BOOK REVIEWS


In publishing this small book the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission has continued its commitment toward maintaining an historical bibliography of the Commonwealth. Trussel's work is the fourth volume in a series covering historical publications from 1966 to 1979. Books, articles, and dissertations have all been included. It follows the same format as the previous three. The first part of the work covers the chronology of Pennsylvania from 1682 to the present. The second part deals with special topics such as county histories, church histories, and minority and ethnic groups.

Trussel has provided a brief introduction and statistical analysis about the citations appearing in the volume. The colonial period has maintained its traditional popularity. The newer trend of more work on the late nineteenth century has continued to grow. He notes a lack of equal emphasis on the pre-Civil War period and the twentieth century. Another trend is also evident. More work is being done in social and economic history rather than the more traditional area of political history. Yet even within these areas there are topics which need greater attention such as agriculture, commerce, and banking. Biography is another area which is greatly lopsided. Benjamin Franklin has forty-six items devoted to him. No other individual received more than five citations.

A major strength of the book is the extensive index which covers thirty-one pages. It contains subjects, authors, and place names. There is also a good deal of cross-referencing which proves helpful in looking up citations. I found only one oversight which I felt had some importance. The name Jacob Cist did not appear under biographical citations as was the case with other individuals. Nor did his name appear in the index.

Scholars, students, and libraries interested in Pennsylvania history will find this volume a welcome addition to the bibliographies of the Commonwealth. It is not only interesting to find out what type of historical literature is being written about Pennsylvania, but also helps a person look up a special topic.


Peter Onuf's *The Origins of the Federal Republic,* is a welcome addition to our historical understanding of the events and ideas of the American Revolutionary era. This well-researched analysis of the years 1775 to 1787 reviews the boundary and western land controversies of the newly independent American states. Although judicial decisions were not always conclusive, Onuf maintains that the conflicts succeeded in forcing the states involved in such disputes to define the parameters of governmental authority and their relationship to the Congress. The conclusions reached in these judicial disagreements also served to
advance the position of those who called for a stronger continental union at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. An important aspect of this era was the limited authority exercised by the American states. This was particularly in evidence regarding Pennsylvania’s difficulties in the northeastern and southwestern sections of the state. In Revolutionary Pennsylvania, the proprietary charter, which was so roundly criticized by the radicals prior to independence, was utilized to support the Commonwealth’s claims to the disputed territory. Indeed, the Pennsylvania leadership maintained the same position regarding the contested areas as the Penn family had taken before the revolution.

Although there were serious problems concerning the loyalty of settlers in the northeastern and southwestern areas of the state, Pennsylvania officials viewed the situation solely in terms of their legalistic battles with Connecticut and Virginia. Once resolved, Pennsylvania looked to the continental government for continued affirmation of its jurisdictional boundaries and acceptance of its authority by the disgruntled citizenry of the northeastern and southwestern corners of the state. Therefore, Onuf points out, Pennsylvania acted as a member of a community of republican states with a central governing authority, rather than as a sovereign nation.

Despite the success of Pennsylvania and other states in resolving jurisdictional conflicts, uneasiness with respect to citizen loyalty prompted contemporaries who advocated a stronger union to portray the years prior to the adoption of the United States Constitution as a critical era. While Onuf does not accept the Federalist-Fiske thesis that the states were about to wage war on one another, he maintains that this perception of the situation was enhanced by numerous separatist movements and by Shay’s Rebellion. In fact, events in Massachusetts were of particular importance for Federalists to point to as proof that all states—not just those with contested boundaries—were vulnerable to frontier insurrection.

The Federalist call for a Constitutional Convention provided the opportunity to establish a stronger continental government. Onuf contends that the Federalists consistently exaggerated the seriousness of state rivalry and the potential dangers from boundary disputes. The Federalists were able to convince Americans that they had endured the worst, in hopes of a more perfect future. Ironically, the Federalist success in persuading Americans to support the new Constitution was not because of the failure to settle judicial controversies, but the defining of what constitutes an American state and the role of the continental union which occurred as a result of those disputes. Thus, Onuf departs from traditional interpretations that view the Constitution as a beneficent or unfortunate outcome of the period, and sheds considerable light upon how events and ideas became the basis for the 1787 consensus of republican government.

Westmoreland County Community College

LEMUEL MOLOVINSKY


Mr. Madison’s War represents an able attempt to examine one of the most peculiar aspects of the War of 1812—the failure of the nation to conduct the war
effort in a minimally competent fashion. We have known for years that the war effort was badly administered. The question Mr. Stagg asks, is, why was that so? An obvious question, the answers to it shed much light on our attitudes about the military and its place in American society, on the success of the constitutional reforms of the 1780s in establishing a government to provide for the common defense, and on the interconnectedness of war, economics, and politics in the Early Republic.

