

BOOK REVIEWS

*W*endy A. Cooper and Lisa Minardi. *Paint, Pattern and People: Furniture of Southeastern Pennsylvania, 1725–1850* (Philadelphia: Winterthur and the University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). Pp. xxv, 277. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$55.00.

The 2011 exhibit *Paint, Pattern and People* at Winterthur Museum was remarkable in that it showcased not only collections from multiple museums but also numerous objects held privately. Those attending saw artifacts that they could not have seen before, no matter how many museums they had visited or antique shows they had attended. The exhibit catalog that accompanied the exhibit shares this quality. While the decorative arts of early Pennsylvania have been the subject of many publications, the reader of this volume is bound to encounter old favorites as well as examples that have been newly discovered, or at least newly publicized.

The book *Paint, Pattern and People: Furniture of Southeastern Pennsylvania, 1725–1850* aims to bring a new level of attention

to the furniture produced in Philadelphia's hinterlands through the careful study of a select group of objects. Cooper and Minardi, who authored the book and curated the exhibit, write that "the principal goal of the project was to identify distinct localisms based on well-documented examples in which the maker or family history is known" (xxiv). The emphasis on well-documented examples is noteworthy. While many objects that reside in museum and private collections have limited provenance, those included in this study are generally signed or accompanied by written records, such as receipts, or strong family histories that indicate who made them, who owned them, or both.

Despite the volume's focus on furniture, Cooper and Minardi do not limit themselves to the study of that medium. Their body of evidence includes other items made from wood, such as architectural features that could have been made by the same woodworkers who crafted seating and storage forms. Recognizing that craftsmen served the needs of families throughout the life cycle, they even include a discussion of coffins, biers for carrying coffins, and corpse trays. References to funeral practices suggest one of the strengths of *Paint, Pattern and People*: it makes connections among different types of material culture, discussing coffee drinking in the context of coffee mills, music in the context of chairs designed to accommodate trombone players, and textiles such as featherbeds in the context of bedsteads with pillow panels.

If the identification of exceptionally documented objects in a variety of materials (and their lavish illustration in color, no less) is this volume's greatest strength, the major weakness of *Paint, Pattern and People* is the lack of a consistent argument. The content of the book is divided into an introduction and four chapters: "People," "Places," "Families," and "Makers." The first two chapters use material culture as a way to engage in a broad discussion of difference in colonial and early national Pennsylvania. The authors use physical differences among artifacts as a key to understanding differences based on ethnic and religious background and geographic location. In the latter two chapters, the focus shifts to a greater emphasis on individuals, with abundant detail, much of it genealogical, about those who created and owned the objects under study. Unfortunately, there is no formal conclusion to concretely tie the various parts together.

The authors do make the case in the introduction that "localism, more so than regionalism, may be a more relevant organizing concept for the study of American history and material culture" (xvii). Similar arguments have been offered, specifically concerning the mid-Atlantic region, by Gabrielle Lanier in *The Delaware Valley in the Early Republic* (2005) and Liam Riordan in *Many*

Identities, One Nation (2007), both of which are cited in the extensive bibliography. In many respects, *Paint, Pattern and People* builds on the work of these two and other authors. By examining local construction features and decorative patterns, many known to collectors for years, the authors raise questions about both patronage and training networks. When they demonstrate the striking similarity between furniture made in Pennsylvania and Virginia, issues of migration and mobility also come to the fore.

Yet the authors' primary intended audience members are not really historians, nor are the topics they address always those that historians would find the most interesting. For example, when they discuss a spinning wheel and reel made in 1842 for Rebecca H. Hershey, they emphasize how they know that Daniel Danner was the maker rather than why tools for home spinning were still being produced after the rise of textile mills. They do not explore whether the lack of wear on the objects suggests that they were made for commemorative reasons, in an era when the colonial past was increasingly revered, rather than for purely productive purposes.

