

Book Reviews

Edited by Billy G. Smith. *Life in Early Philadelphia: Documents from the Revolutionary and Early National Periods.*

(University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, Pp. 318, \$40.00 cloth, \$13.95 paper)

Billy G. Smith's edited volume of essays and documents, *Life in Early Philadelphia: Documents from the Revolutionary and Early National Periods*, is an excellent source for comprehending why the history of ordinary people occupies contested terrain. Smith explains that the documents "are intended to convey the diversity of life and the range of conditions in America's premier urban center during this period and to indicate the variety of evidence historians can use to reconstruct the past."

The book is comprised of nine chapters, each with an introductory essay, by scholars including Smith, Susan Klepp, Steve Rosswurm, Susan Branson, and Ronald Schultz, explaining the documents' significance. Encompassing a range of common peoples' experiences—from birth to death, across gender and racial divides, and ideological commitments among the various "sorts"—*Life in Early Philadelphia* reveals that the city did not offer rewards for many. Documents provide fascinating and important details about people for whom very little information otherwise remains and about whom little has been written.

Appropriately, Smith opens the volume with eighteenth and nineteenth century descriptions of "Philadelphia, The Athens of America." These descriptions scarcely acknowledge the city's poor, minorities, and women, who also inhabited Philadelphia's environs. Given the book's concern with the lives of people who did not receive serious scholarly attention during earlier eras, it is instructive that the remainder of the documents in the book depart from these pristine views of the city, and subsequently, restricted conceptions of history.

An introduction and documents describing those individuals alluded to but not explicitly included in the earlier versions of Philadelphia's past—the institutionalized poor, prisoners, and fugitives from slavery or indentured servitude—follow the section describing a city inhabited and viewed by the "better sorts." Men and women, black and white, seeking to escape poverty and oppression, were born or arrived in a city where they encountered institutional efforts to cure their alleged ills. They were believed to threaten Philadelphia with the disease of social disorder. The documents suggest that these groups might be viewed differently, however, since they found few opportunities for pursuing legitimate livelihoods.

Daily life for certain white women offered a few, though not many more

options than those available for the city's "lowest sorts." In one major respect the women included here differed from the institutionalized poor; they recorded their activities and beliefs. Excerpts written between 1759 and 1807 from the diary of Elizabeth Drinker, a woman of the "best sort," and Ann Baker Carson (1785-1824), a "working woman," provide glimpses of daily activities for these Philadelphia females. The documents reveal a changing status for certain white women between the War for Independence and the early national period, providing insights into their perspectives as viewed from their respective class positions.

Ordinary people did not leave many records, and therefore few documents exist indicating their views on birth, life, and death. Fragments of details about ordinary people's lives that do remain are often found in vital statistics recorded by authorities. Ordinary people were born, lived, married, traveled, and died not only with well-entrenched biases toward them, but they resided in perilous conditions as well. In two chapters which include documents on marriage, mortality, and migration Susan Klepp and Billy Smith exhume these people as they were portrayed in vital statistics. These two exceptional essays examine the meager quality of life for the poor.

Politics and ideology among ordinary citizens during the revolutionary age conclude *Life in Early Philadelphia*. Consensus did not necessarily prevail among the city's men of humble means about what the War for Independence should achieve. Each author explains, and the related documents reveal, the differing political perspectives of white working men and their belief in revolutionary ideology despite the possibility that they were vulnerable to exploitation by merchants and the politically powerful of the city.

Why publish a collection of documents about or written by groups excluded from previous generations of Philadelphia historians? These fragments from the mute clearly reveal some of the gaps American social history has inherited from earlier historians' neglect. This collection of essays and documents encourages students and scholars alike to press toward exploring the complexity and depth of "ordinary inhabitants," thereby enlarging the scope of what might be considered appropriately as history.

Leslie Patrick, *Bucknell University*

By Deborah Mathias Gough, Christ Church, Philadelphia: The Nation's Church in a Changing City.

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955. 425 pp.
\$29.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper)

Few institutions of any sort manage to survive for three hundred years. Yet after three centuries (1695-1995), Philadelphia's Christ (Episcopal) Church remains at its original site just north of the intersection of Second and Market

Streets, in the oldest neighborhood in Philadelphia. How this parish managed to remain alive despite numerous vicissitudes is the central theme of Deborah Mathias Gough's tercentennial history.

The founders of Christ Church, of the Church of England, objected to Quaker Pennsylvania's adoption of religious toleration. Leaders of Christ Church campaigned for several decades to have Anglicanism "established" in Pennsylvania and the proprietorship of the Penn family replaced by a royal charter. But the near impossibility of accomplishing this, combined with the realization that being free of undue governmental interference provided them with a beneficent flexibility and autonomy, caused Christ Church to abandon the campaign for establishment early in the eighteenth century.

Without an American bishop—or other ecclesiastic structures—Christ Church went on to evolve its own unique system of governance. This experience, in addition to its tolerant, low-church traditions, allowed Christ Church to lead the way in creating an independent Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States following the Revolution, no small feat given its origins in the Church of England, whose head was Britain's remaining monarch. For this reason Christ Church can rightfully claim to be the "Mother Church" of this nation's Episcopal denomination.

