Book Reviews:


From the late 1960s, the concept of separate spheres for women and men came to dominate the emerging field of women's history, crowding out alternative theoretical approaches. In *Life After Death* Wilson has advanced the dialogue on separate spheres and offered an important challenge to several aspects of current gender theory.

First presented by Barbara Welter in 1966, the idea of separate spheres offered historians a solution to one vexing problem: how to write about women where participation in the economy, the state, and the learned professions traditionally defined the historical arena. Research did indeed uncover some women, forgotten and neglected, who had met, or nearly met, the traditional requirements. Groups of women were recognized, particularly in the early factories and in reform movements. Textbooks that had been almost exclusively concerned with males now include some women. But no amount of research could gainsay the fact that relatively few individual women or women's movements had achieved positions of influence and power. Were all women to be condemned to a secondary and peripheral status in the study of history? If so, then women's history would remain irrelevant since it offered only a record of oppression, defeat, and inferior achievement.³

Welter's reformulation of women's position offered a striking solution to this stumbling block of women's apparent perpetual inferiority. Since the early nineteenth century, she argued, American women had not participated in the same world as men. According to Welter's reading of early nineteenth-century literature, industrialization carved out a separate sphere for women who were expected to be pious, pure, submissive and domestic. These characteristics were not innate, timeless attributions of gendered identity, but were cultural creations that had historical roots. The history of women could ignore the chronologies of great men and large events, since women's lives were separate and different. In the domestic sphere, women were the actors and women's achievements could be measured by women's standards.⁴ In addition, the doctrine of women's difference could provide a basis for women's growing influence.⁵

Something of the change wrought by this approach to the history of women can be seen in the distance between the dismal assessment of women's role afforded by early studies of women and the American Revolution, and the later, more positive evaluations of historians. In 1976, Joan Hoff Wilson found only a negative tale.⁶ Indeed, if Abigail Adams' much-quoted injunction to the founding fathers "to remember the ladies" is the standard for judging the revolution, then there was no revolution for women, only more of the same patriarchy. But by 1980, both Linda K. Kerber and Mary Beth Norton found in the late 18th and early 19th century household and family, if not in the state, a new status for women as republican mothers or exemplars of republican womanhood. This heightened respect for women led to educational opportunities,
companionate marriages, family planning and a falling birth rate, as well as an elusive, tentative, but real sense of individualism and self confidence. The private, domestic sphere had its own history. Most recently, Linda Kerber has shown that the post-revolutionary status of women can be made the standard by which men's understanding of equality, natural rights, and citizenship can be judged. In this sense, the studies of women and the American Revolution have come full circle in the last two decades—from women's achievements being measured against men's standards to men's standards being comprehended in terms of women's status.

The triumph of the concept of separate spheres was not accomplished without an undercurrent of criticism. Gerda Lerner was among the first to identify the class-blind character of the ideology of "true womanhood" as described by Welter. Others, like Deborah Gray White, stressed the "the malevolence that flowed from both racism and sexism" for African Americans. Thoroughly dismantled by subsequent research has been the idea that the doctrine of separate spheres was congruent with industrialization, implying a preindustrial "golden age" when women producers had power and respect for their contributions to the family economy. It is now generally accepted that the vociferous insistence on separate spheres in the nineteenth century marked not a new phenomenon, but a frantic attempt to retain a fading system of rigid gendered roles. Other evaluations of the concept of separate spheres have stressed issues of power, conflict and autonomy as men and women struggled to achieve their visions of themselves and of society.

What had been an undercurrent of criticism has recently become a flood of increasingly sophisticated analyses of gender in American history. Joan W. Scott has argued that while we now know that "women were agents of history," history written in terms of the "separateness and difference of women" often produces a history "so different from the standard story as to seem parallel but not central—sometimes even trivial." She calls for a new history that moves toward an inclusive, complex history of the varied strains of human experience. Linda Kerber has warned that "to continue to use the language of separate spheres is to deny the reciprocity between gender and society, and to impose a static model on dynamic relationships." Ava Baron writes that in fact gender "is constituted through people's lived experience within continually redefined and contested social activities and institutions. Gender is integral not only to relations between men and women, but also to a myriad of other relations of power and hierarchy." Recent work, then, has called for an appreciation of the reciprocity, not the separateness, of gender roles, to recall that "woman" is defined as not "man," just as masculinity is conceived of as not feminity. These differences between male and female are social constructions that enforce power relationships by masking similarities. And to idealize men as dominant, aggressive, independent public figures excludes not only women, but all those men who may possess none of those attributes. Gendered roles are neither static nor universal.

In Life After Death, Wilson asks if woman's proper role was to be subordinate to a man, how did social norms encompass the commonplace reality of widowhood—when women became heads of their own households? Wilson's answer is to argue that gendered definitions of social roles were less important between 1750 and 1850 than familial definitions, both for women and
men. Husbands considered the best interests of the family and not patriarchy when writing their wills, while the widow, “when proper feminity stood in the way of providing for herself and her family” entered the public sphere in order “to meet her family obligations” (p. 5). If family, rather than gender is the focus, she argues, then women and men’s lives are seen as “less dichotomous, and closer to a realistic representation” (p. 5). Women could be actors in the public realm, married men found identity in their domestic responsibilities. Reciprocity and shared experience prevailed over separateness and difference in Wilson’s account. Complexity, overlapping definitions and conflict in gender roles also shape her analysis.

Wilson first discusses the emotional shock of the loss of a spouse, and then moves on to the central concern of her research—the strategies employed by women to maintain themselves and their kin after widowhood. By Pennsylvania law, women should not have fared well in widowhood. The intestate provisions of state law were among the harshest in the United States in preferring a debtor’s claims to the estate over the claims of the widow. Yet husbands and wives, in cooperation or independently, protected the family’s interests and the welfare of the survivors. The economic situation of the family may have varied by rural/urban residence or with the coming of industrialization, but the familial orientation did not change in the century studied. Wilson also examines her major themes in light of the economic status of families. Poor wives became poor widows, wealthy wives remained wealthy. Propertyless widows strove to maintain their independence by avoiding the almshouse, while propertied women worked to pay their debts and, in many cases, to advance their fortunes. Both propertied and poorer widows concurred in trying to hold their families together. Contemporary notions of domesticity did not substantially limit these women in their roles as heads of household.