While Mr. Madison's War represents than an attempt to understand why the War of 1812 proved to be a succession of errors in administration, it is also an exploration of the unease that we had (have?) with the military. This is, therefore, an important book that complements the work of Charles Royster on American attitudes toward the military during the Revolution. The author also offers the most intelligible explanation yet of why the United States chose to go to war and to execute that war by invading Canada. And he more than satisfactorily answers the question he asks about why the war effort proved to be such a flawed one in execution.

There are only two limitations of the book I wish to mention. First, the author chose to examine the war effort from the perspective of James Madison. He does this, he says, because of the central role of Madison in the national politics of the period. I suspect it also has a great deal to do with the availability of the Madison papers. While such a concentration is understandable it makes the book less satisfactory than, for example, Royster's A Revolutionary People at War which rests on a broader archival base. The other limitation is the price of the volume. This is a good book, but even in paperback Princeton University Press has priced it beyond the reach of many who should read it.

University of Texas at San Antonio

STEVEN R. BOYD


These useful books represent an important development in the field of women's history in the United States, namely, the spirited efforts of local and state women's organizations to publish reference sources for the reconstruction of women's past contributions to American society. A special committee of the Mayor's Commission for Women of Philadelphia assembled the guide to women's history resources in the Delaware Valley area as part of its goal of making Philadelphia's cultural and educational institutions and its community and civic organizations aware of the available scholarly resources on women's history. The compilation of biographies of Pennsylvania women involved the participation of fifty-five of Pennsylvania's seventy-eight American Association of University Women's branches. Both organizations deserve praise for their efforts to further the cause of women's history in the United States.

Our Hidden Heritage contains one-page or two-page biographies of 259
women who deserve recognition for their experiences as pioneers, performers, community activists, or professionals. The volume opens with an introductory essay on women's history in Pennsylvania that complements the sixteen sections of biography that categorize women by their date of birth and "prime area of involvement of occupation" (p. xvii). The book sections include frontier life, government and politics, military and support services, medicine, law, journalism, political activism, community development, religion, education, and the arts and sciences. Our Hidden Heritage reminds Pennsylvanians that some very famous women, such as Pearl Buck, Margaret Mead, Rachel Louise Carson, and Hilda "H.D." Doolittle Aldington came from Pennsylvania. More importantly, the volume pays tribute to many women whose visibility has been totally limited to their local communities. Unfortunately, the book does not spell out the criteria used in the selection of women honored with biographies. In addition, the individual portraits are devoid of source references so that the reader has little idea how the biographical information was collected. The lack of references to sources limits the book's usefulness as does the brevity of the entries.

The Guide to Women's History Resources in the Delaware Valley Area contains a brief essay on women's history in the region, a list of institutional records relevant to women's history, a list of notable Delaware Valley women who were born or performed significant work in the region, and a selective bibliography of scholarly works on women's history, the Delaware Valley, as well as women in the Delaware Valley, and, lastly, indexes of institutions and women in the Delaware Valley by field of achievement or topic. This volume is an excellent model of what needs to be done throughout the United States to locate records for historical research. The Women's History Project of the Mayor's Commission enlisted the help of librarians, archivists, and curators throughout the Delaware Valley area to describe records in their institutions suitable for historical inquiry. Primary and secondary sources were also consulted for the list of notable women in the Delaware Valley area. The list of notable women, as editor Trina Vaux is aware, mostly identifies white, middle-class, Protestant women. A concerted effort was made to include sources for the study of other groups of women. The section on institutional records lists information about Roman Catholic religious congregations and artifacts and materials about women's domestic activities.

Both volumes deserve to be in every school and public library in the state of Pennsylvania. The successful completion of these ambitious projects by women's organizations should spur others to continue the endeavor of bringing to public attention the contributions of women to the past and present.

University of Pittsburgh

Maurine Weiner Greenwald


This book records the story of the search by American Presbyterian women for some measure of equality and status in their denomination over the last two hundred years. The author's main theses are well documented. They assert that
Presbyterian doctrines demanded the subordination of women and the supremacy of men in human relationships both inside and outside the church.

The authors also indicate that women exerted considerable influence through their boards for home and foreign missions. Furthermore, in recent years, they have achieved great gains toward equality in the Presbyterian church, most dramatically, perhaps, in the General Assembly's approval in 1979 of an amendment to the Form of Government that specified the election of both men and women to the offices of deacon and ruling elder.