Cooper and Minardi include as one of their objectives "debunking and correcting some long standing myths," and their new findings often have the most bearing among students of the decorative arts (xxvii). The authors expertly note that painted chests, often called "dower" chests, were made for both men and women and therefore should not automatically be associated with a woman's dowry. They go on to challenge John Joseph Stoudt's assertion that the decorative motifs on these chests carried religious meaning—that birds, for instance, symbolized the soul. Through their extensive research, Cooper and Minardi can offer alternative explanations for certain motifs, but they cannot rule out religious meaning. Despite the lack of conclusive evidence in cases like this, the authors should be commended for questioning traditional but often romanticized ideas about early Pennsylvania furniture and introducing a scholarly perspective to the discourse.

A desire to address previous (mis)conceptions about Pennsylvania decorative arts, coupled with the reality of what has survived and can be documented, creates somewhat uneven coverage of distinct groups and individuals. For example, in the section on Pennsylvania Germans, the authors devote eleven pages to the Moravians and only six to the much more numerous members of German Lutheran and Reformed congregations. Neither Jews nor Catholics are discussed in any detail, and Africans, African Americans, and Native Americans are missing from the account.

Paint, Pattern and People is a book that will be most appreciated by those with a passion for the decorative arts. The authors have done exemplary

research identifying well-documented objects and using those to make attributions to makers and to make comparisons with other objects. The volume is well designed and illustrated to capture the essence of the exhibit where these objects, some previously unexhibited, could be seen together. Cooper and Minardi state that the book “is not about dovetails and glue blocks” but rather “the furniture and what it can tell us about the people who made and owned it as well as the culture and craft production of the areas in which it originated” (xxiv). This goal is achieved in a catalog that is full of personal names, places, and dates. However, in their attention to these details, the authors sometimes miss the opportunity to explore larger historical issues. Their call to future scholars to build on their study recognizes that there is still more to be said about Pennsylvania furniture.

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Evan Haefeli. *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). Pp. 384. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$45.00.

The title of Evan Haefeli's book leads the reader to expect a discussion of the standard view of how the Dutch from the melting pot that was seventeenth-century Amsterdam brought religious tolerance to New Netherland and thus to the Middle Colonies and ultimately to the United States. But this is not the case Haefeli makes. The subject is much more nuanced.

Although religious toleration was a legal right in the Dutch Republic enshrined in article 13 of the 1579 Union of Utrecht, which ordained that “everyone shall remain free in religion and that no one may be persecuted or investigated because of religion,” toleration was not tolerance. American religious liberty, Haefeli writes, had its origins not in sixteenth-century Dutch political thinking but in Stuart England. When James, duke of York and a Roman Catholic, was given New Netherland by his Roman Catholic-leaning brother Charles II in 1664, one of his first acts was to allow the discriminated-against Lutherans to call a minister—something the Dutch had not allowed during their forty-year tenure (except in New Sweden on the Delaware), just as they had not allowed public worship by Jews, Catholics, Quakers, or other dissenting Protestants. In New Netherland, the Reformed

Dutch Church was the official church and the only one permitted to conduct public worship. Freedom of the conscience was the freedom to worship privately, not the freedom to worship in groups in public.

Taking a social-historical approach to his topic, Haefeli draws on both Atlantic history, which holds that the American colonies were part of a trans-Atlantic world in which events in Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean affected people, trade, and ideas interactively, and borderlands history, which stresses the fluidity and permeability of boundaries—not only geographical but among and between Europeans, Americans, Indians, and Africans—in early American history. Into this multicultural context enter the Stuarts, restored to their authority after two decades of trauma and civil war. Beset with the need to maintain their Restoration, and mindful of their own proclivities for Roman Catholicism, one part of Charles II's strategy was to extend tolerance to all comers. Haefeli does not spell this out clearly enough. He provides "readers unfamiliar with Dutch history . . . useful orientation" to the events and religious groups relevant to the Dutch-American story, but he is not equally helpful to readers hazy on Stuart history. So, reader, beware. Brush up on your Stuart history before proceeding.

