BOOK REVIEWS


Richard Beale Davis concludes his career as Alumni Distinguished Professor of American Literature at the University of Tennessee with a magnum opus. Intellectual Life in the Colonial South is magisterial in concept, catholic in taste, comprehensive in execution, perceptive in analysis, and graceful in style. It is a seminal study which will foster dozens of dissertations and hundreds of monographs as scholars carry out the author’s charge to amplify, emend, qualify, confirm, and deny his examples and interpretations. No serious student of colonial intellectual life can neglect these tomes.

The sheer breadth of Davis’ undertaking may partially be comprehended by a listing of the ten chapters. Volume I contains three: promotion, discovery, and history; the Indian image; and education. Volume II’s four consider: books, libraries, reading, and printing; religion; sermons; science and technology. Volume III describes: fine arts; bellettristic literature (the longest chapter); and the public mind. The subtopics under these headings are awesome in their diversity: Indian oratory, educational theory, witchcraft, cartography, ornithology, ornamental garden design, satires, elegies, and political theory only scratch the surface of areas surveyed. Through this survey, Davis seeks to demonstrate “that the colonial southerner had a mind contemplative and introspective and articulate and creative and hedonistic and observant . . .; that this mind was shaped by Britain and Europe and its peculiar situation in the New World; and—perhaps by implication—that this mind did at least as much toward the shaping of the later national mind as did that of New England” (I, xxvi).

While electing to forego a grand synthesis of the colonial southern mind, Davis considers the emergence of several characteristics. First of all the southerner is religious, although clearly in a different way from the Puritans. Much “that was happening in Great Britain and on the European continent had effects on the southern seacoast settlement which prevented the kind of unified, albeit changing, religious and theological unity that New England possessed” (II, 629). Secondly, the southerner is hedonistic. “From the colonial beginning the love of play, of recreation has gone hand in hand with the piety of rank and file of society and with the more
reasoned religious philosophies of the better educated” (III, 1649). The southern settler also had an agrarian viewpoint fully developed by the mid-eighteenth century. He “came not to build a city upon a hill” but rather “to cultivate a fertile valley until he had won for himself the good life, the American dream as reality” (I, xxx). The southern mind was also devoted to classicism, not only in its reading habits, but also in such manifestations as architecture, an emanation of intellectual development most characteristic of the region’s cultural achievements. Finally, the colonial southerner remained British in his taste in literature, the arts, law, and education. This meant there was no cultural lag between Britain and the southern colonists’ adoption of current creative fashion.

Davis prescribes a strong antidote to the scholarly poison that New Englanders dominated colonial cultural life. In the process he attacks and chides prominent champions of Puritan intellectual supremacy from Perry Miller to Alan Heimert. Typical is his description of the scholarship of Raymond Stearns as being “in the older historical tradition of assigning disproportionate importance to anything from New England and being supercilious or condescending toward anything done south of the Susquehanna” (II, 1087).

But Davis is not entirely a southerphile in his approach. He acknowledges that too few seventeenth-century southern sermons survive to make an adequate comparison with those of the Puritan fathers. He knows the South produced nothing comparable to the diaries and verse of early New England (III, 1314–1315). Davis’ emphasis is on the “golden age” of southern culture, 1700–1763. William Byrd and Samuel Davies of Virginia, along with Richard Lewis and Alexander Hamilton of Maryland, plus Eliza Lucas Pinckney and Alexander Garden of South Carolina are the luminaries around whom revolved many lesser but not insignificant intellectual planets. Collectively this cultural enlightenment provided the environment which produced the better-known supernovae of the Revolutionary age.

*Intellectual Life* is at its best when describing and analyzing Professor Davis’ literary interests—thus the chapters on sermons and literature are probably the most significant. Of course a work of this magnitude has its errors of omission and commission. Often references to the latest scholarship are not to be found; for example, the Indian population figures (I, 108) are probably too low, the discussion of malaria (II, 929–934) is outdated, and the relative importance of wheat as a cash crop is underrated (II, 952–953). The placing of this reviewer and Robert E. Brown on the same side relative to the degree of colonial democracy (III, 1546–1547) is one of a few unfortunate errors. However many these slight and slips, they do not significantly diminish the importance of the work.