Boyd and Brackenridge have made good use of General Assembly Minutes and other official church documents housed in the Presbyterian Historical Society. In addition, they have employed oral history sources to supplement the written word.

The book consists of four parts. The first describes the organization of women in the church from 1789 to the present. The second returns to chronology and focuses on the burning issues of whether or not women should be permitted to speak in church and the quest by some for ordination. The third section deals with professional and lay participation of women in missions, education, the ministry, and as ministers' wives. The fourth recounts the story in the Southern Presbyterian Church and ends with a chapter on the contemporary scene.

Ample evidence is supplied to show that during the nineteenth century traditional scriptural interpretations were used to prevent women from speaking, teaching, and praying aloud in mixed church services. The authors give due credit to Charles Finney's support of women praying in public and his dispute with Asahel Nettleton at the New Lebanon Convention in 1827, but neglect his later support of the women's cause.

The authors are particularly effective in tracing the changes that occurred after the Civil War when women increased their influence within the church. As they became more important to the work of the church, it was inevitable that they would seek equality in church activities.

As the text indicates, however, efforts to widen women's sphere between 1880 and 1920 were only partially successful. It was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that the Presbyterian Church supported its own training school for deaconesses. It was not until 1928 that ordained male church leaders met with women to discuss questions regarding sexual equality in church government and not until 1930 that the General Assembly granted women ordination as ruling elders.

The year 1969, however, marked the beginning of a new era for male-female relationships in the church. From then on, according to the authors, "the issues, concerns, and needs of women have had an unprecedented prominence in General Assembly deliverances and in denominational practices" (p. 226).

Although the authors occasionally compare the situation within the Presbyterian church with that of other Protestant denominations, the book could have been strengthened by more cross-denominational comparisons. The text could also have been enlivened with more biographical details on the many interesting women who contributed to the shaping of events within the church. It would be useful to know, for instance, how active these women were in secular reform movements as well.

This book is a useful addition to the growing literature on women's history...
and the rise of feminism. It belongs on reading lists in courses on women’s studies and church history.

Ohio Humanities Council

CHARLES C. COLE, JR.


The discovery, in an old bread box, a stash of letters from Elizabeth Lawrence to her family, presented historian Helen Hartman Gemmill several choices. She might edit the letters for publication, with annotations to fill in the inevitable gaps. Or she might write a full-fledged biography of this nineteenth-century Bucks County native who married well, traveled widely, enjoyed a long widowhood, and inspired the character of Madeleine Lee in Henry Adam’s Washington novel, Democracy. Instead, Gemmill did both, producing a biography based heavily on the Bread Box letters from which she generously quotes. The result is a somewhat unsatisfactory blend of letters and narrative, redeemed by the book’s excellent format and Elizabeth Lawrence’s lively style and vivid descriptions.

Elizabeth Chapman Lawrence was born in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, in 1829, daughter of Judge Henry Chapman who later served in Congress. While touring Europe, she met her future husband, T. Bigelow Lawrence, scion of the Massachusetts manufacturing and diplomatic family, and himself a successful diplomat. Thanks to her family’s standing, her husband’s position and wealth, and her own abundant charm, Elizabeth Lawrence was a sought-after guest in high society at home and abroad.

Beginning in 1853, her letters to her family describe her encounters with the leading literary and political figures of her time, in London and Florence where Bigelow Lawrence served as diplomatic attaché and consul, and in Washington, where Elizabeth maintained a home following her husband’s death in 1869. She was a close friend of Harriet Lane, niece and White House hostess of Pennsylvanian James Buchanan; together she and Harriet were presented to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in May, 1854. Elizabeth’s descriptions are sometimes sharp, often funny. Her judgements were occasionally wide of the mark: she disapproved of both Queen Victoria and Abraham Lincoln. Although her pride in her Doylestown home and in her family’s Quaker background is apparent in her letters, her lavish society life and her opposition to the abolition of slavery belie her own more simple origins. By their very nature, her letters leave many questions unanswered, in particular, the nature of her marriage and her reaction to the death of her husband and the suicide of her friend, Marian Adams. As a result, Mrs. Lawrence sometimes seems more frivolous and shallow than her spirited letters on less important matters otherwise suggest.

Helen Gemmill does not attempt to analyze the life of Elizabeth Chapman Lawrence in the broader context of nineteenth-century womanhood. She does, however, present a highly readable and entertaining behind-the-scenes account of nineteenth-century society. The book reflects Gemmill’s careful background research, especially her use of contemporary illustrations. She chronicles well Elizabeth Lawrence’s benevolence, particularly to her family, and its impor-
tance in the efforts of her nephew and heir Henry Mercer in establishing the Bucks County Historical Society. The book contains a helpful index, but would have benefited from fuller descriptive footnotes and more specific citations to the Bread Box letters quoted in the text.