This aside, the author makes, and convincingly, many salient points not heretofore part of the dialogue about the influence of the Reformed Dutch Church in New Netherland. He indicates, for instance, in chapter 1 that radical philosophical developments of the 1650s and 1660s in Amsterdam made it a very different city from the one the original settlers had known in the 1620s and 1630s. In the 1650s, the establishment of Amsterdam City's own colony on the Delaware, New Amstel, introduced there a "unique and special time in Dutch history, and in the history of America," for New Amstel's authorities allowed some of those radical experiments in religious liberty to establish a first footing on American soil (53).

Haefeli's treatment of connivance, the Dutch practice of winking at religious dissent (such as hidden house churches and synagogues), is thoughtful and nuanced. He points out that foreigners interpreted the religious diversity in the side streets and attics of Amsterdam as religious freedom, when it was not. Connivance developed, he writes, to "smooth over some of the rough edges created by the clash between the pretensions to hegemony of the Dutch Reformed Church and the reality of its incomplete hold on the hearts and minds of the inhabitants of the Dutch world, but it varied widely depending on the authorities in charge and how closely they supervised" (56). Not all clandestine religious activity was winked at. Some was discouraged, even in

tolerant Amsterdam. In New Netherland, with the exception of the Delaware communities, it was routinely suppressed.

Everywhere in the Dutch world, by the seventeenth century a global world, it was the same. Religious diversity was not forbidden, but religions not of the Calvinist persuasion were expected to acknowledge the primacy of the Dutch Reformed Church and keep their worship out of sight. This was truer in New Netherland than in certain Dutch trading communities in northern Europe, New Sweden on the Delaware, and especially Brazil, where the Dutch authorities extended a formal grant of toleration to Catholics and Jews.

Because of these ambiguous situations, the Dutch could think of themselves as tolerant, as they did not actively engage in religious persecution. But the tolerated could claim the Dutch were intolerant because they did not permit public worship beyond their own church. As the author points out, this contradiction allowed the Reformed Church to live surrounded by religious diversity without endorsing it, just as it permitted all to live with the Dutch without accepting the Dutch Reformed Church.

As the Dutch expanded their trade and their colonies around the globe, they encountered more exotic faiths—Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Confucian—and although they were constrained by the Union of Utrecht from compelling these diverse people to conform to Dutch Reformed beliefs, the hope was always that by merely suppressing the competition, rather than requiring conformity, dissenters would be drawn to the Reformed Church, thus growing it from within and spreading its influence benignly wherever Dutch trade routes took it.

This well-argued book will compel all who write of the Reformed Dutch Church in the future to shun reflexive claims for Dutch tolerance. It was more complicated than has been thought. The author concludes with the idea that the greatest contribution of the Dutch to American religious diversity was not to promote tolerance, but to hold the mid-Atlantic out of English hands until the Restoration, giving pluralism a chance to root itself deeply and permanently in what became New York and New Jersey and parts of Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

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Simon Finger, *The Contagious City: The Politics of Public Health in Early Philadelphia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012). Pp. 256. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$39.95.

Simon Finger's *The Contagious City: The Politics of Public Health in Early Philadelphia* traces the connections between politics and public health in Philadelphia from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The author does a fine job showing how political ideology corresponded with health and medical reform. Finger writes, "I . . . show how political efforts to promote health on a collective basis . . . shaped the political culture of that city and of the province and the nation around it" (5). He continues, "Ideas about people, politics, and space influenced the way colonists, rebels, and republicans conceived their polity" (6). As Philadelphia underwent colonial development, experienced revolutionary transformation, and exerted national influence, political leaders, medical professionals, city planners, and public health reformers did their best to positively influence the health of the city's residents as well as the urban body politic.