The magnificence of what Davis has wrought reminds one of the Latin inscription above the tomb of Sir Christopher Wren in St. Paul’s Cathedral which reads, “If you seek his monument, look around.” It would have been most fitting for the University of Tennessee Press to have inscribed
below the author’s name on the title pages of these volumes, “If you seek his monument, read here.” Few scholars will ever leave a more lasting or impressive memorial.

_Bowling Green State University_  \textbf{David Curtis Skaggs}

By Sung Bok Kim. (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1978. xxii, 456 p. Appendices, maps, index. $19.00.)

One of the most enduring national myths has enshrined the freehold farmer in a central place in the American pantheon. No more so than in early American history where the most common experience was that of working the soil. The major exception to this pattern that scholars cared to note was that of the manors of New York. As “feudal” holdovers they were odious, undemocratic, and contrary to American ideals. The issue of tenantry has been overlooked otherwise. However, as social historians have plowed an ever deeper and broader furrow through the colonial period tenantry has finally come under closer scrutiny. Now we have Sung Bok Kim’s excellent study that finally ends the clichés which have characterized the study of the New York manor lords and their tenants.

The manors were largely the product of the late seventeenth century. The necessity of financing imperial wars and building a stable court party forced the governors to reward their adherents with large land grants and other favors. Many of the land grants received some form of private jurisdiction. This is the only aspect of the manors which can be regarded as “feudal,” but, as the author shows, legislation creating local government quickly eroded the manor lord’s rights to administer justice to their tenants. Thus ended the only “feudal” aspect of the manors and while Sung uses the word “feudal” frequently it would seem to have no meaning in the context of New York.

The most important contribution of his book is in its central section. He makes an entirely convincing case that the relationship between the landlords and the tenants was mutually beneficial for a very long time. Using a highly variable rent and fee structure, the landlords attracted and kept landless families. Many of these families prospered belying the image of a hard pressed tenantry suffering under coercive and vicious landlords. The tenants, in fact, were notoriously remiss in paying their rents, leaving the landlord only the gains from local milling and general store operations plus long-term gains from improvements. By the middle of the eighteenth century the third generation manor lords were finally realizing these long-term gains and were settling down to become full-time landlords forsaking mercantile careers. When their profits became tied to the land exclusively
the landlords tightened up their grip on the tenants. Sung draws too glossy a picture of the relationship between lord and tenant prior to 1750. It was a relationship based on mutual need and suffered from all the strains that such dependencies create. If research into colonial society has revealed anything it has been that communal peace was a sometimes thing and never as common as Sung would have us believe it was in the Hudson River Valley. He rests a good part of his case on the image of the kindly landlord who did not want the stigma that went with being a cruel extortionist of his tenants. This social type was no doubt a compelling model; however, when their interests were at stake the manor lords could be ruthless as Sung reveals all too clearly in the final section of his book.

From 1751 to 1775 the manors were periodically wracked by riots. Sung’s meticulous research reveals that these riots were not the product of class tension as much as they were the result of boundary disputes. The rough-hewn and ill-surveyed land grants of the seventeenth century were increasingly challenged by hungry New Englanders who moved onto the ill-defined border between New York and its New England neighbors. Massachusetts Bay encouraged the land grab on the boundary in order to support its own claims to this region. The squatters were also allied with disgruntled tenants finally aroused by new and tougher landlords. Together they pressed their claims to ownership of the land. Due to the complexities of New York politics the manor lords were frequently left to repel the rioters on their own, and on occasion these battles resulted in death—one form of colonial riot, at least, which brought more than the destruction of property. The onset of the Revolution blurred these conflicts until they broke out again in the nineteenth century, a testimony to the durability of the landlords.

Never again will it be possible to spout clichés about the New York manors. Sung’s diligent research leaves little room for argument in regard to his major findings. There are always quibbles one can make and this reviewer disagrees entirely with Sung’s analysis of Leisler’s rebellion. However, one puts this work down impressed by its scholarship and certain of its place in the literature of the colonial period.

University of California, San Diego

Robert C. Ritchie


The present volume is an extended, revised version of a long article published serially, under the same title, in four issues of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, volume 59 (Pittsburgh, 1976). The author is an outstanding contributor to that publication, esteemed for his
careful, scholarly editing of journals and orderly books relevant to western Pennsylvania history. The present work, though of a different nature, exhibits the same traits of extensive research, interest in original documents, and detailed, first-hand knowledge of terrain.