University of the District of Columbia

JEAN L. PREER


The slender volume contains fourteen papers of which twelve were presented originally at a colloquium conducted by the Brooklyn College in 1981 as part of a celebration of “German Art and Thought in the Nineteenth Century,” sponsored by the Federal Republic of Germany. These essays can be viewed as tentative and preliminary studies directed toward a long-range, in-depth examination of the impact of German culture, as transmitted by German immigrants, upon the development of American culture.

At least three of these papers deal with aspects of the German-American experience in nineteenth-century Pennsylvania. In one article William Durden examines the importance of the German-American reading society as an alternative educational institution which provided an opportunity for pleasure and intellectual growth to fully-employed persons. In particular, he describes the organization and program of the Reading, Pennsylvania, Lesegesellschaft which was the first German-American reading society, founded in 1803. Its main purpose was to raise funds to purchase books, published in German, for circulation among its members. It remained in existence until 1840. It helped preserve the German language for its members through the vehicle of German literature.

John R. Costello studied Henry Harbaugh’s Pennsylvania German poetry and reached the conclusion that this work was written to protest the anglicization of Pennsylvania German culture and dialect. He suggests that Harbaugh used English words in his poetry, even though Pennsylvania German words were available, to identify ideas, attitudes, and behaviors which he deplored as hostile to the culture and which he hoped that his readers would reject. Costello holds that, in the mid-nineteenth century, relations between the English-speaking and German-speaking communities were marked by a feeling of mutual dislike, and that as a loyal Pennsylvania German, Harbaugh shared the antipathy of his fellow Pennsylvania Germans for English values and actions, and expressed his dislike in his poetry. This interpretation seems to be somewhat forced. Harbaugh was no country bumpkin living in semi-isolation on a mountain farm. He was a distinguished seminary professor and a leader of his church who traveled widely through the state and nation, and who was at home in the English-speaking world. If anything, in his dialect poetry with its nostalgic emphasis, he was contrasting unfavorably the complex and impersonal society of the industrial city with the comparatively uncomplicated, pre-industrial world of the farmer.

In her essay, Franzi Ascher-Nash examines the folksongs of the Pennsylvania Germans. She finds that these songs had originated among the first generation of
settlers and were preserved by future generations by word of mouth, even though the conditions which they described had passed away after the second generation. She discovered also that many of these songs had their roots in medieval Swiss mountain songs and that often the singer was accompanied by another musician playing the dulcimer. Finally, she learned that a few songs were translations of nineteenth-century English songs as "Oh Susannah!"

These essays reflect the strength and limitations of the collection. Their strength lies in their careful examination of discrete phenomena, and their limitation is that they cannot describe the larger world of the nineteenth-century German in America. They are tantalizing but not satisfying.

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

MAHLON H. HELLERICH


On reading this biography, diverse advice of two well-known practitioners of the genre is brought to mind. Allan Nevins in The Gateway to History contended that only the really great life deserved concentrated attention. Lytton Strachey, on the other hand, suggested in the preface to Eminent Victorians that as no one could be expected to master the literature and thus the facts and implications of a great historical era the biographer as historian was justified in bringing up from the historical deep some specimens, useful for understanding the past. Clearly Nevins would disdain Schoenfeld's life of Gridley whereas Strachey could have found in him an apt specimen/subject.

Gridley's name has been narrowed to a single command given him by Commodore Dewey at the start of the Battle of Manila Bay: "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley." The battle which was a glorious first of May for Dewey was hardly so for Gridley. He was a very sick man, allowed by Dewey to remain in command of the flagship Olympia because he pleaded not to be relieved and in part because there was a shortage of officers. He was dead in just over a month, probably due to liver cancer, having expired in Kobe, Japan, on his way home. His ashes were taken to Erie, Pennsylvania, where a memorial to him now stands.

Born in Logansport, Indiana, in 1844 Charles Vernon Gridley was appointed to the Naval Academy in 1860. He served under Farragut commencing in 1863, the course of instruction at the Academy having been drastically shortened due to the war. Duty with the West Gulf Blockade Squadron, as another serving junior officer, A. T. Mahan, wrote, was "desperately tedious." After the war, like Mahan, Gridley remained in the Navy. In 1871 he was assigned to command the U.S.S. Michigan, whose home port was Erie, Pennsylvania. The Michigan was the only warship on the Great Lakes at the time. In 1872 Gridley married Harriet Vincent, daughter of Judge Vincent, one of Erie's leading citizens. In this way Erie became Gridley's adopted home town.