During the nineteenth century Christ Church faced new challenges when well-to-do residents of the neighborhood left, first for more fashionable streets further west in the city and still later for the Philadelphia suburbs. Christ Church faced this challenge by reaching out to the neighborhood's new working-class residents and to the owners of commercial establishments in the area; at one time it sponsored an Old Christ Church Businessmen's Association. During the early twentieth century the parish became a major participant in the Social Gospel movement, culminating in the construction of its Neighborhood House, which in many ways resembled an urban settlement house.

During the nineteenth century, especially around the time of the "centennial" of American Independence in 1876, Christ Church began to use its historical association to gain positive publicity and, eventually, financial support. As part of this historical campaign, the parish called attention to the age and splendid Georgian architecture of the church structure and to the fact that many of the "founding fathers," including Benjamin Franklin and George Washington, had worshipped at Christ Church. These historic ties were employed even more successfully after the middle of the twentieth century. Christ Church was then included in Philadelphia's historic area. The Society Hill neighborhood just south of the church was "restored," and affluent residents, some of whom joined Christ Church, began to move there.

Of course, Christ Church was fortunate in its selection of rectors throughout much of its history. Author Deborah Gough suggests that this may have been

due to the practical outlook of those who served on the church's vestry. They were largely individuals from business and the professions (many from socially prominent families) who were able to assess the parish's needs and to identify the persons and policies that were necessary to survive and prosper. This is one area where Gough might have been somewhat more explicit in her analysis, but this is only a minor observation about a wholly fascinating study.

Unlike typical commemorative church histories, Gough's account of Christ Church is impressively and imaginatively researched. In addition to her extensive use of original sources, in the parish archives and beyond, the author conducted a number of insightful interviews with individuals who were connected with various aspects of the parish's life in recent decades. The result is a fine book that will appeal to members of Christ Church, to general readers in the Philadelphia region, and to scholars of urban history as well as historians of religion on both sides of the Atlantic.

David R. Contosta, *Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia*

By Owen S. Ireland. *Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics: Ratifying the Constitution in Pennsylvania.*

(University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995. Pp. 292. Paper \$18.95, Cloth \$50.00)

In this study on the ratification controversy in Pennsylvania, Ireland builds on his scholarship, begun thirty years ago, about the ethnic-religious dimension of partisan politics during the Revolutionary era. This reviewer lists himself among those who have long anticipated this publication; it has now arrived and it was well worth the wait. Ireland's model study incorporates the most recent historical work. In many respects, his masterful analysis of the vicissitudes of Pennsylvania's political fortunes from 1778 to 1789, is an effort to go, interpretively speaking, beyond Robert Brunhouse's 1942 classic statement on the *Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania*.

Ireland divides the book into two parts: "The Contest" (Chapters 1-4) and "The Context" (Chapters 5-7). All chapters in part 1 are topical in nature, addressing such matters as the Federalist Conspiracy, the Fall Campaign, the State Convention, and the Antifederalist Counterattack. For Pennsylvania, Ireland emphasizes how past partisan behavior represents the "best predictor of response on both the elite level and popular level" (p. xviii). The State Constitutionalist Party, from Presbyterian and Reformed backgrounds, opposed ratification, while Republicans, from Anglican, Quaker, Lutheran, and German-Sectarian backgrounds, favored it. In analyzing the swing of the political pendulum, Ireland sees the aforementioned parties initially dividing over three major issues: Test Acts; the conversion of the Anglican-based College of

Philadelphia into the Presbyterian-led University of Pennsylvania; and the State Constitution of 1776. He also maintains that the two political camps selected candidates from “the same upper ranks of society” (p. xvii). He insists, like others, that in 1786 the party balance was tipped in favor of the State Republicans when they gained control of the Pennsylvania Assembly. They held this advantage when the adoption of the proposed Federal Constitution was before the public in 1787-88.

In the “Context” part, consisting of three chapters relating to economic considerations, Ireland admits that the problems faced by the Confederation government “played a complex part in this outcome” (p. 147). He argues that the backcountry voters represented the key to the outcome. Class lines or economic issues were not, however, crucial in determining the City of Philadelphia’s response to the Federal Constitution. For example, Ireland concludes that the backcountry Constitutionalists, within the Philadelphia trading area, “responded in a way largely consistent with party identification and principle” (p. 216). For the backcountry between the city in the east and the mountains in the west, “the popular response to the Federal Constitution represented more a division among farmers in similar situations rather than among farmers in different economic context” (pp. 265-66). Beyond the mountains (western counties), “a complex set of factors interacted to produce an Antifederalist majority” (p. 265). On ratification, then, backcountry alignments correlated most strongly with “political complexion.” In outlining a “quiet counterrevolution” (Chapter 7) to account for the decisive Antifederalist defeat and the Federalist victory, Ireland claims that the State Republicans and Federalists achieved a political majority only when persons alienated by the Revolution and excluded from citizenship returned to vote.