Two aspects of this research stand out. First, Wilson counters the tendency of some historians to apply rigid definitions of the doctrine of separate spheres as explanations for all behavior in the past. For example, she corrects one common reading of men’s intentions in assigning executorships of their estates. Suzanne Lebsock, in her study of Virginia, is among those arguing that wealthy husbands excluded their wives because executorship “stretched the wife’s competence or undermined her status as a lady,” and that all men believed that younger women “were too inexperienced to assume the executor’s responsibilities.” Wilson reminds readers that executorship was often an onerous burden, not a position of power, especially where the estate was complex, or the surviving spouse was burdened by illness or busy with small children. To be spared an executorship was not necessarily to be denigrated by male prejudice. Since husbands frequently consulted their wives in writing their wills, men’s testamentary provisions often reflected women’s preferences. The exercise of power and authority by husbands and wives was far more complex, and more cooperative, than historians have argued. Second, Wilson is willing to portray women as multifaceted, complex adults. Too often women in early America are stereotyped as everlastingly meek and mild, patient and long-suffering. In her account there are few such heroines or passive victims (although some sons and sons-in-law were oppressed by dominant women). Pennsylvania widows could be conniving, manipulative, criminal, weak, responsible, selfish, caring, short-sighted, or even wise. Whatever their character, most had a clear idea of
their goals in life and knew how to achieve those goals. As she concludes, “Female competence and family affection fitted easily together under the rubric of womanhood” (p. 170). If anything, Wilson is too sanguine about husbands’ familial intentions, but the men are dead and no longer hold center stage.18

Her portrayal of gender roles challenges several recent interpretations. Women and the family were not at odds in her account of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—late twentieth-century notions of autonomy and selfhood are not appropriate to earlier periods of American history.19 Widows were not deputy or surrogate husbands, but competent actors in their own right.20 The appropriate spheres of both men and women included knowledge of the domestic and public realms. Separation and difference have been exaggerated, while common experience, competence, and reciprocity have been underestimated.21 This is a valuable contribution to gender and family studies.

One question remains. How much of this new interpretation of gender and family is due to Wilson’s theoretical framework and how much is due to the fact that her subjects are Pennsylvanians?22 She posits both the representativeness of Pennsylvania within the nation and Pennsylvania’s “unique milieu of heterogeneity” (p. 6). These regional issues have recently been debated by Michael Zuckerman and Jack P. Greene in this journal,23 while Jean R. Soderlund has called for a new model of women’s history based on Pennsylvania’s religious, ethnic and racial diversity.24

Some women did use diversity to their advantage. Jane Martin Bartram left the Quakers to marry a Scotsman in the German Lutheran church, and then left her husband to support the revolution.25 Elizabeth Sampson Sullivan Ashbridge moved from the Old World to the New, from Anglicanism to Catholicism and back, from servitude to an abusive husband. As a Quaker minister, she finally realized “a Pennsylvania of the soul,” an identity which had come from the process of experience.26 Diversity in Pennsylvania gave these two women options while undermining the authority of their husbands.

Other works on gender and the family have stressed not variety, but the dominant role of the Quakers in introducing such key concepts as domesticity, family planning, and feminism to Pennsylvania and beyond.27 Yet if Quaker ideas led the way, Quaker women are often described in terms of their separation and difference from other women.28 How could Quaker ideals be so influential in the domestic realm, if contact and shared experiences between groups of women were infrequent?29 A few studies have suggested that the uniqueness of the Quakers has been exaggerated, particularly on the subject of family planning, but we know too little of non-Quaker women.30 There is no consensus on the meaning of cultural diversity in Pennsylvania and much that awaits further study.

Is the competence and confidence of Pennsylvania women (and the domesticity of Pennsylvania men) in fact typical of early America as a whole? Was it even typical of central and western Pennsylvania? Or, is this a localized pattern that will later spread throughout the nation? If so, what is the timing and cause of this rippling effect? Is it the mix of religions, ideologies, social
ranks and statuses, ethnic and racial groups in southeastern Pennsylvania that produces this less dichotomized definition of gender by about 1750? Or is it the Quakers (or another group) that achieve a greater or lesser degree of cultural hegemony? How do the apparent continuities of familial concern mesh with a century of political, social, economic and ideological revolution? These and other questions need investigation and Wilson's model of complementary and overlapping gendered roles should be combined with Soderlund's call for an examination of women in Pennsylvania's heterogeneous society. Like all good history, Life after Death not only answers questions but also raises important and exciting issues for future research.31

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Notes


3. Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Bantam, 1953), was widely read. She argued that "the whole of feminine history is man-made," including feminism. Historically prominent women are "oddities" who have adopted "masculine perspectives" in order to succeed (pp. 118-128). The record of women from prehistory to the present filled only seventy pages. She would conclude that "the historical fact cannot be considered as establishing an eternal truth. . . . The free woman is just being born" (pp. 672-3).


10 Deborah Gray White, Ain't I a Woman?: Female Slave in the Plantation South (New York: Norton, 1985), 162.

11. The classic accounts of a golden age predated Welter. See Elisabeth A. Dexter, Colonial Women of Affairs: Women in Business and Professions in America before 1776 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924) and Career Women of America: 1776-1840 (Francistown, New Hampshire: Jones, 1950). But later historians concurred. In the colonies, "Women's accomplishments in domestic crafts commanded the esteem that was due all necessary functions," wrote Nancy F. Cott, while after industrialization, economic dependence was char-
characteristic of women and the "important productive capacity of women instead appeared in their reproductive capacity." Roots of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women (New York: Dutton, 1972), 6, 23.


19. Compare Degler, At Odds.


24. Jean R. Soderlund, "Women in Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania: Toward a Model of Diver-


phia Transformation Project, May 1987; Karin Wulf, "'As we are all single': Unmarried Women of Property in Philadelphia County, 1693-1774," paper presented to the Philadelphia Center for Early American Studies, March 1992. While Wilson tends to treat the period from 1750 to 1850 as a whole, particularly in terms of gender relations, most of these studies focus on change, particularly in the 1780s and 1790s.