Finger begins his study in the colonial period. He describes how William Penn promoted the physical transformation of the Pennsylvania landscape and fashioned Philadelphia's layout. He hoped these measures might convince additional settlers to make the journey to his fledgling colony. He connected colonial power with demographic growth. As a result, he marketed his colony not only to residents of the British Isles, but also to Protestants in Europe. The decision to reach out to continental Protestants, specifically Germans, as potential settlers affected public health in several ways. Foreign migration, which was often accompanied by disease due to the tragic circumstances aboard ship, soon was seen as contagion. The association of the stranger with sickness brought about discrimination. Colonists wondered whether foreign bodies could be incorporated into the British body politic. Public health measures, including quarantine and the establishment of medical institutions, developed to help the ailing.

Philadelphia's contributions to the Enlightenment also highlight the connections between politics and public health. Benjamin Franklin embodied the era's devotion to association and improvement. He championed the Pennsylvania Hospital as a means of improving the well-being of the city and its ailing people. Philadelphians and other Pennsylvanians also participated in the Enlightenment exchange of knowledge. American colonists sent

samples of all sorts to England and Europe for analysis and took advantage of the opportunity to study in cities, like Edinburgh, that led in medical education. Yet, as the political atmosphere in the colonies became inflamed by the revolutionary crises of the 1760s and 1770s, American medical students abroad united in the face of British condescension and heavy-handedness.

Finger also studies Philadelphia's role in the Revolution and the early national period. He proves how "the war played a crucial part in transforming Philadelphia's medical community" (86). Medical practitioners gained experience and prestige, associated with military and political leaders, and came to understand the significance of public health programs. Medical veterans of the Revolution continued to lead the city after the war. They founded the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, advocated for health reform, and contributed to city institutions like the dispensary. The yellow fever epidemics of the 1790s tested the power of these medical leaders and their political colleagues. Fear of the disease divided health professionals and even separated the new United States, as neighboring states feared the introduction of disease via trade.

The author completed an impressive amount of primary source research. He coupled archival manuscripts with published material and consulted documents from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Finger includes examples of visual primary sources, such as maps, a frontispiece, and a sketch, in his narrative so that the reader can see the connections between public health and politics.

Overall, the book works well. One weakness that detracts from Finger's otherwise fine work is the author's tendency to move quickly from one topic to another without adequate analysis. For example, after analyzing the incorporation of Germans into the Pennsylvania body politic, Finger abruptly discusses the forced resettlement of Acadians in Pennsylvania. His investigation of the Acadian experience lasts for only three pages.

Despite this weakness, Finger's book succeeds. Historians of medicine will appreciate the author's study of politics and medicine. Students of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania history will find a story of how the city and the state debated and dealt with issues related to public health.

KAROL K. WEAVER
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Peter Charles Hoffer. *When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield: Enlightenment, Revival, and the Power of the Printed Word* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). Pp. 168. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$55.00.

When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield is part of The Johns Hopkins University Press series “Witness to History,” of which Peter Charles Hoffer is an editor. These books are short, secondary source–based volumes geared toward an undergraduate audience. In that genre, Hoffer’s book works well. It is deeply attuned to the scholarly literature, not only on Franklin and Whitefield, but on the eighteenth-century Atlantic world generally.

Hoffer is adept at packaging the current state of the historiography in ways that will remain interesting to students; for instance, in an evocative section on London as the key hub in the Anglo-American commercial empire, Hoffer tells us that “coffee, tea, sugar, chocolate, and other imported caffeinates and energy sources kept the middle classes at their desks longer. . . . Sugar made tea and coffee as popular as alcoholic beverages, and far more likely to keep one awake and busy than beer” (47). Such passages have abundant citations in endnotes, not just to books in general, but to specific references within them.