In describing the extended contest in Pennsylvania over the adoption of the Federal Constitution, Ireland neither embraces one of the prevailing variant Antifederalist interpretations nor explains differences in political alignments in terms of ideology, class, or variations in degree of participation in a market economy first made fashionable by Jackson Turner Main. In his concluding chapter (“The People’s Triumph”) Ireland summarizes his “different position” in three main parts—“Pennsylvanians responded to the proposed Federal Constitution largely on the basis of political attachments rooted in ethnic-religious identities nurtured by a decade or more of bitter partisan warfare” (p. 255). He adds: “A solid majority favored it; a vehement minority opposed” (p. 255). Ireland further argues that by 1786 broad consensus existed in improving Congress’ power to regulate commerce and control foreign affairs. “Pennsylvanians divided over the Federal Constitution not because it enhanced the power of the central government,” sums up Ireland, “but rather because it did so in ways that promised to alter the balance of political power within Pennsylvania” (p. 255).

This is a well-researched interpretive volume. Ireland takes sides respecting his analysis of the “counter-revolution” in Pennsylvania. Although some readers may want to question Ireland on a point here or there, he fully and amply defends his interpretations through his narrative and in his notes. He also offers something of a case history for the study of religious and ethnic influences on the politics of Revolutionary America. Two appendices offer an analysis of the newspaper debate and of the German vote in the 1788 congressional election. There is a bibliographical essay, but Ireland’s conclusion attempts to place his study within the larger scholarly context.

In sum, this bold, interpretive study represents a solid contribution to the history of Pennsylvania. It is required reading for all who study late eighteenth-century politics.

Roland M. Baumann, *Oberlin College Archives*

By John K. Brown, *The Baldwin Locomotive Works, 1831-1915: A Study in American Industrial Practice.*

(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. Pp. xxxii + 328, \$39.95)

With this riveting study of Baldwin Locomotive Works, John K. Brown makes an important contribution to the history and historiography of American business. Through his perceptive analysis of operations at Baldwin Locomotive Works, Brown enriches our knowledge of Philadelphia’s industrial past and expands the scope of current scholarship. Historians have largely ignored the capital equipment producers, companies like Baldwin that built the machinery used as factory inputs by other firms in providing goods and services. Brown posits that Baldwin, a giant in the field, represents a case study of the capital goods industry. From shop floor to the partners’ room, Brown gathers compelling evidence that challenges the prevailing interpretation of large-scale enterprise advanced by Alfred D. Chandler, Jr.

The history of the Baldwin Works, presented by Brown as a platform for the capital equipment sector, reveals a structure and operation at variance with Chandler’s managerially oriented high-volume, uniform-product model. Brown initially establishes that, in their comparatively limited market, locomotive builders found themselves forced to react to the railroads’ cyclical demand for new equipment in boom times and to master mechanics’ insistence on locomotives built to their individual designs. Brown attributes Baldwin’s success to multiple factors but emphasizes the partners’ abilities to secure customers beyond domestic mainline railroads and to structure the company’s resources to regularize the efficient production of custom orders. Most partners were promoted from the workforce, and they embodied a producer ethos in which middle managers represented the antithesis of production. Brown clearly

demonstrates how the partners not only instituted managerial controls in the decades before Chandler's managerial revolution, but also achieved systematized production and substantial growth without middle managers. The partners controlled standards for interchangeability through the drafting room, schedules for production through the superintendent and shop foremen, and the work force through piecework and inside contracting. Brown credits the producer ethos and high wages for welding a cooperative partnership between management and skilled workers. At the same time, however, the partners transformed work practices from artisanal to industrial, and finally to operatives performing specialized jobs. This gradual and uneven transformation from craft shop to industrial plant mirrored expansion in capacity and mechanization as the partners pushed for increased efficiency and flexibility.

Beyond the Chandlerian issues, Brown finds other evidence at Baldwin which he skillfully relates, often in his notes to current scholarly issues. As examples, piecework did not lead to rate cuts and soldiering among workers; inside contracting did not result in animosity between contractors and the firm; the value and liquidity of partners' ownership interests were higher than previously estimated; and Albro Martin's assessment of federal railroad regulation is generally confirmed by Baldwin's experience. Brown's sensitivity to an array of historiographical issues is not surprising in light of his extensive bibliography. His interpretations are founded on his relentless search for and thorough familiarity with an array of primary sources, including numerous manuscript collections pertinent to the Baldwin Works, serial and periodical literature, and case law. It remains for historians to determine the degree to which Brown's case study of an industry leader is representative of the broader capital goods sector.

The quality of Brown's scholarship is enhanced by his presentation. Brown has effectively organized a complex subject. He writes clearly and unpretentiously with ample explanation of production methods and technological developments. Numerous photographs are immensely helpful in visualizing locomotive building at Baldwin. This pioneering study of the capital equipment sector is a book of award-winning caliber that merits serious attention.

Robert M. Blackson, *Kutztown University*

By David R. Contosa. *Villanova University, 1842-1992: American—Catholic—Augustinian.*

(University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
1995. Pp. 331, \$35.00)

This study of Villanova represents one of the first comprehensive histories of a Catholic university in the United States. Contosta pioneers in his

exploration of the complex social and political environment that created the institution. In doing so, he broadens our understanding of the important role Catholicism has played in shaping the mainstream of American higher education.