Riding a wave of idealism in the 1960's, a regiment of fervent young historians churned out books purporting to find a tradition of altruistic reform at the heart of American history. They singled out the abolitionist movement for special, often rapturous attention. A decade later fatigue and conservative resistance had swept much of this aside, replacing it with skeptical if not cynical critiques of American reformers' timidity, lack of vision, and self-interestedness. Finally, the less morally engaged era of the 1980's saw most historians shelve moral questions almost altogether, choosing instead to unleash their computers on dispassionate studies of communities, usually communities of those (historiographically and otherwise) neglected people toward whom reformers had directed their efforts. Now the 1990's find Gary Nash and Jean Soderlund producing a valuable, insightful work that contains elements of all three prior historiographical moments.

Slavery was part of Pennsylvania society virtually from the beginning. William Penn owned at least twelve slaves, and it took a few generations even for Quakers, let alone other groups attracted to the prosperous colony, to proclaim an unequivocally antislavery position. Individual manumissions by non-Quakers were rare before 1780. Still, in that year Pennsylvania managed,
via a gradual emancipation law, to become the first state south of New England to abolish slavery. How and why that happened, how the law's provisions were carried out, and what impact this all had on the state's black population, are the subjects of this book.

Nash and Soderlund acknowledge the presence of real altruism in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, especially among Quakers after 1750, but gradually among others as well. They discuss several morally committed people, few more stunning than wealthy Philadelphia merchant Joshua Fisher, who as well as their offspring in 1776, at age 69, began an exhaustive eight-year search for all their slaves, in order to buy and free them, that he had sold in the past.

But the authors are emphatic that Joshua Fisher was atypical. Stressing “the tension between economic interest and antislavery ideology” (p. xii), they argue convincingly that appeals to conscience were never sufficient to overturn a profitable institution. Rather, they point to other factors facilitating abolition. Unlike in the South, slaves in Pennsylvania were never directed into work specific to them; no occupation ever became fixed in the public mind as exclusively slaves' work. Additionally, slave mortality rates in Philadelphia were unusually high, and a 10 point tax per head on new imports (levied due to fear of a darkening population after the Seven Years War had diminished the white labor supply) made replacing the losses painfully expensive. Finally, the authors contend that slaves themselves pushed Pennsylvania toward emancipation by running away in far greater numbers than is usually assumed, thus injecting more anxiety and risk into slaveowning.

Ultimately, though, the key to passage of the 1780 emancipation law may have been the specifics of the law itself. Under the act, anyone who was a slave (adult or child) prior to March 1, 1780 could remain enslaved permanently. Any child born to slave parents after that date would be free on his or her twenty-eighth birthday, meaning that they still would be sacrificing themselves to owners during their most productive years. In fact, there would be slaves in Pennsylvania until 1847. Slavery would be phased out because it could be done with little or no financial sacrifice to the owners. Pennsylvania did have its Joshua Fishers, but more typical was painter Charles Willson Peale, a pro-emancipation member of the Assembly in 1780. Peale was "in theory convinced of the humanity of freeing slaves (p. 156), "but in practice willing to release them only if he could recapture his investment to the point of sending a slave woman into the Philadelphia streets to beg the amount he felt she was worth before he was willing to free her."

The authors' arguments about motivation are ably constructed and based on solid evidence that they have mined skillfully and obviously know intimately. Indeed, no two people are more qualified for this task than Nash and Soderlund, respectively the distinguished author of a study of black Philadelphia and the leading authority on Pennsylvania Quakers and slavery. Nevertheless, frustrating gaps in the documentary record force severe limitations even upon these two experts. While they try valiantly to flesh out the impact of antislavery actions and attitudes upon black Pennsylvanians, they are handicapped by lack of evidence. There are no descriptive written sources produced by black Pennsylvanians before the Revolution, and few for many years thereafter. Thus, the authors' fascinating account of the white reformers in the Pennsyl-
vania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery—they dub it "the nation's first freedmen's bureau" (p. 128)—can not be matched in vividness or interpretive surefootedness with a comparable account of the people that group served. They make maximum use of statistical data, estimating, for example, that only about ten percent of freed men and women rose significantly on the socioeconomic ladder. But such material is often ambiguous and treacherously incomplete, and is susceptible to overinterpretation. Generally the authors handle this material well, but some readers will have quarrels, finding evidence on slave runaways and some other matters to be less conclusive than they assert.

This said, *Freedom by Degrees* remains a sophisticated and important work, not least because of the sober (and sobering) object lesson it affords on why reform actually happens in a society simultaneously impassioned by principle and profit.

John d'Entremont, Randolph-Macon Woman's College


(Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991. 30 minutes long. $29.95.)

Accessible quality videotapes about American artists are rare, and *Mary Cassatt: Impressionist From Philadelphia* is a jewel. Filmed in 1975 by NET and available on VHS for several years, the tape is now being distributed by the University of Pittsburgh Press. Subtitle aside, Mary Cassatt was born and grew up in Allegheny City, part of present Pittsburgh. Her family did move to Philadelphia, her brother, Alexander, was to become President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and she would begin her artistic studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Displeased with the training she was receiving she fought with her father for the privilege of studying in Paris. Settling there permanently in 1874, the year of the first "Impressionist Exhibition," she would make France her home, returning to America only twice. She became the only American artist invited to show with the Impressionists. But she always considered herself to be an American, insisting to an interviewer that "... my name is Mary, not Marie ..." and enticing her parents and sister to live with her and establish a proper American household.

That the original film was made in 1975 is an advantage in that it could include interviews with the late Adelyn Breeskin, Cassatt's foremost biographer and author of the *catalog raisonne* of her work, and the last surviving of her nieces, a daughter of Cassatt's brother Gardener, who was clearly the Philadelphia "Mainline" matron aunt Mary never wanted to be.