Published in a limited edition of 500 copies, the book is not a mere reprint of the magazine article. Of its ten chapters, Chapter 9 is new, and so are some of the illustrations and maps; the account of the Brodhead expedition has undergone some revision; and two appendixes, the bibliography, and a meager index were not parts of the magazine article. A few details have been overlooked in the transition, however: notes on pages 41 and 51 still refer the reader to the magazine rather than to pages 9–10 and 34–35 of the present volume, and works cited in the new part of the text are not listed in the bibliography.

The text was not written as a military history or a reference work. In the author's own words, his purpose was "to present a perspective view of the great conflict for freedom and existence as witnessed [from Pittsburgh]," and, in the process, to call attention to "documentary sources which the casual reader may not have discovered for himself." Quoted documents contribute flavor and immediacy to the narrative, and biographical sketches provide digressions from it. The main concern at Pittsburgh was military, of course, and the text probably gives enough attention to matters of command, garrisons, logistics, and maneuvers to satisfy the general reader. Accounts of the interplay of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Continental politics, Indian affairs, Loyalists, and personalities, and topographic and archeological information illustrate the sweep and complexity of the "perspective view."

Fort Pitt was never attacked during the Revolution, nor, for whatever reasons, did it deliver any major attack on the enemy. Its situation separated it from operations nearer the seacoast, though it was affected by them. The Brodhead expedition of 1779 was dwarfed by the Sullivan expedition with which it was loosely coordinated, and its success did not spare the western settlements from later Indian attacks, including the 1782 destruction of Hannastown. The fort occupied a strategic situation, however, and its military presence was both a deterrent to Loyalist activities and a support to the transmontane population that after the war moved on to settle the "Old Northwest"—something impossible for underpopulated Canada to have accomplished even though Detroit remained in British hands.

The book is almost free from typographic errors, although in a three-line quotation on page 10 only four of the nine italicized words should have been so printed. The book is simply and attractively bound, the pages are stitched in, the type is legible, and the price is by present standards moderate. A little more attention of the kind given the typography would have benefited the text. Such statements as the one on page 9 that the Allegheny and Ohio rivers remained the Indian boundary until 1795
(later corrected by accounts of the Ft. Stanwix and Ft. McIntosh treaties of 1784-85) and the one on page 188 that has Governor Jefferson appointed Indian agent by John Dodge could have been rectified. In fairness to Donald H. Kent (page ix), it should be noted that his official position was that of Director of the Bureau of Archives and History, rather than that of State Archivist.

Mechanicsburg, Pa.

WILLIAM A. HUNTER


Gail Stuart Rowe has produced a detailed study of the lawyer who saved Pennsylvania's court system from the arbitrary administration that radical Revolutionary government would otherwise have imposed. An early outspoken revolutionary, both in his native Delaware and Pennsylvania, McKean served as Pennsylvania's chief justice from 1777 to 1799, and after that served three terms as governor. Because the book is the result of thorough research, and because McKean's career spanned so many years of Pennsylvania history, Thomas McKean is a major achievement.

The chapters dealing with early years in Delaware emphasize personal ambition and legal expertise. Resentment against the new imperial policy of 1763 led McKean to eventually favor revolution. His Presbyterian background and education did not make him an opponent of monarchy, nor does the author link him to those Presbyterians who sought to replace, in both colonies, proprietary with royal government.

Rowe holds that after 1760 American republicanism—the ideal—was of the type expounded by John Adams: committed self-sacrifice to public service and, at all times, personal virtue. If, as the subtitle suggests, the book's thesis is the evolving nature of this republicanism, its author does not present it adequately. He does not try to show how a theory of republicanism influenced McKean's actions, nor does he more than occasionally mention that the American political climate was gradually changing. Kim T. Phillips' article in The Pennsylvania Magazine, Volume CI, is far more informative, because she associates the Duane-Leib defection from the Dallas-McKean Republican state party with the decline of the personally virtuous republicanism and its replacement by a new type of popular politics.

Since the limits of the power of the judicial branch were not clear in 1777, McKean had to fight to keep it from being overshadowed by the Supreme Executive Council. He also battled valiantly to preserve much of British law for a people who were now independent of British govern-
calm. He had his own particular theory in this matter and many of his professional colleagues did not agree with him. An area of dispute with the federal judicial power also developed, but McKean was not generally opposed to strong national courts. He regarded the entire court system as institutionally dwarfed, although he does not seem to have sympathized with those in western Pennsylvania who argued that long distance from courts was itself a form of injustice.