In 1842, Philadelphia's small Augustinian community purchased the land on which the university was founded a year later—a 197-acre tract along what would become the city's fabled "Main Line." The suburban location was an important factor only in recent years. Beginning in the 1970s, Villanova was able to attract more high-quality students who wanted to be within easy striking distance of the big city without having to attend an urban university surrounded by decaying neighborhoods. In the early days, however, recruitment posed a serious problem. Students enrolled in the academy side of Villanova outnumbered undergraduates until the early 1900s. In fact, the university—Villanova College until 1953—awarded only 697 baccalaureate degrees during its first fifty years. Nor did the institution earn academic distinction during that time. In spite of the Augustinian emphasis on relating the heart to the mind and on the love of learning for its own sake, Villanova's classical curriculum differed insignificantly from the curricula at Georgetown, St. Joseph's, Holy Cross, and other well-known Catholic colleges. Only when Villanova broadened its academic program in the years just before World War I to include commerce, engineering, science, and pre-medicine did enrollment rise substantially. The goal remained, however, to produce "Catholic gentlemen," i.e., young men who sought truth within the context of the highest moral and human values. Instruction in religious doctrine generally took a conservative bent, and the course of studies offered few electives, reflecting Catholic belief that there existed a body of truth to be passed from generation to generation. Contosta goes on to show how later changes—admitting women to all academic programs in 1968, promoting graduate studies in the 1970s, decreasing the numbers of undergraduates in the 1980s—all came together by the 1990s to make Villanova one of America's finest private universities.

Contosta's approach is essentially chronological and divides Villanova's history into distinct eras that overlap presidential administrations. (The institution has had 31 presidents over 150 years.) The focus is on the university's intellectual development, and discussions of such disparate topics as athletics, student life, philanthropy, and physical plant are placed in this broader philosophical context whenever possible. The book is well-written, soundly researched, and lacks the stodginess of many institutional histories. It is likely to please both students of higher education and Villanova's alumni and friends.

Michael Bezilla, *The Pennsylvania State University*

By Alden T. Vaughan. *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience*.

(New York, Oxford University Press, 1995. 350 pp, Cloth, \$55.00; Paper, \$19.95)

Like the roots of the giant American sequoia tree, the roots of American racism are myriad and strong. Also, like the sequoia roots, the roots of racism are sometimes visible on the surface, and sometimes subterranean, sending out networks of tendrils that travel great distances from the organism and its fruit. In his *Roots of American Racism* Alden T. Vaughan immediately starts out on the right foot: his title does not pretend to be *the* roots but, instead, offers an exploration of *some* roots of this extremely complex network of topics. A culmination of more than two decades of contemplating and attending to the American conversation about race, Vaughan's volume is a collection of ten essays, which range across the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries in pursuit of an understanding of the support-structure of the towering trunk and spreading branches of modern racism.

Arranging the essays into three sections, Vaughan first explores changing perceptions—both of early Americans and of later analysts. Then he examines the interplay between culture and race. In the final section, he looks at religion and race, specifically at New England Puritans and Pennsylvania Quakers. Focusing on imported Africans and New World Natives, the essays primarily examine the xenophobia and cultural bias of English-Americans: only the last essay does much to approach the question of “the frequency and depth of acculturation” (p. 213) between the various cultures.

That each of these essays has appeared before, in one form or another, should not deter the reader. Vaughan has used this fact to give them new life, sometimes adding new layers of complexity to the earlier incarnation of the argument, sometimes taking the opportunity to *revise* his earlier interpretation. There is a brief introduction to each essay. This is an important value of the work, providing both a retrospective view of the historiography of racism, and an opportunity to watch the unfolding of one scholar's thinking on the subject.

But it is not just the unfolding of *one* scholar's thinking that Vaughan has set before us. In this volume, he reminds just about *everybody* who has engaged the topic, and he has incorporated these other perspectives into his analysis. Through this volume we revisit James Axtell, Carl Degler, Francis Jennings, Winthrop Jordan, Steven Katz, Edmund Morgan, Gary Nash, and many others of the detective team well-known for pursuing this case of the elusive American racism. The wish that proofreading had been more rigorous is more than balanced by the fact that this is a tidy volume through which undergraduate and established-scholar alike can revisit many branches of the far-reaching and shady structure of American racism.

Emma J. Lapsansky, *Haverford College*

By David Hancock. *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785.*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xxiii, 447, \$59.95)

David Hancock's *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* effectively combines economic and socio-cultural history to produce a much clearer picture of entrepreneurial activities in eighteenth-century Britain than we have hitherto enjoyed. Hancock deftly brings to life the London financial cadres who dominated the American trade in the middle of the eighteenth century through an examination not only of their commercial activities, but also through careful investigation of the means by which the members of these financial circles sought to improve their positions in British social life. The author's choice to combine biographical with statistical methodologies distances this book from other studies in the field, including important works such as Ralph M. Davis's *Capital and Credit in the Overseas Trade: The View from the Chesapeake* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980). Davis's valuable work relies on exhaustive statistical documentation, but it noticeably lacks the vitality of Hancock's efforts thanks to the latter's gift for fleshing out the lives of his subjects.

