees it, Clark's concern for blacks and other working class Philadelphians never overshadowed his belief in the primacy of the downtown. Petshek treats Clark and Dilworth as post-war New Dealers who in New Deal fashion believed in aiding the urban oppressed through the more efficient articulation of the city's economic, social and spatial patterns. Post-war reform focused on urban development rather than structural change, on environmental more than social engineering, on bureaucratic rather than social efficiency. According to Petshek, Clark's comprehensive program called for housing and slum clearance, new industrial


25. Petshek, Challenge of Urban Reform; Fink, "Reform in Philadelphia;" Reichley, Art of Government.
development, mass transit, modern parking facilities, and the completion of the expressway system. Petshek and Fink find these priorities consistent with the civic and professional ambitions of the Downtown and circle neighborhoods.

Petshek especially concentrates on Clark and Dilworth's efforts to enlist business and civic organizations behind urban redevelopment; he gives William Rafsky special attention. Clark appointed hosiery union organizer Rafsky to be his coordinator of development, and under him, according to both Petshek and Reichley, the GPM, the CCCP, the Housing Association, and Chamber of Commerce gained unobstructed access into the city's planning process.26

Despite this element of democracy the planners of Philadelphia's renaissance exuded what Richard Sennett derogates as a "purified image" of the city's future. Inspiration for the 1954 Central Urban Renewal Area study came from professional housers such as Dorothy Montgomery, executive director of the PHA, and member of the redevelopment authority, and from planners such as Walter Phillips. Naturally, the CURA study aimed to halt the spread of blight in the central city. As a result, the two jewels in the city planning diadem were the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation's Society Hill restoration, and Greenfield's Penn Center Plaza, the latter in part inspired by Victor Gruen's *The Heart of Our Cities.* In similar fashion to Pittsburgh, Detroit, Boston and New Haven, the Clark-Dilworth reform riveted the planning energies of the city on the CBD. Although Rafsky and Clark tried to neutralize Bacon's penchant for "projectitus" the heritage of Philadelphia's "golden age" was calculated in terms of housing projects, office plazas, Society Hills, and the machinery for comprehensive planning.27

Philadelphia's approach was highly centralized and according to Fred Foley was premised on the firm belief that the level of urban corruption and inefficiency varied positively with the level of decentralization. In an article in *Urban Education* on the "Failure of Reform: Community Control in Philadelphia Public Schools," Foley explored the professional's antipathy for decentralization by studying school superintendent Mark Shedd's failure to decentralize the administration of Philadelphia schools. Shedd's plan came up


before a school board headed by Dilworth himself, and was defeated by the distrust Dilworth and his professional colleagues harbored for the neighborhoods.  

The Neighborhoods

Allured by the downtown, historians, political scientists, economists, and policymakers alike have tended to ignore the crisis eroding the environmental quality of Philadelphia's neighborhoods. As Burt observed, middle class and elite Philadelphia long regarded the zone of neighborhoods outside the downtown as a "swamp"; alas, the emerging transportation-induced city-suburban pattern of post-industrialism enshrouded the swamp in thicker and thicker murk. Yet, the bias for centralization invidiously diverted attention from the neighborhoods. Conrad Weiler makes a similar point in his Philadelphia Neighborhoods: Authority and the Urban Crisis. Beholding the parochiality and uniqueness of neighborhood life "as an obstacle to rational, enlightened government which threatened the good of the whole city," the reformers, concluded Weiler failed to see that the "liberal commonweal embodied in such things as urban renewal or charter reform has been too often merely the selfish possession of the downtown or upper class neighborhoods." Weiler admonished the "downtown" to "confront the problem of urban class and ethnic diversity (ergo the neighborhood)."

If Weiler's elysium of heterogeneity still awaits fruition in Philadelphia, at least an agenda for scholarly confrontation has been established. Historian pioneers of post-industrialism and neighborhood change have explored the effect of suburbanization, the job-residence nexus, and the enigma of race and ethnicity. Efforts have been made to link the patterns of neighborhood change to political behavior. Several studies have focused on particular neighborhoods. In other words the murk engulfing the swamp seems less opaque, and moreover, despite the denseness, contours are beginning to appear. William Cutler, for one, in probing the shifting currents of decentralization and centralization in Philadelphia, discovered forces of decentralization rampant in the 1920s. Significantly, the pre-World War II settlement of what Kenneth Jackson

calls the "crabgrass frontier," and the interstitial filling of the
periphery induced by the recreational use of the automobile co-
incided with an equally momentous event in post-industrial ur-
banization: the flood stage of black migration.30

Although W.E.B. Dubois' *The Philadelphia Negro* set high standards
for studies of the black urban experience, recent scholarship has
bypassed Philadelphia for other cities. Philadelphia's black com-
community awaits a study comparable to Allan Spear's *Black Chicago*,
Gilbert Osofsky's *Harlem*, Kenneth Kusmer's dissection of Cleveland's
black ghetto, or David Katzman's masterful portrait of black Detroit.
Historians know somewhat more about black Philadelphia during
the Great Depression. H. V. Nelson has investigated the impact of
class and race differences among Philadelphia blacks in the 1930s;
Bauman has studied the New Deal and black housing, and James
Erroll Miller's 1945 dissertation examined black voting patterns in
Philadelphia, 1932-1945. Other scholars, including Shover, have
explored (if only briefly) how black voters between 1936 and 1957
left the clutches of the city's Republican machine for the tight
embrace of the Democrats. Nelson's in-depth study of the ideological
cleavages of class and race consciousness within the black community
suggests that the New Deal lured the black middle class to the
Democracy with promises of political status, good housing and fair
employment practices. Nelson and Bauman argue that although
segregated, public housing fulfilled the desire of middle class blacks
for decent housing distinguishable from the black slum. However,
as Allen Winkler found in his study of the transit strike of August
1944, the black migration of World War II not only significantly
expanded the North and West Philadelphia black community, but
also heightened the city's racial tensions. For a full week white trac-
tion employees struck against the effort of the Philadelphia Trans-
portation Company prodded by Washington to upgrade eight
Negroes to motormen positions formerly restricted to whites. The
strike crippled a transportation system critically needed for war pro-
duction and forced Secretary of War Henry Stimson to take Federal
control of the transit system. Winkler emphasized that the major
strike issue centered more on the struggle between the Congress of