Franklin and Whitefield are representative, for Hoffer, as ambitious, self-fashioning men of the eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic world. Franklin is the great advocate of Enlightenment, Whitefield of Awakening. Given the nature of the book, few details here will surprise scholarly experts, but Hoffer comfortably weaves Franklin and Whitefield’s life stories with the Atlantic histories of Philadelphia, Boston, London, Bristol, and other significant locales.

Hoffer paints a convincing picture of Franklin and Whitefield’s friendship and respective worlds, but while he overtly admires Franklin, he never seems quite comfortable with Whitefield. Much of this is a matter of tone. The “needy” Whitefield, a “master of manipulating the emotions,” preached out of his “neediness,” Hoffer contends, winning over people whose middle-class “anxiety . . . bred the need to find and adhere to evangelical preaching” (41, 47, 64).

More substantially, Hoffer suggests that even as Whitefield “clung” to the prescriptions of his Calvinist theology, the preacher was surprised that Calvin’s stern God would save so many in the Great Awakening (20, 48). I see no evidence that Whitefield’s (or Edwards’s, or others’) surprise about the revivals was shaped by Calvinism. Calvinists do not profess to know how many people God intends ultimately to save. But this book holds that

Whitefield wittingly or unwittingly undermined Calvinist theology by preaching, in Hoffer's words, that "rebirth was the first step that a person could take on the road to salvation" (91).

This reflects a common misunderstanding of Calvinism: critics have often been perplexed at how Calvinists could preach a gospel of free grace, when they knew that only the elect could respond. But that theological tension was evidently no problem for Whitefield, Edwards, or the Calvinist evangelicals who dominated America's Great Awakening. Rebirth, they preached, was not a "step" that anyone could take him- or herself, nor did that experience put the reborn on the "road" to salvation; it was salvation itself, accomplished by God's grace and power.

Some of Hoffer's approach to evangelicals seems informed by present concerns: he tells us that because Whitefield believed in the divine origin and authority of Scripture, he would be termed a "fundamentalist" if he were around today (58). Similarly, from his "modern perspective," Hoffer asserts that Whitefield's childhood sins, meticulously described in the itinerant's account of his early life, simply mean that he was a "normal child—craving attention and acting out to get it." But, in Hoffer's reading, we don't know whether Whitefield's autobiography reflects his "actual experience" anyway (38). Ultimately, Whitefield's piety here is a "mask" and an "affectation" (49). Because of these skeptical assessments of the itinerant, the book struggles to explain what made Whitefield so driven, and so compelling.

Yet Hoffer does see merit in Whitefield. The itinerant's real significance actually lies within his ostensible, unstated rejection of Calvinism, which made him the "ultimate democrat" of his time, even more than Franklin (124). He and Franklin both knew the power of print media, an understanding that helped seal their long-term friendship and business relationship, with Franklin happily printing Whitefield's journals and sermons in spite of his theological objections to them. Both were masters of rhetoric, Franklin of the written word, Whitefield the spoken.

It is clearer why Franklin matters to Hoffer. He is emblematic of a secular, scientific, pragmatic, optimistic mindset that represents, in Hoffer's unabashedly modernist view, the best of the American tradition. Whitefield's primary legacy lies in America's sheer religiosity, which Hoffer tells us we can see "Sunday morning on the roads" in northeast Georgia and across the Bible Belt (129). Megachurches with packed parking lots and high-tech productions—these are Whitefield's most enduring contributions today.

Unfortunately, Hoffer intones in his concluding paragraph, in some of those churches “religious belief once again has turned to harsh judgments of those who are not among the saved” (131).

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David Schuyler. *Sanctified Landscape: Writers, Artists, and the Hudson River Valley, 1820–1909* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012). Pp. xii, 206. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$29.95.