Hancock's work is organized into three major sections. The first stresses the growing nature of the British commercial empire of the eighteenth century and the significant role of traders, investors, and entrepreneurs within it. The second addresses the commercial activities of the merchants, including the slave trade, farming, shipping, finance, and government contracting. The final segment deals with the efforts of these ambitious London merchants to improve their status by transforming their domestic and cultural life and through various philanthropic and community projects.

Primary source material drawn from widely-scattered holdings from the West Indies, the United States, Great Britain, and elsewhere form the basis for this volume. This variety of source material lends a richness to Hancock's study that seems particularly well-suited to the rather cosmopolitan lives of the merchants, whom Hancock refers to as "associates." The twenty-three associates who comprised the financial circles examined in Hancock's study were the success stories of their day, self-made men who usually had risen from peripheral status to realize and exploit the burgeoning opportunities represented by the Atlantic trade.

An examination of the center-periphery relations of the British and American economies provides Hancock with the opportunity to argue for a state of mutual (although unequal) dependency. The author maintains that "[n]either the periphery nor the center, prospered by itself; the periphery, in particular, prospered through trade with and help from the center" (p. 21). The argument here is critical, for it impacts upon an important component of Hancock's

thesis—namely that these merchants helped their American counterparts grow into “a diverse group whose prosperity and confidence . . . allowed thirteen colonies ‘to dissolve the political bands’ that has connected them to Britain” (p. 2). Hancock concludes that as the merchants exploited opportunities overseas they helped to solidify the empire, and “actively abetted what Adam Smith called America’s rise to ‘wealth and greatness,’ even as they enriched themselves” (p. 3). This thesis, that the imperial mercantile projects of the British metropole furthered the ability of the American periphery to gain the confidence necessary for eventual independence, seems less than convincing.

Generally, one would assume that an economic periphery would in fact *lack* confidence rather than gain it as a result of contact in the form of unequal trading relationships with the metropole. That certainly would be more consistent with the works of other theorists who have dominated center/periphery studies, such as Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin, and André Gunder Frank. Hancock singles out Wallerstein for a particularly harsh critique, in which he accuses him of having ignored the importance of “mediated reciprocal relationships” in favor of an overarching view of core, sub-periphery, and periphery (p. 15). Indeed, Hancock’s view certainly seems plausible in regards to the British-American relationship. This possibly explains why the success of the metropole would not necessarily translate into structurally-retarded development in the American colonies.

Citizens of the World is an outstanding contribution to our comprehension of the London-based international and entrepreneurial system that fueled a growing imperial capitalism. Hancock’s study certainly goes far towards an understanding of the motives of the London associates, and to see them in the cultural milieu of their day; but perhaps it asks the reader to infer conclusions about their effects on the development of the American continent. Hancock carefully documents the role that the enterprising attitudes of the associates had in the improvement of the American business climate and infrastructure. But in the opinion of this reviewer, he still falls a bit short of proving that the confidence imparted by the merchants was a decisive factor in the drive to American independence. This in no way diminishes Hancock’s achievement, however, in bringing to light the *mentalité* of the eighteenth-century global merchants who so shaped the British economic imperium.

Michael D. Slaven, *California University of Pennsylvania*

By Edith B. Gelles. *Portia: The World of Abigail Adams*.

(Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995

[paperback], Pp. 256, \$12.95)

This 1993 co-winner of the Herbert Feis Award of the American Historical Association is a welcome addition to the paperback publications available for

use in courses relating to colonial and early national history and to women's studies, for this is more than a biography of Abigail Adams. In fact, although not very satisfying as a biography, it is an important work for revealing women's experience in the eighteenth century.

One comes away from the work wishing to know a lot more about Abigail the person. This may be due to the fact that we are more accustomed to a traditional male-defined biography of Abigail that sees her through the career of John, rather than as the central character in her own right. It may also reveal that the work is more a collection of essays (Gelles uses the term "collage") that have Abigail as a central source, than a complete biography.

All this aside, *Portia* (the long-suffering, wise and erudite wife of the Roman senator Brutus, and Abigail's pen name throughout most of her adult life) is an important work. Gelles combines literature, psychology, anthropology, and good historical analysis to disclose the reality faced by women of the eighteenth century. In particular, her introductory chapter on the Abigail Adams industry is a gem of historiographical writing. Additionally, her analysis of the role of gossip is illuminating and shows how it functioned within the Adams family and probably within many families and communities of the eighteenth century—"as it controlled lives by directing alliances, monitoring, perhaps protecting its members, advertising rules, adjudicating behavior, relieving anger and frustration, building reputations and egos, providing social cohesion" (85). The chapter on "Domestic Patriotism" studies Abigail's "traditional domestic responsibilities" and portrays a very astute and resourceful entrepreneur who kept the family businesses afloat and successful in John's absence.

The essay entitled "The Threefold Cord" is a wonderful study of relations among three sisters—Abigail Adams, Mary Cranch, and Elizabeth Shaw Moody—and probes the feminist use of the term "sisterhood" to explain their relationship. The chapters entitled "My Closest Companion" and "Mother and Citizen" study Abigail as a mother in very different roles with her daughter, Abigail Junior, and son John Quincy.

Do not read *Portia* as just a biography of Abigail Adams; but do read it as good interdisciplinary social history.