Rowe does not provide a satisfactory explanation for McKean's shift to the Republican Party in 1795. His Francophile leanings are mentioned, but not really clarified. His personal position as a government creditor seems to be part of the motivation, for McKean was not satisfied with Hamilton's program for funding the national debt. There is no mention of his hostility toward Hamilton's ambitions or beliefs. Republican leaders of 1795 welcomed him because he was popularly regarded as nonpartisan; from that point forward Rowe portrays him as motivated by his personal views on political issues. The author vaguely suggests that McKean's character changed at the time. But even though he writes against the contemporary belief that McKean was a weathercock and a trimmer, the reader is left with the impression that it was so.

Even allowing for the habitual public deference to men of achievement in this period, McKean was a very unlikely Republican. His constitutional proposals for the Commonwealth in 1790 were reactionary; he was insensitive enough to have been quoted as saying that all paupers were rogues.

The chapters dealing with the judicial years are more interesting than the three covering the governorship because the material is not treated in standard histories of Pennsylvania. Rather than explaining the purpose behind executive actions, and the rationale of its opposition, Rowe's account of the collision course, 1802 to 1808, between the governor and his legislature is a presentation of details drawn largely from public documents. There is little there that does not appear in Sanford W. Higginbotham's *Keystone in the Democratic Arch: Pennsylvania Politics 1800-1816* (1952). Social and economic factors in the history of the Commonwealth are largely ignored; even the political aspects of sectionalism and westward expansion do not receive attention. The attempts to impeach the governor, apparently the climax of his life's odyssey, receives only surface treatment. Why did the legislators decide not to remove McKean? Were they truly convinced by the aged politician's apologetic rhetoric, were they satisfied that he would soon leave office, or was the determining factor certain covert political bargains not mentioned by the biographer?

The failure to look for personal motives—sociological or psychological—is a major shortcoming of this work. One excuse for this may be the confusing nature of the sources, especially the exaggerated caricatures in the newspaper invective of the times. Also, until 1799, one might say that Rowe is justified in preserving the sanctity of judicial decisions by eschew-
ing discussion of a judge's personal involvement. Of course, that is not the way for a historian to write the biography of a judge two centuries later. We are left wondering whether McKean's quick temper and arrogance came from his Scotch-Irish origins, from the frustration of not being accepted as the cream of Philadelphia's society, or from an excess of that combativeness traditionally considered desirable in a lawyer. Was there a common factor linking the fist fight McKean had with William Thompson and the two incidents when his sons descended to physical violence during delicate political crises? Was his enemy, William Cobbett, correct in saying that the Chief Justice's desire to conceal his rough origins ruled his sense of judgment? Was it his vanity that motivated his wife to destroy his wigs whenever he was drunk?

Thomas McKean is marred by the presentation of innumerable short quotations from legal opinions and gubernatorial statements, to which are often joined several sentences paraphrasing the remaining points of each document. In places this has been done indiscriminately, suggesting that the author cannot distinguish the important from the trivial. Also, it distorts history by placing an undue emphasis on formal documents. It is as if Rowe believes that statements made by officeholders in the performance of their duties are the most reliable and informative sources. These weaknesses are obvious. For readers of history at a certain level, however, this distortion can itself be a strength. For those whose lives will never allow them to assimilate the information found in Rowe's sources, the book is one to treasure.

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission  LOUIS M. WADDELL


When James Wilson died in 1798 he was at once forgotten, and only specialists know anything about him now. Although such neglect is understandable, as will appear below, it is hardly consonant with his achievements. From an early stage of the resistance to Britain through the formation of the national government he was politically active at high levels. One of just six men who signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, he served prominently in the Continental Congress, the Pennsylvania legislature, the Constitutional Convention, the ratifying convention in Pennsylvania (his speeches comprise the bulk of its published debates), the state constitutional convention of 1790, which he dominated, and finally he was for years an associate justice of the federal Supreme Court. His ideas had a "precursory" quality, that is, they often incorporated seminal principles that later became important. "It is not
too much to say,” writes Geoffrey Seed, quoting R. G. McCloskey, a recent compiler of Wilson's works, “that the ideas of James Wilson more nearly foreshadowed the national future than those of any of his well-remembered contemporaries. No one of them—not Hamilton, or Jefferson, or Madison, or Adams, or Marshall—came so close to representing in his views what the United States was to become.”