Sea duty and an assignment as instructor at the Naval Academy in the 1870s and 1880s took Gridley away from home for extended periods. Then in 1891 he was restored to duty as a line officer and in June, 1897, was given command of the Olympia on station in the Far East. In this capacity was Gridley caught briefly in the cross hairs of history.
What would Lytton Strachey have found in the life of Charles Vernon Gridley which might be historically confirming if not exactly revealing? Certainly his career reflected the ennui of the 1870s in American naval service, a growing interest in advanced technology and especially gunnery in the 1880s, and the new role of the Navy in the large policy of the United States in the 1890s. Whether Maxwell Schoenfeld was conscious of the Strachey method in writing this brief, well-documented account is not important. That he has woven the career of Gridley into the overall fabric of American naval and diplomatic history is what counts. As Allan Nevins as written, biography "humanizes the past," and it is in this sense that Schoenfeld makes a small but useful contribution to historical understanding.

Saint Joseph's University

DAVID H. BURTON

Life by the Moving Road: An Illustrated History of Greater Harrisburg. By Michael Barton, with Marc A. Dorfman, and pictorial research by Irwin Richman and John Beck. (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, Greater Harrisburg Area, 1983. Pp. 223. $24.95.)

First, write a brief, anecdotally rich, and lively history of a small city; second, illustrate the history with colorful pictures and interesting photographs of the city; and, third, append capsule histories of the businesses and industries identified with the city. This appears to be the Windsor Publishing Company's formula for producing marketable and profitable local history, and Michael Barton's Life by the Moving Road is a superb example. Indeed, the book was published in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce of Harrisburg.

True to the Windsor recipe, the book actually contains two parts: first a series of fourteen illustrated historical vignettes capture the flavor of Harrisburg's history from 1733 to 1980. Part 2, about one-third of the text, comprises a collection of short business histories written by Marc Dorfman, a free-lance writer who collaborated in writing the book. This review only encompasses Barton's glimpses of Harrisburg's history.

Barton does not attempt to write the definitive history of Harrisburg. Indeed, the author employs an effective and entertaining kaleidoscopic technique for familiarizing the reader with the principle historic changes in the social and economic fabric of Harrisburg life. Therefore, Barton presents his historical vignettes as neatly sliced pieces of the larger tapestry of Harrisburg's social, economic, and political history. These clips, some admittedly apocryphal, afford insight into the temper and quality of Harrisburg's life at numerous stages in the city's chronological development.

At the outset, Barton makes clear his belief that above all it is the Susquehanna River which has historically given form and texture to the city's life. As a transportation artery, the occasion for a ford, then a bridge site, the river was early Harrisburg's raison d'être. But the river's beauty and grandeur, as well as its terrible capacity for flooding, made it more than any other factor an unchangeable quantity in the calculus of the city's destiny. To continue the story, Barton examines the legend of the Shawnee Indian's attempted immolation of John Harris. In the various and conflicting written and artistic accounts of Harris's attempted burning by a band of presumably intoxicated Indians,
Barton sees a young city struggling to reconstruct a "useable past." Moving into the nineteenth-century, Barton reveals that traveler's descriptions of Harrisburg glimpse not only a heavy drinking society, but also a frontier democracy where even black slaves enjoyed a modicum of freedom. Records of the State Lunatic Hospital in Harrisburg enable Barton to explicate the Victorian moral beliefs undergirding the city in the mid-nineteenth century. A. M. Bowman's diary describes "Lee's invasion which never came," while Harrisburg's "Guilded Age" appears in the colorful recital of "Boss" Harry Cook's funeral. Much of Harrisburg's "City Beautiful" Movement is told in the words of the city's premier beautifier, J. Horace McFarland. And, finally, Barton employs Harvey Taylor's Secret Diary to "cover" the history of post-World War II Harrisburg.

The vignettes, buttressed by a selection of paintings and photographs, create a mood of the times. Moreover, Barton effectively uses his sources to imply urban growth and technological progress. However, the author regrettably fails to explore the significance of his illustrative historical incidents, other than, for example, explaining that the State Lunatic Hospital was part of the larger proliferation of institutions in mid-nineteenth-century Harrisburg. Therefore, it is the anecdotal and pictorial display which motivates the book and not its interpretative content. And that, of course, is the author's and the publisher's intent. To their credit, it is considerably more entertaining, and more intelligently written, than many other books arranged so neatly on the American middle-class coffee table.

*California University of Pennsylvania*  

JOHN F. BAUMAN