George W. Franz, *Penn State/Delaware County*

By Paul K. Conkin. *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America*.

(Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995, Pp. 316, Paper \$16.95)

Conkin claims that during the colonial period and the nation's first hundred years "Reformed confessions made up, by far, the largest and most influential segment of Christianity in America" (p. ix). Given the comprehensiveness of

Conkin's definition of Reformed, this is not surprising. He includes not only denominations that bear that name but also Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Anglicans, Methodists, and most Baptists. All of these groups, he claims, acknowledged "a commonality of doctrines . . . that in time many would identify with John Calvin" (p. xi). "To the left of the center" (p. xi) he places the Friends (Quakers), Anabaptists, and other smaller groups. On the right are the Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Lutherans. Although he distinguishes clearly between Lutheran and Reformed confessions (see p. 31), he notes the closeness of the German branches of these two denominations in eastern Pennsylvania where they "often utilized the same church building and long talked of a common seminary. The commonality of language overcame doctrinal and liturgical differences" (p. 169).

Recognizing that the Reformed tradition did not originate in the religious upheaval of the sixteenth century, Conkin begins with the "Jewish roots" (p. 1) of Christianity and the early and Medieval church before discussing the Reformation. The Apostle Paul and St. Augustine, he notes, were John Calvin's forebears, to whom Calvin was "always deferential" (p. 30). Throughout, Conkin attempts to describe each particular group's practices and beliefs and to explain the changes that occurred as its adherents developed in America. Conkin devotes two separate chapters to the outstanding eighteenth century theologians, Jonathan Edwards and Samuel Hopkins, and to their successors in the nineteenth, Nathaniel Taylor, Charles Hodge, and Horace Bushnell. Readers of this journal might be especially interested in what Conkin labels a "major Reformed . . . tradition in America before the Civil War" (p. 113). This was the Christological theology and ecclesiology as well as "sacramental and liturgical" (p. 176) worship emphasized by Professors John W. Nevin and Philip Schaff at the German Reformed Church's seminary at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. As Conkin notes "the influence of Mercersburg extended far beyond the small Reformed Church" (p. 176). According to Conkin, "the Mercersburg theologians proved prophetic. They began a larger ecumenical effort, one that included Roman Catholicism . . . and anticipated by a century movements toward convergence" (p. 176). After an especially interesting chapter on "Reformed Worship," including music (pp. 183-209), Conkin ends his detailed narrative with the theological and sectional tensions that helped to render the "center" so "uneasy" during the pre-Civil War period.

Conkin admits that "many errors remain in the text" (p. ix), and he is correct. Several examples follow. There was no "identifiable German Reformed congregation . . . in Germantown in 1683" (p. 60). German church people, Reformed and Lutherans, as well as sectarians "moved south by way of the great valley of Virginia" (p. 57) with Presbyterians. Philip William Otterbein did not lead a "revivalistic Wesleyan group out of the German Reformed Church during the revolutionary era" (p. 60). In fact, he never left his church. The

German Reformed Classis of North, not South, Carolina “briefly . . . broke from the synod” (p. 175) in 1853 over the church’s alleged “Romanism” (p. 175). Other factual inaccuracies, as well as too many misprints by a publisher that usually does better, could be specified. Perhaps such problems are understandable in a book that covers such a broad spectrum. Nevertheless, errors in fields that readers know well could cause them to wonder about the validity of statements on topics with which they are not as familiar.

Although not entirely accurate on some details, Conkin’s volume depicts “Reformed Christianity in Ante-Bellum America.” This was not the only religious tradition at this time and place, but it was “The Uneasy Center.” The author is to be commended for the breadth of his study. As for the mistakes that we reviewers identify, he can correct them in the next edition.

John B. Frantz, *The Pennsylvania State University, University Park*

Edited by Randall M. Miller and John R. McKivigan. *The Moment of Decision: Biographical Essays on American Character and Regional Identity.*

(Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. Pp. xi, 233, \$59.95)

Conceived as a festschrift for Merton Dillon of Ohio State University, this mixed lot of essays has been organized around an intriguing theme. As co-editor Randall Miller observes in the introduction, studying critical moments in public lives can help us better appreciate the culture individuals sprang from and the choices available to them. History doesn’t simply happen; people have options and consciously or not, face momentous decisions. Thereby they shape their lives and, in some instances, affect the course of history.

In an era of historical writing where it is not self-evident that individual volition matters, the editors’ choice of theme is refreshing. Unfortunately, it sets a standard few of the essays in this collection meet, unless the concept of turning points is stretched out of any recognizable shape. Several of the essays, like John Cimprich’s account of General George H. Thomas and the rights of the freedmen and Hugh Davis’s analysis of the colonizationist Leonard Bacon readily fit the organizing principle of this book but make rather little of their subjects’ experiences. Several of the contributions would have been better left in typescript.

The best piece in this collection, in my view, is James Brewer Stewart’s “Garrison, Phillips, and the Symmetry of Autobiography: Charisma and the Character of Abolitionist Leadership.” It provocatively applies the concept of charisma to American political culture and shrewdly captures the connections between private and public personae. Stewart’s argument fits the organizing theme in the sense that both William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips

responded to particular events or mental images in embracing abolitionism at a time when this put them beyond the pale of American consensus. It humanizes both men and helps us appreciate more fully how Phillips's heritage influenced his commitment to a very difficult struggle for social justice.