Six years before Jefferson or John Adams arrived at the idea, Wilson put into writing the principle of dominion status, which was the culminating American definition of colonial rights within the empire and later became the formula for the division of powers between state and federal governments under the Constitution. At one time or another during his career, Wilson asserted the doctrine of implied powers (of the Confederation Congress), anticipated John Marshall’s decisions protecting corporation charters against legislative violation, came out early and clearly for judicial review of federal legislation, and practically originated the nationalist argument that the phrase “we the people” in the Constitution signified the creation of the Union by the people at large rather than, as states righters contended, by agreement of the states.

Wilson conceived of an almost mystical bond between government and the people. A devotee of the Scottish Enlightenment rather than Anglo-American political tradition, he had no fear of power, admired “effective” government, and was a profound centralist. He regarded government as a general instrument to be used in realizing the purposes of the society, and he thought of the people as committed to the process by their participation in elections. His ideas came out clearly at the Constitutional Convention, where he opposed any restrictions upon the central government in areas within its jurisdiction. He would have done away with the counterbalance represented by state authority or influence, even that implicit in state representation in the Senate. (He fought hard for proportional representation in both houses of Congress.) He argued against a bill of rights on the grounds that it would limit sovereignty and therefore the will of the people, which should be uncircumscribed. His notion of positive government, it should be said, was at least equal to that of Hamilton in its advocacy of using government to promote economic development.

A mighty government had to rest upon a broad foundation of popular participation if it were to involve the loyalty and energy of the people. At the Federal Convention and elsewhere Wilson consistently stood for universal manhood suffrage, the direct, popular election of all officers (including the President), and representation based upon population without respect to wealth. Although he favored checks and balances between different branches of government, he rejected the notion of social class balance, that is, the idea that by electoral or other devices the different branches of government should be made to represent different classes of society. Wilson thought all branches should represent the people at large.
This political ideology corresponded more closely to governmental practice in the twentieth century than to the thought of Wilson's contemporaries, even that of his fellow Federalists. They wanted a powerful central government, but one of their main reasons was to restrain the "licentiousness" of the people. Central government was coupled in their minds with elite dominance. They were divided in their attitude toward big government, many of them apprehensive of tyranny, but they were united in their opposition to democracy. None of them would go along with Wilson's idea of universal suffrage, direct election, and no structural restraints upon popular will. Wilson's philosophy was on the other hand insupportable to Antifederalists. They were more likely to lean to democracy, but they were united in their opposition to big government. None of them would sanction unlimited powers.

It is no wonder that while Wilson may have influenced the Federal Convention, he failed to convert it. His ideas were incompatible with prevailing conceptions of the nature of man and of government then, as, for that matter, they probably are today. However, their inopportuneness was not the only reason Wilson left so small an imprint upon his times; personal traits contributed to what became a tragic end. He was never very popular and had few friends, but that was less consequential than his having too much worldly ambition—for money and social position. He attached himself to the rich and powerful; he tried frantically and not always scrupulously to acquire wealth, frequently getting involved over his head in speculative enterprises. As Geoffrey Seed acknowledges, his principles coincided with his self-interest most of the time, but when they did not, his principles suffered. Hence, there was in his own time what one might call a public suspicion of his motives, a distrust of his sincerity which has clouded his reputation among historians and, in fact, may have prevented his gaining a higher position in the new federal government. During the 1790s he was in most respects eligible for a cabinet position or the chief justiceship; neither Washington nor Adams, however, gave top appointments to speculators.

Wilson is for evident reasons being revived as an historical personage. Randolph G. Adams edited a selection of his writings in 1930. An excellent biography was published in 1956 by Page Smith. More recently, in 1967, Robert Green McCloskey compiled a scholarly edition of his works and wrote a brilliant essay on his political thought. The present volume by Geoffrey Seed is equally brilliant and has the merit of covering the origins of Wilson's thought and its elaboration over his entire career. Seed has a thorough command of early American history; his writing is fluent, detached in viewpoint, and eminently sophisticated.