Producer/director Perry Miller Adato thankfully was more in love with her subject than with her own technique, and thereby avoids what is the downfall of many films about artists, excessive panning which never gives the eye a chance to alight and never gives the viewer a sense of the painter's creation. Adato's visual treatment is kinetic but not frenzied. This sensitivity makes the tape especially valuable for instructional use.
Since the tape is only 30 minutes long, great selectivity was a necessity and happily the right choices were made. Always emphasizing Cassatt’s work, the film traces the artist from Philadelphia to Paris, and introduces us to the Impressionists and especially Degas with whom Cassatt had a long complex relationship. Asked if she thought the two were lovers, biographer Breeskin admits that at one time she “hoped they had,” but she concludes that they were probably just friends. There is attention to the artist’s family and to her friend Louisine Elder Havemeyer who, with Cassatt’s guidance, became America’s first collector of impressionist art. Cassatt located major impressionist and old master paintings for Louisine and her husband H. O. Havemeyer, the bulk of whose collection is now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In her later years, Cassatt was interested in the women’s suffrage movement and urged her American friends to this activity. She died in France in 1926, blind, wealthy, and with her work little known in her own country. This fine tape tells it all; it is on occasion poignant or amusing, but it is always scholarly and informative.

Irwin Richman, Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg


In his introduction, Maris Vinovskis, editor of this collection of seven essays, laments “the neglect of the American Civil War by social historians” and observes that most have also “ignored the possible influence of the Civil War on the life course of nineteenth-century Americans” (p. vii.). The purposes of this slim volume are to encourage scrutiny of the neglected areas and to provide examples of the kinds of studies that might be done. Only one of the essays was previously published and, by design, all seven focus upon the North. Vinovskis expresses the hope for a parallel volume on the South in the near future.

In the initial essay “Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War?” contributed by the editor, he analyzes statistical data on military casualties in the Civil War in comparison with each of America’s other wars and documents the dimensions of the greatest bloodletting in the nation’s history. Then, comparing enlistment rolls and other data for Newburyport, Massachusetts with manuscript census records, he explores the question of who fought for the Union. Finally, he charts the burgeoning federal pension program through the postwar decades, noting that by the 1890’s it constituted over 40 percent of the total federal budget.

In “Community and War: The Civil War Experience of Two New Hampshire Towns,” Thomas R. Kemp, through local newspapers, enlistment and draft rolls and manuscript census reports, examines how early, widespread enthusiasm for the war dissolved into disillusionment in the face of Union defeats and mounting casualty lists. More importantly, he concludes that those who fought constituted a reasonable cross section of their communities and that, for these communities at least, the war was not “a poor man’s fight.”
The interplay between soldiers in the field and the folks back home, as revealed in diaries and letters, is the theme of Reid Mitchell's "The Northern Soldier and His Community." Mitchell argues convincingly that because the Civil War company or regiment was recruited from a specific locality, comprised of friends and neighbors and commanded by men who had been peers in civilian life, it "begins with all the discipline of a lodge of Elks" (p. 81). However, he concludes that because companies were extensions of communities which soldiers felt they were defending, because communities kept the companies under close scrutiny and because news of insubordination or cowardice would quickly reach home, civilian volunteers became disciplined and courageous soldiers.

Essays by Robin L. Einhorn and Stuart McConnell explore the origins of machine politics in Chicago and examine the question of who joined the G.A.R. In "Such is the Price We Pay: American Widows and the Civil War Pension System," Amy E. Holmes tracks an ever-expanding pension system and concludes that it "became in effect an old age pension [system], specialized in helping a unique but large group of women: two generations of widows, mothers and wives" (p. 194).

Perhaps of greatest interest to Pennsylvania historians is J. Matthew Gallman's study, "Voluntarism in War Time: Philadelphia's Great Central Fair." Gallman analyzes the organization, administration, and execution of this spectacular fundraising event which engaged the efforts of thousands of Philadelphia volunteers, lasted for three weeks, attracted over 400,000 visitors and raised over $1,000,000 for the benefit of the United States Sanitary Commission. Noting that some historians have suggested that the Civil War accelerated the organization of activity in large, impersonal structures, and that the wartime activities of women propelled them into public affairs in the postwar years, he finds neither interpretative theme confirmed by Philadelphia's experience with the Central Fair. It was a grassroots effort in which large numbers of women participated but under an all male executive committee. "The signs of change," he concludes, "seem outweighed by the evidence of persistent localism and gender divisions" (p. 112).

This is, generally, a well-written collection although occasionally some of the authors, reflecting the paucity of the evidence, are more speculative than one might wish. Nonetheless, these are illuminating explorations of important and neglected subjects.

John F. Coleman, St. Francis College of Pennsylvania


Cultural Connections defies easy summary categorization. It is at once a guidebook and a history of collecting from the days of Charles Wilson Peale to the present. Most of all, it is a brilliant essay on American cultural self-perceptions and character, as viewed through the many and varied lenses of Philadelphia-area institutions.
The guidebook alone—over 60 pages of capsule descriptions of museums, libraries, galleries, gardens, and historic structures, replete with maps, representative illustrations from each institution’s holdings, and addresses and phone numbers—stagger the reader with the range of collecting institutions and their holdings, from books to bridles, mummies to mummers, wampum belts to wallabies. Vogel’s Baedecker invites readers to venture beyond Independence Hall to discover perhaps the richest, most diverse array of cultural institutions anywhere in the country. In doing so, the book should readily satisfy its sponsor, the William Penn Foundation, which commissioned a “comprehensive guidebook to acquaint Philadelphians with the cultural wealth that is part of their birthright” (p. 11).

But Vogel does more than encourage visits to area institutions. He asks us to look behind the buildings and objects to consider why “our society has come to treasure certain works of art and artifice, and particular books, manuscripts, and natural specimens” (p. 11), how and why institutions evolve, and how such institutions affect society even as they reflect the society that builds and supports them. It is Vogel’s interpretive thrust that moves the book past Peale’s cabinet of curiosities to see not just stuffed mammals, Revolutionary War relics, Chinese porcelain, or whatever, but to see ourselves.