30. Cutler, "The Persistent Dualism;" Jackson, "Crabgrass Frontier;" for an
interesting discussion of suburbanization, deconcentration and decentralization,
see John D. Kasarda and George V. Redfearn, "Differential Patterns of City and
43-67.
Industrial Organization's (CIO) Transport Workers Union (TWU) and the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Employees Union (PRTEU) than on the issue of race. The TWU supported black employment opportunity. Accordingly, both the PRTEU and the PTC exploited the upgrading issue to challenge the growing power of the TWU. Ultimately, President Franklin Roosevelt imposed the Smith-Connally War Labor Disputes Act to end the strike and the upgrading continued. Although the Urban League viewed the outcome as a victory for "equal opportunity," realistically, the strike served notice to city blacks that job gains in the post-war era would come slowly and with great difficulty.31

A recently completed study by Bauman of war housing in Philadelphia revealed similar findings. Black in-migrants in the city, failing to discover housing in the already congested Poplar Street or Temple Area slums or in the recently opened Richard Allen or James Weldon Johnson projects, occupied the segregated housing in the grim Shipyard, Tacony, or League Island war housing. Many of the black residents had found good wartime jobs in the Navy Yard, Budd works or the Frankford Arsenal. However, after the war, black workers faced joblessness or at best demotion to menial, low-paying jobs.32

Gene Erickson and William Yancey's study of "Work and Residence in Industrial Philadelphia," reinforce the above point. Erickson and Yancey show that from 1945 to 1970 the white job-residence nexus and discrimination against blacks in the city’s manufacturing sector confined blacks to the shabby housing in non-industrial neighborhoods abandoned in the white post-war hegira to the suburbs. Peter Binzen's 1970 study of Philadelphia's Whitetown, U.S.A.


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showed the impossibility of equating neighborhood stability with neighborhood quality in white working class communities such as Kensington and Fishtown. The city-wide educational achievement test scores which prompted Binzen's study revealed that in many cases schools in white sections were having less success than schools in black districts.\(^{33}\)

In his 1965 article on "Hosiery Workers and the Third Party Impulse," J. David Pivar explained that in the 1920s textile mill districts like Kensington were wracked by joblessness, low wages and labor strife. Heavily populated by English and Irish-Americans with significant clusters of Poles, Philadelphia's mill towns epitomized the convergence of work and residence and yielded extraordinarily high rates of home ownership. This confluence of home ownership, ethnic cohesiveness, and industrial instability produced a militant attachment to both neighborhood and union.\(^{34}\)

Contrary to the elite view of the city, the Polish immigrants in Caroline Golab's study of *Immigrant Destinations* beheld the city of Philadelphia as an abstraction and their neighborhoods as the reality. It was the neighborhood, not the city, which provided immigrants with their identity. Although Philadelphia's large black and Irish population dissuaded large numbers of Poles from settling in Philadelphia, Golab's study found that by 1930 sizeable Polish communities with spectacular rates of home ownership had formed in Kensington, Port Richmond, Bridesburg and Manyunk. Like Erickson and Yancey, Golab stressed that home ownership, proximity to work, and—for the Poles—the opportunity to establish an intricate web of social relations, firmly rooted these people to the neighborhood.\(^{35}\)

Turning from the working class zones of North Philadelphia to the zones of better residences in northern West Philadelphia, Margaret Sammartino Marsh's 1974 dissertation describes how in the 1920s transportation and work patterns transformed blithe and bucolic suburban communities into segregated urban regions. She sees nativist and racial hatreds at work luring those who could afford it to the security of safe homogenous neighborhoods. Marsh

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shows how these forces changed a rural-like suburban Wynnewfield of 1900 from an informal neighborhood into the new urban heterogeneity of the 1920s where residence was based upon socio-economic criteria.  

In conclusion, it should be clear from this survey that Philadelphia as a post-industrial city remains a relatively unexploited area for research. Despite the fascination of traditional historians for the urban core, students of the old city must penetrate beyond the romance of Broad and Chestnut and explore the experience of a mature industrial city caught in the throes of a difficult transition from an industrial to a tertiary economy. Unquestionably, the Canby Balderson and Glady Palmer Philadelphia Labor Market Studies constitute an important starting point. Hopefully, more comprehensive studies of this dynamic change will illuminate the linkages between business, industry, ethnicity, neighborhood change, and the politics of Old Guard Republicanism on the one hand and the Rizzo Imperium on the other.

Furthermore, Kenneth Jackson and Bill Cutler have hinted at a vast potential in suburban studies. More extensive studies of the post-World War II diaspora of the white middle class will presumably yield important insights into the motivations behind urban renewal and illuminate the societal tensions behind the modern urban crisis. However, it is the other city, the gray areas the neighborhoods left behind by suburbanization that still offer the most enticing prospects for future research. Erickson and Yancey have posed their hypothesis, but more research must be done to place the transformation of the old city neighborhood in the perspective of post-industrial urbanization and to fathom the life experiences of the black residents who inherited these neighborhoods. In one last sentence, the metropolis, the service oriented tertiary city, looms as a singularly rich arena for future research.