Queens College of the City University of New York

E. James Ferguson

This is an important book, but one perhaps doomed to be taken too lightly because the author has often been carelessly labelled an ideologue or mere “amateur” historian. Those who commit either of these errors and ignore Inventing America will miss a treat, for Wills has many fresh things to say about Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence, and reminds us that even obvious truths about our most venerable assumptions bear periodic re-examination.

The distinctiveness of Wills’s approach in this study lies in his patient analysis of the changes that Congress made in Jefferson’s draft of the Declaration. That Jefferson was greatly concerned over these revisions is well known, but his reaction has been labelled hypersensitivity and the actual changes regarded as of slight significance. But these assumptions, Wills reminds us, fly in the face of the fact that at least seven times Jefferson painstakingly recopied his draft—carefully identifying the alterations made by Congress—for distribution to friends, certainly an odd response had he been quibbling only about verbal and stylistic matters.

Once he began to separate Jefferson’s Declaration from the one Congress adopted, Wills discovered that Congress had rejected most of what was peculiar to Jefferson’s thought and in the process fundamentally altered his draft. The Virginian had developed a distinctive theory of expatriation, for example, which led him to emphasize America’s separation from the British people (rather than merely from Parliament or the Crown) as the decisive act in attaining independence. The point was sufficiently important to Jefferson that he also made other attempts to develop his “expatriation theory,” but it “did not reach public expression in any of his documents as these were passed by Congress.” As incorporated into the penultimate paragraph of his draft Declaration, “his emigration theory [was] simply excised, along with over three hundred words of accompanying material.”

Furthermore, Wills argues, Jefferson derived his inspiration not from John Locke’s Two Treatises of Government but from “the invigorating realm of the Scottish Enlightenment at its zenith.” At this, Wills’s critics have already balked, but interestingly enough this argument derives not from Wills but from John Dunn, who in a 1969 essay minimized the significance of Locke’s tract in American political thought prior to the nineteenth century. Locke’s Two Treatises, Dunn explained in a passage that echoes Wills’s thesis concerning the Declaration, “was at most a symbol for an entire tradition in the conduct of politics, an ambiguous tradition as all such traditions are, and of those who did read the book most read it as men read the Declaration of Independence today, as an
affirmation of faith in the viability of the tradition, not as an exercise in
the critical assessment of contemporary political achievement.”

Wills, however, carried the search for the origins of Jefferson’s thought
much further than previous scholars, and it led him through Jefferson’s
library and the men who most directly influenced his early education
-especially his tutor at William and Mary, the Scot William Small) to
luminaries of the Scottish Enlightenment such as Thomas Reid, David
Hume, Adam Smith, and, above all, Frances Hutcheson. Little is known
about Jefferson’s education because his first library and early personal
papers perished in the fire that destroyed his Shadwell home in 1769, but
this very fact enabled Wills to seize an opportunity other interpreters
failed to exploit. Although critics will quarrel with some of Wills’s con-
clusions, it is incontrovertible that traditional interpretations are largely
deductive and derived from Jefferson’s later writings. Thus generations
have read the Declaration as a Lockeian document, and then linked
Jefferson to Locke’s political ideas simply by asserting that they were
“in the air” during Jefferson’s formative years. And those ideas are known
to have been “in the air” because they were embodied in the Declaration—
a circular argument that distressed Wills no end. He therefore made fresh
demands on the evidence available in the few surviving documents to
which he could specifically link Jefferson, and consequently Inventing
America became essentially a work of exegesis. This is true not only when
Wills traces the origins of the Virginian’s thought but also in his textual
analyses of the Declaration, where he devotes several chapters to examining
the meaning of single words or brief phrases such as “self-evident,”
“inalienable rights,” “pursuit of happiness,” “agonizing affection,” and
“one people.” The analysis is too detailed to permit a summary in the
space of a brief review, but every serious student of the Revolution should
examine Wills’s readings even though some will fail to win general approval.