In four lavishly illustrated, finely wrought chapters, Vogel assays the meaning of American nationality, Victoriana, discovery and exploration, and “the world we have lost.” Americans, he argues, have used art and architecture, along with ceremonies and rituals, to inspire loyalty to an American national ideal. Especially in the nation’s formative period, symbols of George Washington mixed with natural history specimens from the West to demonstrate American uniqueness; but of late Americans have embraced a more multiethnic identity, as we celebrate immigrant arrivals. During the Victorian period, which Vogel defines as a culture of “self-congratulation,” Americans prided themselves on new wealth and moral worth. Collecting high culture, especially art, gave social standing to wealth, and the idealization of the home insured both moral anchoring and a place to consume the new products of the industrial age. Confident of their own superiority, the Victorians built the great museums to display their genius. They ransacked ancient civilizations to fill those museums, and arranged everything, from human skull sizes and mastodon tusks to industrial products, to measure “progress” and impose order on their universe. Exploration and discovery went both outward into the world and inward into human nature. By the late nineteenth century science and technology began to shunt aside religion as the source of authority; Charles Darwin rather than Charles Finney had become the arbiter of human possibility, eugenics rather than evangelicalism the way to perfection. Yet, as society became more complex, nostalgia for some lost golden age of simplicity and virtue emerged. Creation stories collected from Sumerian texts, Mayan stele, Christian Bibles, or wherever, gained currency, and Americans retreated to patriotic and historical/genealogical societies in search of the simple life. No short review can do justice to Vogel’s interlacing of such themes, but overall he shows the dynamic, syncretic, and contradictory process of self-invention that has distinguished American identity(ies) over time.
Philadelphia boasts that "America began here." Insomuch as America is an idea, and the kinds of relics we preserve and institutions we build represent that idea, much truth resides in the conceit. By treating museum collections as a whole and marking the connections between their idiosyncratic, disparate holdings from ancient Egypt to colonial Philadelphia to today, Vogel shows how artifacts and images, and the institutions that collect and display them, have formed the marrow of American identity. One wonders about the extent to which Philadelphia's cultural connections defined America as Philadelphia slipped from cultural and economic preeminence during the nineteenth century, and indeed how the Philadelphia collecting experience compares with that in other places—subjects Vogel ignores—but there is no gainsaying the signal importance of Vogel's dialectic.

Cultural Connections should be on every historian's desk. The more than two-hundred-fifty stunning full-color illustrations in the book will dazzle the casual reader, while the commentary will inform the serious one. If nothing else, the book should encourage us to visit Philadelphia-area institutions to see for ourselves why cultural connections still matter—not just in Philadelphia, but anywhere in America.

Randall M. Miller, Saint Joseph's University


(Scholarly Resources Inc., 1991. Pp. 240. $75.00.)

Munger has written an informative reference guide on land records dating from 1677 to the present which are currently in the state archives. The Guide is divided into five main sections. There is a lengthy introduction to each section in which the author traces the history of the creation of the records of that particular time. She also aids the researcher by describing in great detail what such terms as application, warrant, survey, return of survey and patent mean. These introductions to the sections are fascinating reading and crammed full of interesting details about not only the records but why they were created, where they were created, and their purpose.

Section I of the Guide briefly discusses pre-Penn land settlement and the Pennsylvania land records dealing with the period before 1682. Section II presents a lengthy discussion of land settlement from 1682 to 1732, during the proprietorship of William Penn. The author feels that most researchers find these early records confusing but the Guide outlines the land system used and explains it and how the records developed. Section III describes the changing policies and procedures followed by the sons and heirs of William Penn from 1732 to 1776. Section IV centers on the land settlement procedures and records as they were established under the authority of the Commonwealth from 1776 to 1990. The final section briefly explains Pennsylvania land policy and titling procedures since 1905.
All land records created prior to 1957 were microfilmed. The Guide gives the exact microfilm reel and frame number for the researcher's use. The description of the series of records found in each section is clear. However, the author does not give either the volume of the records nor an item count. The author also refers to folders, e.g., "Petitions for the period 1763-1786 are filed in three folders." It would be helpful for the researcher to have an item count rather than a folder count since there is no way to determine how many petitions are in a folder. The reviewer also recognizes that most of the material described has been microfilmed, and that exact locations are shown for retrieving the microfilm. But, it would be further helpful if some indication of how many pages were in each volume or binder that is described in the Guide.

These are minor points that should not in any way detract from the excellence of this work. This guide should be used by all those who are interested in Pennsylvania.

Robert J. Plowman, National Archives - Mid Atlantic Region, Philadelphia, PA


This first volume of the biographical dictionary of early Pennsylvania legislators defies the standard categorization of historical writing. While the editors' chief purpose was to provide other scholars with reliable and comprehensive individual biographies of the men who served in the Pennsylvania Assembly during the colony's first three decades, they offer a collective analysis of key characteristics of the legislators as well. And though the dictionary at first glance seems to take an entirely "traditional" historical approach by chronicling the lives of the founding elite, in fact the editors mined sources deeply and systematically, thus yielding data for many sorts of "new," as well as traditional, studies of early Pennsylvania—social, economic, religious, and political. Marianne Wokeck and Craig Horle, former associate editors of the Papers of William Penn, directed work on this volume. Their fellow editors include Jeffrey Scheib, Joseph Foster, David Haugaard, Rosalind Beiler, and Joy Wiltenburg. The biographical dictionary is a logical successor to the Penn Papers, for it widens the focus from Penn to the men who took corporate responsibility for building the commonwealth.

The core of the volume consists of 325 biographical entries of men who served in the Assembly between 1682 and 1709 and in the Provincial Council until 1701, when that body lost its legislative function. The entries vary considerably in length, depending on the importance of the subject and the availability of sources. Despite the editors' warning about the "unevenness and imperfection" of their evidence (p. 142), the richly detailed biographies testify to extensive research. The thirty-page list of primary and secondary sources is an unparalleled guide for research on early Pennsylvania. Each biography includes a heading with dates of legislative service and such basic (but often extremely difficult to verify) information as dates of birth, arrival,
and death; geographical origins; family members; kin who also served in the legislature; and other political offices held. The text of each entry assesses the legislator's significance and traces his life chronologically, describing as appropriate and as evidence permits, his early years and education, immigration, occupation and property holding, religious activities, governmental service, involvement in political controversies, court appearances, slave ownership and opposition to slavery, and any known accomplishments of his wife and children. In all, the editors employ original sources whenever possible and document their findings copiously.

