

Harry Kyriakodis. *Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront*. (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011) Pp. 176. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$21.99.

In this overview of the Philadelphia waterfront, Harry Kyriakodis provides a strong basis for local history that will appeal to a variety of audiences. Readers do not have to have a specific interest in the Delaware River to enjoy Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront; the book contains a history of many city neighborhoods and their inhabitants. Written in a style that makes the author and his voice very present, the book is an experience in storytelling. The best part is that even the most surprising details are true.

Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront effortlessly walks through historical time in each chapter, blending the seventeenth century and modern times with ease. Instead of giving a chronological view of the waterfront, Kyriakodis focuses on a more locational history, one that makes for a much more interesting conversation. The book's north-to-south organization is an effective and unusual way to look at the history of the Delaware River. Most books on the history of the Philadelphia waterfront start in the middle of the city, Market Street, and branch out from that point to chronologically follow the city's expansion. Kyriakodis's decision to organize his book by neighborhood offers a fresh understanding of the expansive waterfront. Philadelphians characterize themselves by the culture of the neighborhood in which they were born or reside, not simply a geographical location; Kyriakodis recognizes this and organizes his book appeal to that sensibility. I only wish that the book came with a map or included several maps alongside the text; indeed, I found myself consulting a variety of maps to help determine the exact locations that Kyriakodis describes.

The introduction alone gives a sound background for those with little or no prior knowledge of the waterfront. The front and back cover images are well chosen to show the visual transformation of the river and illustrate the complex changes in this area of Philadelphia from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Winter recreation on the Delaware, construction of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, and the ever-changing purpose of the riverfront are shown through the images. Each brief chapter is focused on a given topic, like topography, military activities, art, and commerce, and all twenty are short enough to easily retain readers' interest. Though Kyriakodis sometimes refers to obscure events or seems to assume that his readers possess a certain familiarity with Philadelphia's maritime history, these moments do not prevent overall understanding. Anyone can learn about the waterfront from this book, from the completely uninitiated to a relative expert. History is about the details and

Kyriakodis assumes, I suspect rightly, that most of his readers will be unfamiliar with much of the material he presents. This wealth of information is one of many reasons why Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront is a worthwhile read.

As with every book, there are a few minor concerns that should be noted. Some of these relate to writing style and editorial choices. Though the chapters tend to be both short and focused on a single subject, in some cases organization breaks down within chapters when there is a certain lack of flow between topics, and this can make the author's train of thought difficult to follow, particularly for those without previous knowledge of the subject. Unfortunately, there are a few spelling and grammatical errors as well. Being a fact-checker and historian, I would have been pleased to see the inclusion of references or footnotes throughout the book. They would have given more backing to the claims expressed and may have helped substantiate certain ideas.

Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront also has some surprising omissions. Some interesting and important aspects of Philadelphia history that were based near the river, such as the Civil War refreshment saloons, are not mentioned. More seriously, while I get the sense that Kyriakodis is graciously skipping over the eventual blight years of the waterfront, this unfortunate part of its history is instrumental to how current Philadelphia leaders view the Delaware River area. While it may not have been a positive theme, it could have been included in a way that provides context for present-day attitudes toward the waterfront. Finally, Kyriakodis's underlying dislike of the I-95 highway is evident, and while this is a sentiment shared (with good reason) by most waterfront enthusiasts and many historians of the area, it also points to a clear bias that may prevent impartial discussions of certain kinds of development.

Despite these observations, Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront is currently the book that encompasses Delaware River history from William Penn nearly to the present day. The riverfront is constantly evolving to the needs of residents, businesses, and communities; just in the past year, the *Philadelphia Belle*, a river boat providing pleasure cruises mentioned in the book, is no longer operating. However, it is a terrific read for a varied audience of students, teachers, genealogists, newcomers to Philadelphia, long-time residents or native Philadelphians, and more. The book combines a social history of the waterfront with city history, technological history, economic history, and more—this is what makes Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront great.

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