Also memorable is Angela Howard Zophy's "A True Woman's Duty 'To Do Good': Sarah Josepha Hale and Benevolence in Antebellum America," which parallels Stewart's approach connecting the personal to the political. In Hale's case, the early death of her husband led her into the world of journalism and ultimately of benevolence. Hale was able to make not simply a living, but a life that influenced other women to help support their families or work without pay for worthy causes.

Other noteworthy essays, including John David Smith's account of the iconoclastic Massachusetts historian George H. Moore, and Bertram Wyatt-Brown's meditation on regional culture and identity as reflected in the lives of the Adams and Percy families, are less keyed in to the organizing frame of reference. The same may be said of John McGivigan's pithy assessment of the abolitionist James Redpath, a man who began his public life as an ally of John Brown and ended it as a ghostwriter for Jefferson Davis! McGivigan's explication of Redpath's activism during the first months of Reconstruction in South Carolina reveals little about South Carolina or Reconstruction that is entirely new, but it underscores the difficulties blacks and white supporters faced and illuminates the context for Booker T. Washington's approach to black progress.

Sir Ronald Syme once remarked that unless a festschrift concentrated on a single theme, it was a "curse" for scholarship. Evidently the editors of this volume took Syme too much to heart. Merton Dillon well-merited a tribute by his students and peers, but after finishing *The Moment of Decision* this reader wondered whether a different kind of recognition would have been more appropriate and fruitful.

Michael J. Birkner, *Gettysburg College*

By J. Matthew Gallman. *The North Fights the Civil War: The Home Front.*

(Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1994. Pp. xi + 211, \$9.95)

Writing for a popular audience, J. Matthew Gallman provides a focus on an aspect of the Civil War seldom featured in most studies of this American tragedy. He furthermore provides detailed information about Pennsylvania in general and Philadelphia specifically, no doubt due to his scholarly research on the City of Brotherly Love during the Civil War era.

Gallman's most consistent theme deals with localism versus centralization during the war with regard to civilian involvement. Time and again the author

is able to show that antebellum cultural habits of local community associational voluntarism continued throughout the war. He concludes that the Civil War, because of ongoing traditional localism, was not the “total war” that so many historians have argued.

Throughout this work, Gallman emphasized continuity from pre-war years through the war period, concluding that the war did not serve as a catalyst for *radical* change in areas such as the American economy, northern culture, or the roles of blacks, women, and immigrants in northern society. Another important theme is comparison of the homefront experiences of the Union with those of the Confederacy, where Gallman points out that in the areas of conscription and arms production, the South became more centralized than the North.

Information about Pennsylvania in *The North Fights the Civil War* includes such details as political setbacks for the Republicans in the 1862 Congressional elections, high levels of draft evasion (including violence against enrollment officers), and the use of federal troops to subdue striking coal miners in the eastern part of the state. References to events in Philadelphia are so numerous that space permits only one example. Gallman argues that large cities, such as Philadelphia, dealt with the challenges of war effectively because of their diverse economies, dense web of voluntary societies, and large working-class populations as sources for military recruitment.

The author clearly approaches his subject with a social historian’s outlook and methodology; the total lack of citations, however, occasionally is frustrating for anyone wishing to check facts and conclusions. Gallman’s bibliographical essay is too succinct to completely offset this deficiency.

Nevertheless, *The North Fights the Civil War* is so well written and deals with such an important subject that it should reach a wide audience. It could be used (with proper caveats about citations) as a supplementary reading for college level Civil War or United States history survey courses.

Randolph M. Kelley, *Community College of Allegheny County, Allegheny Campus*

By Susan L. Smith. *Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired: Black Women’s Health Activism in America, 1890-1950.*

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995. Pp. vii + 247; ten illustrations. Cloth, \$34.95, Paper \$16.95)

Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired is a welcome addition to the growing body of work in African-American women’s history, to the history of public health in the United States, and to medical history. A sophisticated analysis of the overlapping but differentiated movements to provide health care for black

Americans in the rural South, it situates health reform as a cornerstone of the black freedom struggle, analyzes the gendered nature of black initiatives in public health, and faces squarely issues of racism, social class, and professionalism that influenced attempts to bring a minimum standard of health care to poor African Americans in the South in the first half of the twentieth century.

Some of the broader themes that undergird this history will seem familiar to historians of the twentieth century. One is the exclusion of blacks from federal social welfare programs because these programs were administered by local white officials. Federal authorities proved unwilling to challenge that exclusion for fear of losing congressional support. Smith deals with the extensive network of black women's voluntary associations and the gendered dimensions of power within the black community as well: "men held most of the formal leadership positions and women did most of the grassroots organizing." (p. 1)

The story of the determined efforts of black women, in spite of lack of government interest and even outright opposition, to provide health care services to the rural black South, has not been told before. The chapters on black midwives in Mississippi and on the relationships between sharecroppers and sorority women developed in the Alpha Kappa Alpha Mississippi Health Project are particularly significant for their deep understanding of both the disparities within black America and the alliances forged among women united by race if sometimes divided by social class.