To situate the individual biographies in historical context, the editors provide two series of informative introductory essays and lists. The section titled "Lawmaking in Pennsylvania, 1682-1709: Themes and Issues" includes essays of two sorts. The first deals with constitutional and procedural matters, surveying the evolution of the General Assembly, its structure, electoral law, internal rules and procedures, committee system, and enacted legislation. The second set of essays in this section examines the three chief challenges facing the Assembly, and Pennsylvania society more generally, during this period: the conflict between predominantly Quaker Pennsylvania and the largely non-Quaker Lower Counties; the unpredicted but recurring contentiousness between the Proprietor and the Quaker colonists; and religious factionalism, which reared its head with the Keithian schism and then, with the affirmation controversy between Anglicans and Quakers and the wider debate over defense, became part of the colony's political culture.

The other introductory section, "Legislators of Pennsylvania, 1682-1709," contains a series of useful lists and a collective analysis of legislative leaders. The editors provide session-by-session summaries of Assembly meetings, with lists of delegates, officers, and committees. The collective biography will be of interest to many scholars, for the editors have used data from the individual biographies to offer an effective analysis of the men who comprised the early leadership of the commonwealth. The characteristics examined include legislative experience, age at first service, religion, service in other public offices, occupations, and geographical origins. The editors make apt comparisons, for example between members of the upper and lower houses in age at first service and between the Pennsylvania and Lower Counties representatives in religious affiliation.

The editors and sponsors of this volume deserve unqualified congratulations and thanks. Scholars of early Pennsylvanian and colonial America more generally, will wonder how they previously pursued their research without it.

Jean R. Soderlund, University of Maryland, Baltimore County


In recent years historians, sociologists, and others have expressed concern over Americans' seeming unwillingness to commit to common public endeavors. Some have located the source
of this reluctance in a rising individualism which so permeates our culture as to preclude collective action for the common good. The works they produce contain an implicit yearning for a time when Americans did unite for common purposes. At the same time scholars have also begun to examine those kinds of public demonstrations which provide a window into the values and messages around which Americans unified in the past, such as parades and pageants. John Bodnar has written a wide ranging and ambitious work which addresses Americans who united in the past for the explicit purpose of expressing commonly held core values about our nation. It cautions that unified action has not always been good, and that especially in recent years it has served elite or official aims more than democratic purposes.

Bodnar suggests that Americans have long sought to create public memories about our citizens and our nation evident in the construction of large memorials and activities on national holidays, and that these efforts regularly resulted in a tension between popular, or vernacular, interests, and official, or elite forces. Though vernacular interests often heavily influenced nineteenth century constructions of public memory, in the twentieth century powerful economic interests or the nation state have dominated.

Bodnar argues that the battle over public memory raged in three forums: the communal, regional, and national. In the communal forum ethnic groups competed with business, professional, and national interests to shape a public memory of land settlement and societal development. The vernacular history often won these clashes, but it largely faded under the pressure to promote nationalism in World War I and World War II and the local economy in the inter and post-war periods. The regional forum of the Midwest saw economic elites fashion a pioneer symbol that could both appeal to the citizenry and diffuse any potential for change in the economic status quo which another, more provocative symbol might have fostered. Vernacular interests never held much influence in the national forum, where officials shaped public memories which affirmed the existing social order, emphasized national over local or communal values, and stressed citizen duties over rights.

Bodnar points out through his exploration of our previous efforts to achieve consensus on historical ideals that these attempts involved conflicts between groups with strong interests in the uses these public memories have in the contemporary state. Though vernacular interests sometimes won out in the nineteenth century, and exerted influence at various points after 1900, powerful business and national political interests saw public understanding of the past to be so important to keeping order and generating profits that they overwhelmed popular efforts to fashion a public memory in the twentieth century. By the latter decades of the twentieth century, and especially with the Civil War centennial celebrations, the nationalist emphasis peaked. American enthusiasm for nationalism then began to wane, so that even the Bicentennial celebrations in and around 1976 did not measure up to the Civil War efforts.

Should we seek to resurrect strong communal sentiment among Americans today? Bodnar's work persuasively suggests that we may find any such renewal centered around public memory to work for social order rather than social change, for official interests rather than vernacular.
Though Bodnar remains optimistic that vernacular impulses still have influence, his study sounds a strong note of caution to those advocating unification around public memory.

Timothy Kelly, Chatham College


Harper's work, a revised Ph.D. dissertation (University of Pittsburgh), is a continuation of the “new social history” genre of the last two decades. His study represents the first pre-1800 analysis in which local demographic data comprises the core of the research. In the absence of census data, his primary source is the tax assessment records for “southwestern Pennsylvania, particularly the Monongahela River basin” (p. xv). Actually, most of the data is from Fayette and Washington counties (the latter included present-day Greene County until 1796) from 1784-96.

Harper's research is from “the bottom up.” Using descriptive statistical techniques (percentage, the mean/median, ratio, and decile) he developed fifty-seven tables for 174 pages of text. Not lost in the quantitative maze, however, are the many “people” who were identified and who were a part of the formative period of Pennsylvania's southwestern borders.

Initially, Harper traces the “Early Settlement” years and the familiar Pennsylvania-Virginia claims, land patent system, and migration patterns. His estimates are that the population grew from 33,500 to 94,893 between 1783 and 1800; hence, “the years from the end of the Revolution through the 1790s were the crucial, formative years in the transformation of society” (pp. 15-16).

For the 1780s, the median taxable variable is used to identify those individuals who owned land and he determined that land ownership was at the subsistence level of 100 acres. Harper found that “The river regions had been developed the most; [while] many border regions had scarcely been touched.” By the mid-1790s, however, the typical landowner had fifty acres and “in the river townships, he was a town dweller” (p. 35).

Concentration of wealth is analyzed and land accumulation patterns indicate that the more affluent landowners increased their share of the wealth. Most of the land owners in the 1790s were new to the area. Other forms of wealth are surveyed and Harper notes that mills and slaves were concentrated in the hand of the wealthy and that only a few people had large herds of livestock” (p. 48).