Unfortunately, in his zeal to set the record straight Wills is too dog-
matic and too eager to identify villains. Carl Becker is clearly his favorite
whipping boy, because his highly regarded Declaration of Independence
hooked historians on Jefferson’s presumed Lockeianism, but he also scorns
scholars as diverse as Julian P. Boyd, Erik Erikson, Dumas Malone,
Winthrop Jordan, Daniel Boorstin and Fawn Brodie. Many readers will
be disturbed at Wills’s tone, and others will take delight in the errors that
escaped his editors (e.g. Hartford for Franklin’s Albany Plan; Black over
White for Jordan’s White over Black; 1814 for the 1714 edition of Locke’s
works). But except for his odd and insistent misreading of “We” (in the
Declaration’s concluding paragraph) as a reference to the states rather
than to the delegates themselves, such errors do not fundamentally de-
tract from his achievement. Wills strays at times from his appointed task,
and at others clearly overreaches himself, but he should be applauded
for forcing us to take a closer look at one of the fundamental “testaments”
of the American Revolution and for giving it the most thorough, probing, and imaginative reading it has thus far received.

_Library of Congress_  
_Paul H. Smith_


This book, evidently intended as family history, is written as a general history of South Carolina 1763-1820s with emphasis on what the Pinckneys did. While there are fifty Pinckneys listed in the index, the only ones to be given extended treatment are Charles II (1731–1782), Charles III (1757–1824), Charles Cotesworth (1746–1825), and Thomas (1750–1828). Charles I (1699?–1758) and Eliza Lucas (1723–1793), though given considerably less emphasis, do come out as individuals of importance. Most of the other forty-six receive only slight treatment.

The Pinckneys were wealthy aristocrats, often educated in England and with English viewpoints. Once they had backed the American side, they stuck to it except for Charles II. They were able militarily and politically and were important in the founding of the United States.

The prologue treats the Pinckneys in South Carolina from 1692 until 1763. There is no attempt here to picture family members as human beings or the family as a whole. In fact, throughout the book, the emphasis is on individuals rather than the family as a unit. Little or nothing is said about family characteristics or continuity from generation to generation. Most of the people are treated as historical characters and not as live human beings.

For the war years (1775–1782) the brothers Charles III and Thomas and their cousin Charles Cotesworth get major emphasis. Charles II, who took British protection after the fall of Charleston in 1780, is given less consideration. The seven chapters covering the war years contain more general history, mainly in South Carolina, than actions of Pinckneys. In Chapter 4, for instance, there is considerable detail about the fighting at Brandywine and Germantown because Charles Cotesworth was in the area and by family tradition took part in the action. No proof of his actions exists. For the war years, the fullest treatment for any Pinckney is given to Thomas’ severe wound at Camden, his convalescence, and exchange as a prisoner of war.

Full treatment of Pinckney political careers in the 1780s are given. Charles III and Charles Cotesworth were members of the Continental Congress. Charles III’s plan of union in the Constitutional Convention makes it obvious that he was a leader in the stronger central government
forces there. All the Pinckneys worked for the ratification of the new Constitution.

Both Thomas and C. C. turned down federal judgeships offered by Washington before Thomas accepted the ministership to Great Britain. There he had little success. After John Jay's treaty with the British in 1795, Thomas went to Spain where he succeeded in signing a treaty. The popularity of this treaty in the United States is noted, but its provisions are not given and little is said of Pinckney's skills as a diplomat.

C. C. having refused a Supreme Court justiceship and two cabinet offers, finally accepted the ministry to France in 1796, only to be refused acceptance by the revolutionary French government. By 1800 both C. C. and Thomas were still good Federalists, but Charles III was now becoming a Jeffersonian Republican. The epilogue traces the separate careers of the three leading Pinckneys until their deaths in the 1820s.

What the Pinckneys did is usually set down, but how they were important is not always clear. The book is mainly narrative history with little analysis. This reviewer would like to know more of the Pinckneys as people and to see how they operated as a family.

The thirty-five pages of bibliography give most of the important sources and secondary works. Much of the text sounds like nineteenth-century history, and the 123 pages of footnotes tend to cite mainly older source collections, memoirs, and secondary works. The index lists only proper names.

The University of Georgia

Kenneth Coleman


The traveling exhibition (at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, November-January, 1978-1979), of which this attractive, well-illustrated catalogue provides a permanent record, was produced, appropriately, by the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, the repository of the Dupont family archives which extend back to eighteenth-century France. Although the family did not become established in the United States until 1800, the patriarch Pierre-Samuel Dupont ("de Nemours" was added later), noted physiocrat, biographer of Turgot, government functionary, and friend of Franklin, avidly observed from Paris the American Revolution and decisive French intervention therein. Manuscripts and rare printed items from the Dupont archives form the core of this exhibition, which is intended to show "what Europeans dreamed their new world could be, and what they found they had in fact made of their great opportunity."
A significant case-study is provided by the Dupont family, though it does not necessarily typify France as a whole. Complementary documents—including “graphics” and artifacts to give visual appeal—were thus borrowed from a wide range of American libraries, museums, and private collections, among them the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, American Philosophical Society, and French Benevolent Society of Philadelphia.