Based on extensive research in manuscript sources and oral history as well as government documents, *Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired* adds significantly to our understanding of African Americans' demands for health care. Smith drives home the role that geography—in addition to race and class—plays in access to medical treatment, and of the ways in which health activism is linked to demands for social change. It is a book that deserves a wide audience.

Margaret Marsh, *Temple University*

By Glen Jeansonne. *Women of the Far Right: The Mothers' Movement and World War II.*

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1996. Pp. 264. \$29.95)

It all sounds so modern: in order to prevent involvement in a bloody foreign war, women of diverse social backgrounds mobilize to form a grass-roots organization. They lobby Congress to prevent bloodshed, and to expose the machinations of the warmongers and their allies in the media. All the while, they demand greater respect for women's rights and social conditions. This might seem an attractive scenario, until it is realized that the war in question was that against Nazi Germany, and the alleged warmongers were American

Jews, who were depicted as *ipso facto* traitors and Communist spies. As Glen Jeansonne points out, the “Mothers’ Movement” of the 1940s is one corner of women’s history that modern feminist scholars have not been anxious to explore, or to claim as part of women’s heritage.

Jeansonne is one of a small group of scholars who are attempting to rediscover the history of the American Far Right, a particularly gallant enterprise as neither he nor his colleagues usually have anything but contempt for their subjects. Yet the intellectual project is highly worthwhile. The Far Right has often been a lively presence on the American political scene, and in the 1930s and 1940s it was especially critical in mobilizing opposition to American involvement in war. The vast majority of isolationists assuredly did not belong to the extreme Right, and sincerely believed in the worthy credo of “America First”, but some leaders did at least flirt with active sympathy for Axis causes. As in the notorious case of Charles Lindbergh, a number explicitly blamed Jews for drumming up pro-war sentiment. This was music to the ears of authentic extremists like Father Charles Coughlin and Gerald L. K. Smith, and of their women supporters who now exploited the rhetoric of Christian womanhood and motherhood in order to plead for peace. Under a bewildering variety of names, the “Mothers Movement” served as the centerpiece of ultra-Right agitation in American cities from the end of the 1930s through the early 1950s.

Women of the Far Right has a special interest for students of Pennsylvania history because the “Mothers” were well entrenched in Philadelphia, and to a lesser extent Pittsburgh. Pennsylvania women like Catherine V. Brown, Bessie Burchett, and Lilian Parks were among the best-known figures nationally. Jeansonne includes a brief section on Philadelphia, in which he rightly draws attention to the critical figure of Bessie Burchett, who was led into fanatical anti-Communist and anti-semitic agitation through what may appear the very modern issue of alleged leftist and secularist subversion in the public schools. By the late 1930s, she had joined other anti-semitic agitators in a desperate campaign to keep America out of war. Beginning as the “Crusading Mothers”, the Philadelphia women soon became the “National Blue Star Mothers of Pennsylvania”, and sought to appeal to women whose sons and husbands were absent in the armed forces.

Though ostensibly pacifist, the group’s primary motivation was anti-Jewish. For Catherine V. Brown, this was a “Jew war”, “the Jew international bankers’ war”, started by “Jew Roosevelt” to destroy Christian civilization and set up a Communist World Government. The National Blue Star and other “Mothers” groups tracked families whose members had become military casualties, and then wrote the relatives to explain that these misfortunes were the result of schemes by Jewish or British interests, of the “Jew bankers and Washington bureaucrats their sons and husbands died for.” The heartless letter-writing

campaign continued at least until the German surrender in 1945, by which time the "Mothers' Movement" in Philadelphia was said to be "fast turning the City of Brotherly Love into the City of Motherly Hate".

Jeansonne's account of Pennsylvania conditions makes little attempt to place Brown, Burchett, and others in the context of pre-existing anti-semitic and Far Right agitation, especially the Coughlinite and Christian Front movements out of which the local Mothers assuredly developed. For example, Joseph Gallagher is mentioned without a sense of his vital importance as a Nazi leader in Philadelphia's violent street politics in the late 1930s. Other key Coughlinite agitators like the Blisards are mentioned only briefly (and then misspelled). However, Jeansonne's wide-ranging and convincing account of the Mothers as a national extremist force more than compensates for such local peccadilloes.

The scholarly value of Jeansonne's book is vastly augmented by his attempt to integrate the story of this one movement into the wider phenomenon of female participation in extreme Right movements generally, a theme already familiar from the work of Kathleen M. Blee on the women of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. Ironically, this was the first political movement to adopt gender-neutral terminology by using "Klansperson" in its internal correspondence! This discussion naturally leads Jeansonne into conflict with feminist theorists like Andrea Dworkin, for whom social conservatism is by definition anti-woman. Jeansonne is obviously correct in demonstrating not just the continuing female role on the extremist Right, but in showing the odd compatibility between fringe aspects of feminist rhetoric and such activism. The resulting book is vital not just for our understanding of the "politics of unreason" in American history, but for the whole substance of feminist politics and theory. As such, it is an extremely thought-provoking and insightful study.

Philip Jenkins, *The Pennsylvania State University*