Fragmentary data seems to indicate that about twenty per cent of the population were tenants by the mid-1790s and that it was a short-term situation. Absenteeism, primarily as a speculative factor, increased in Washington County and declined in Fayette County and “there was a symbiotic relationship between tenancy and speculation. Certainly there was no lack of persons willing to take the plunge” (p. 80).

New towns were yet another development. There are brief histories of most of the seven-
teen in the two counties. Nine were located on rivers and eight on smaller streams. Using limited data Harper found that the smaller towns' roles were as marketing/trade centers, real estate investment centers, and an economic opportunity for the lower classes. Some were also governmental centers, and all were centers of culture, education and religion. Data for the class structure of four of these towns indicate "the dominant position of the professional and mercantile class" (p. 101).

Data for Fayette County in 1796 is the basis for his long chapter on the occupational structure. He identifies the "people" in the professional and mercantile classes, the absentee landowners, yeomen, and the "dependent class." Harper concludes that "those natural processes that sort out and stratify people, that create a class structure in any society, had already left their imprint on the frontier society..." (p. 140).

Similarly, Harper identifies and studies the "structure of political power." These included the "primary leaders," and the judiciary and county officials. "Men of property," he determines, "completely dominated political office at every level...[T]he higher the political office, the more consistantly it was filled by men of wealth and position" (p. 171). He concludes his work by noting that "Together, the elite and the commoner brought about the rapid transformation of western Pennsylvania" (p. 174).

The author's analytical style is descriptive, which is fitting for his methodology. However, he should have provided a historical overview of the political developments in southwestern Pennsylvania during that "formative" decade. The two small maps in Appendix B should have been revised, enlarged and placed in the front of the work. Every geographic location mentioned in the narrative should have been included.

There is a twenty-seven page appendix with nineteen additional tables. The endnotes (fifty-two pages) are annotated and informative. The index is also well organized. There is no bibliography and the price tag of $39.95 is exorbitant.

Historians, both amateur and professional, will want to look at Harper's contribution to local, social, economic, and regional history.

J. K. Folmar, California University of Pennsylvania


The publication of *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker* is a notable event. It is a remarkable document, not only in terms of its length, covering as it does nearly 50 years, 1758-1807, in the life of Elizabeth Drinker, but also for its richly revealing evidence on a myriad of topics. The diary takes us from Drinker's early twenties throughout her 46-year marriage to the prominent Philadelphia Quaker merchant, Henry Drinker. Most of the journal—about three fourths—was composed between 1793 and 1807, thus emphasizing Drinker's more mature, less passionate years.
What was on the mind of this Philadelphia merchant's wife when she wrote, almost daily, in her diary? Nothing personal, for the most part. For what Drinker gives us in breadth and length, she takes away in depth and personal insight. Editor Elaine Forman Crane calls the diary a "cautious document" (p. xv) which deliberately excludes intimacy and emotional concerns. Indeed, one of the most revealing aspects of this interesting diary comes from Drinker's own description of self-censorship: "I can't describe how I have felt this day, indeed it is what I do not at any time undertake to do" (p. 1688).

And indeed at first glance the diary reads like a long string of daily reports on weather, visitors, and various illnesses. But as Crane rightly points out in a very thoughtful—if occasionally overreaching—introduction, Drinker's diary makes important contributions to our understanding of many subjects in 18th century society: the urbanization of Philadelphia; family and community; pharmacology and medical practice; and yellow fever epidemics that swept through Philadelphia in the 1790s.

The heart of these 2000 plus pages lies in the fascinating details of Drinker's family life. The centrality of family and kin is revealed on every page here: in Drinker's crucial role as caregiver in times of illness and childbearing; in her active pattern of visitation, and in her endless concern for the lives of her children. The Diary offers useful glimpses into father-child relationships and grandparent-grandchild ties. We get, as well, fresh and revealing evidence of servant life inside the household. Finally, scholars studying patterns of friendship and kinship have a rich resource here.

Drinker's extraordinary active domestic life amply documented throughout the diary suggests to Crane the need to revise our understanding of women in eighteenth-century America. Drinker, Crane insists, was not the quintessentially timid, deferential wife of the mercantile elite. She willingly followed Henry's opinions, Crane argues, "as long as they did not conflict with her own inclinations" (p. xii). As evidence, Crane points to Drinker's courage during the Revolution—rebuffing the quartering of a soldier in her home in 1777-8—and her unflagging service as caregiver for the sick and pregnant in her family. Crane, in fact, insists that the diary calls for a reassessment of "the entire subject of female political sensitivity and participation in the 18th century" (p. xxvii). This is a highly dubious claim, for in the next paragraph Crane concedes that save for the hint of intellectual sophistication (Drinker once read a biography of Pope Sixtus V), her diary is notably silent about political life at home.

The diary is also largely unrevealing on the issue of religion, largely, one suspects, because it was Henry, not Elizabeth who was the pious Quaker. Elizabeth admitted to rarely attending meeting.

In addition to the insights into family and kinship, the diary's principal value, as Crane notes, is in suggesting the pervasive presence of pain in preindustrial America. The diary is among other things an almost daily litany of headaches, toothaches, and various stomach and intestinal ailments. Whatever else it does, Drinker's diary offers unique and valuable evidence in the history of pain.
Even if only a fraction of Crane's claims for the diary's contributions are true, this is still a remarkable treasure trove of information that will be of immense value for all students of eighteenth-century American society.

Daniel Blake Smith, University of Kentucky


(Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1991. Pp. 362, $19.95, $39.95 cloth.)

Carr, Menard and Walsh have used their combined expertise on early Maryland to put flesh on the bones of Robert Cole. Like Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman in A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1750 (1984), they have contextualized the statistical realities of the early Chesapeake. Like Laurel Thatcher Ulrich in A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812 (1990), they have used one person's serendipitous cache of documents to accomplish their task. Thankfully, the guardian that Robert Cole appointed for his children generated a wonderfully detailed "Cole Plantation Account" in the court records. This document, Cole's will, probate records, census data and prosopographic material are the primary sources the authors use to recreate Cole's world.