Seen from a car passing over the Tappan Zee Bridge or an overlook in one of the towns that hug its shores, the Hudson River presents a deceptive sense of calm and timelessness. It is an essential part of the furniture of American history, providing a reliable scaffolding for episodes that are often recalled dutifully, if a bit dimly: the Revolutionary War, the invented Knickerbocker history of Washington Irving, and the group of nineteenth-century artists now known as the Hudson River School. David Schuyler’s book, a study of the literary and visual culture created by an elite group of writers, artists, and other tastemakers in the Hudson Valley between 1820 and 1909, helps overturn that deathless and static image. His book bristles with odd and surprising details that make clear how intensely human activity shaped those landscapes. Irving’s cottage in Tarrytown, New York, for instance, boasted a lake in the shape of the Mediterranean and a “vaguely Spanish” pagoda (53). Just as telling is Irving’s indignant reaction as his “snuggery” was invaded by the “infernal alarum” of a railway line (56).

Schuyler argues that the Hudson River’s landscapes were “sanctified” by writers, artists and tourists, and this material makes up much of the first half of his book. He begins with a chapter on tourism, focusing on its paradoxical “pattern of exploitation and development” (25), and follows with a chapter on “The Artist’s River,” looking at Thomas Cole’s prescient objections to the depredations of industry, particularly in and around his beloved Hudson River. Two more chapters (“The Writer’s River” and “The River in a Garden”) examine the efforts of two writers, Irving and Nathaniel Parker Willis, and a landscape gardener, Andrew Jackson Downing, to domesticate the landscapes of the Hudson River with charming estates that took advantage of the area’s natural beauty. These topics have been frequently addressed,

and, although Schuyler adds some fresh and engaging material, they will be familiar to readers acquainted with historiography of the Hudson River School, a scholarly trail that itself wends its way all the way back to the nineteenth century.

Schuyler's most original contribution, however, is to look at the ways in which these sanctified landscapes were profaned, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the last four chapters of the book form a slow chronicle of loss, as the beauty, natural resources, and historically significant sites of the Hudson River Valley were compromised or destroyed. In chapter 5, "Change and Continuity at Mid-Century," Schuyler considers three Hudson River towns (Newburgh, Kingston, and Poughkeepsie) as new factories and the largely Irish and German immigrants who worked in them changed the built and natural environments and their relationship to the waterfront. The chapter also contains an extended inquiry into the move to save George Washington's Revolutionary War headquarters at Newburgh. The material contained in the chapter can sometimes be unwieldy for the reader, however, and this is emblematic of the book's weaknesses. Wide-ranging in more ways than one, *Sanctified Landscape* covers a great amount of material geographically and methodologically. Chapter 5, for example, looks at social, economic, and environmental change in three towns, a tall order indeed, while also addressing the historic preservation of a revered monument in one of them. After that, the limited focus of the following chapter, "Elegy for the Hudson River School," is a tonic as the author addresses a different kind of relic, the painter Jervis McEntee. His journal and later life form a melancholy record of what the new cosmopolitanism looked like from the losing side, that of the second-generation Hudson River School painters who saw the value of their works tumble as a "perfect deluge" of foreign pictures, in McEntee's words, flooded the market (123). The chapter is deeply insightful and informative, and one emerges with a vivid sense not only of McEntee's decline, but of his brother-artists' as well.

The final two chapters end on a note of loss tempered with possibility. Chapter 7 details the local environmentalism of naturalist John Burroughs, whom Henry James called "a sort of reduced, but also more humorous, more available, and more sociable Thoreau" (137). The final chapter tells the story of the largely forgotten 1909 Hudson-Fulton celebration, an event that New York elites hoped would encourage a very specific kind of public memory that, as we know from Schuyler's account, had been slowly

BOOK REVIEWS

declining for some time. The celebration was a flop. Schuyler's account of the crash of the replica ship *Half Moon*, which was deeply embarrassing to the organizers, and of parade floats depicting Revolutionary War battles to crowds of potentially confused or unimpressed immigrants emphasizes that it is human activity that shapes the Hudson River's sublime landscapes, not the other way around. The river, it seems, keeps rolling.

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