The authors argue that yeoman planters, like Cole, used the realities of their environment—abundant land, scarce labor and Native-American techniques—to forge a new kind of agriculture in Maryland. They were not wasteful, just rational, given the realities of early Chesapeake rural life. Using Robert Cole's experiences as the backdrop, they describe the function and layout of a farm in seventeenth-century Maryland. We learn, among other things, about livestock management, tobacco cultivation and various strategies of land ownership and tenancy. We even get a glimpse at the material world within the doors of the farmhouse.

According to the authors, the world within Robert Cole's farmhouse and beyond functioned hierarchically, although tight class boundaries and a strong slave system were things yet to come. Cole lived during a period dubbed the "Age of the Yeoman Planter" from the 1650s to 1680s or 1690s, when opportunities were real for new arrivals if they could survive the deadly demographics of the area. Compared to New England or the Caribbean, Maryland provided the best chance for mobility if not life expectancy. Things changed as the century progressed, however. Life expectancy went up, but opportunity declined. By the 1730s and 1740s the loose hierarchy had turned into a class system. The authors trace these important developments in Chesapeake society through one man's life.

This kind of work is the exciting result of decades of social history research. We finally see the culmination of years of painstaking documentation of the lives of the common men and women of early Maryland. This kind of historical recreation is difficult to present with accuracy
and ease. The prose at times exposes this challenge. Similarly, some pieces of data explication might have been better relegated to the footnotes. Harder to explain, however, but I suspect out of a desire for historical accuracy, their conclusions are at times strangely tentative. If any group of people can put aside such tentativeness in their conclusions it is Carr, Green, and Walsh. The body of knowledge they draw on to give us a glimpse of Robert Cole’s world is nothing short of astounding. The appendixes give the reader some sense of the depth of understanding these authors have of their subject. Thanks to their expertise we finally have viewed the small, farmbound life familiar to the few that dared the odds and came to early Maryland.

Lisa Wilson, *Connecticut College*


The book Steel/City is in fact a printing of the play “Steel/City” which was first staged at the University of Pittsburgh in 1976 and which has played to many local and national audiences during the past 25 years. The work emphasizes the role of labor in the development of the Pittsburgh region and has been produced in book form in conjunction with the centennial of the Homestead steel strike of 1892.

Act I of the docudrama presents a fast moving synopsis of the early history of Pittsburgh. It opens with a parade of characters representing occupations common to the borough of Pittsburgh, then hurries the reader through the Whiskey Rebellion and the community’s transition to an “Iron City.” The Act concludes with the ascendency of Andrew Carnegie whose enigmatic nature is illustrated by the use of three actors, each portraying a different aspect of the industrialist’s personality.

Act II deals with the late 19th century process of unionization, and is clearly sympathetic to the plight of labor. The authors depict the workers’ simple life style and describe the harsh working conditions that led the workers to organize. The second part discusses the efforts of Carnegie and Henry C. Frick to thwart the attempts at unionization, and culminates in a portrayal of the violence of the Homestead strike and its aftermath.

The final Act involves a chronological leap to the year 1975 and centers upon a picnic for retired steelworkers. The characters have ethnic names and their anecdotes about their days on the job are related in an earthy dialogue. The conversations emphasize the brotherhood of the laborers and are distinctly anti-management. Nonetheless the stories will seem quite familiar to those readers who grew up in a steelworker’s home. The play has a somber ending which the authors note was prophetic in light of the subsequent demise of the steel industry.

The book is entertaining, but its value to historians and history teachers will be limited. The authors take some dramatic liberties in their interpretation of history, but the work is fundamen-
tally accurate. Here authors Elvgren and Favorini must be given credit. Though neither is a professional historian—both have backgrounds as theater arts educators—the research for the play was commensurate with traditional writing of history. The playwrights examined the solid core of secondary literature available, and made much use of primary data including extensive oral interviews.

Someday historians may indeed use the play itself as evidence of community values. However the work's main educational value may be to secondary level teachers who typically employ a variety of teaching techniques. The play obviously lends itself to role playing, simulation and discussion which could give students better insights into the lives of working class America.

David W. Lonich, Ringgold High School


What makes this new edition of the Guide special is its inclusion for the first time of the complete text of the 150 commemorative plaques that local historical societies in cooperation with the old Pennsylvania Historical Commission put in place between 1913 and 1933. Usually bolted or cemented on free-standing boulders or the walls of historical structures, they represent what a generation of local antiquarians considered important in an era before state historians took over the program and erected 1,500 more of the familiar blue and gold roadside markers.

The persona of late Associate State Historian, William A. Hunter, imprints the earlier signs. His highly particular editing ensured that many markers claimed less than fervent sponsors often wished. In further recognition of his scholarship, the Guide occasionally alludes to "replacements" where Hunter's scholarship unearthed error; it does not mention other markers which at his initiative were quietly removed and discarded.

The hand of State Historian Sylvester K. Stevens is evident, too. At his retirement party Stevens was presented his own very unofficial marker. Designed as an imitation of the roadside versions, it spoke of him as "Scourge of the Appropriation Committees" but was silent on why assemblymen so patiently took the punishment. A reading of the dedication dates for the markers discloses the political savvy of that legendary figure in Pennsylvania history. With his eye on votes Stevens scheduled public marker dedication ceremonies for the weeks just preceding elections and shifted the publicity focus to the local legislators.

How balanced has the marker program been over its nearly eighty years? Philadelphia County has 42 markers, one for every 46,000 people; the fifty-two markers in Dauphin County, come out to 4,300 for each citizen.
As to topic, Cumberland County had three of the old commemorative plaques and forty-five of the newer markers at press time (two have been added so far in 1992). Leaving aside eight that mark churches, mostly pre-1800, the forty-eight include fourteen dealing with the colonial era, six with the American Revolution, six with the Civil War, and six more with the pre-Jackson years. Four honor late nineteenth century persons or events; one tells of the twentieth.

Under the direction of its current executive director, Brent Glass, the PHMC has worked to raise the standards of the marker program. Once a mere staff function, the program now operates with help from an advisory committee of historians. New markers were put in place at the rate of twenty-nine per year through 1975; the pace now is half a dozen annually. Published with a preface by its author George R. Beyer and a dozen regional introductions by Harold L. Myers, the Guide attractively and accurately presents the markers.

Robert G. Crist, Camp Hill