The exhibition illustrates many facets of Franco-American relations for the period 1765-1815, its 242 separate items ingeniously (sometimes a bit arbitrarily) gathered into categories or chapters headed “The Myth and the Land,” “The Utopian Government,” “The Atlantic Market,” “The Yanqui,” with brief epilogues called “France Sings of America” (popular music) and “America in Perspective” (peep-shows and vues d’optique). Within each section the myth and the reality, illusion and disillusion, alternate contrapuntally. Despite the connecting essays, selected illustrations, and informative descriptive notes, the reader of the catalogue—without benefit of the visual juxtapositions of the exhibition itself—is left at times with an impression of dispersion rather than a coherent whole. Instead of attempting to puzzle out how the pieces fit together, it is more rewarding to peruse the catalogue as one would a good antiquarian bookseller’s list, pausing at the choice or unexpected numbers such as, for example: Victor Dupont’s unpublished sonnet “Mes Adieux à l’Europe en 1801” (No. 34), Gabrielle-Joséphine Dupont’s manuscript essay “Reflexions souvent comparatives entre le pays natal et le pays d’adoption” (Nos. 38, 208), Mme de Staël’s letter of 1804 withdrawing her long-distance investments in a certain gunpowder mill (No. 163), Mme Moreau’s biting assessments of New York society (No. 196), or President Jefferson’s landmark letter of 1803 to Pierre-Samuel Dupont thanking him and his son Victor for “the aids” they have given in the transactions resulting in the acquisition of Louisiana (No. 179).

The catalogue is an exciting grab bag which will yield prizes to anyone interested in the relations between France and the United States, whether it be the ideological links between the two Revolutions, transatlantic shipments of seeds and plants, land speculation, technological exchanges, education, émigré life, or the French “image” of America. It can take its place on the shelf with other scholarly catalogues inspired by the Bicentennial, such as Les Français dans la Guerre d’Indépendance Américaine, compiled by François Bergot (Musée de Rennes, 1976), the last section of which, “Chocs au Retour,” also deals with “imagery”; or the more broadly conceived The European Vision of America (Cleveland Museum of Art, National Gallery, Grand Palais—Paris, 1975-1977), compiled by Hugh Honour, and his book derived from the show, The New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time (Pantheon Books, 1975).

Brattleboro, Vt.

Howard C. Rice, Jr.

The founding fathers in this publication landed and cooked in Boston, Newport, New York, Charleston and Philadelphia. These five colonial seaports are selected as foci for local cooking and eating habits. It is a good device for categorizing vital history. A civilization is what it eats, and descriptions of the growing and preparation of regional food can give a good picture of the social life of a particular time.

The author has taken many recipes and reduced them for modern kitchens. On the whole the balance is for heavy, stodgy, and starchy pancakes, griddle cakes, doughnuts, pot-pies, corn meal and rice recipes, stews with dumplings, puddings, cakes, and other fillers. Better recipes for all these have long been available, but the recipes in this book have interest since they give us a feeling, after some hundreds of years, of what kept our ancestors alive. Also the division by cities clearly shows the differences in eating habits brought about by climate and the varying ethnic backgrounds of the colonists.

The recipes are comparatively simple, and geared on the whole for the inexperienced cook. The author is a Home Economics teacher, and has attended the Cordon Bleu School in Paris.

A rapid glance is given at each colonial city. This is cursory history with glimpses of interesting facts, without given authorities. However, extracts from the writings of a traveler named Patrick M’Roberts in 1774 give contemporary descriptions of the five cities which are of value. Drawings of early utensils for preparing food intersperse the text. Drawings and photographs of historic buildings in each colonial seaport follow the recipes special to that city.

It is evident that the author has done much experimental cooking to present these recipes in their present form. Nevertheless those interested in this aspect of social history will find a serious lack. There is no bibliography or list of sources. However, this book presents a view of a very basic and important part of colonial life.

York Harbor, Me. Caroline Cadwalader


In 1806, after having served more than five years as President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson denied that in order to maintain separation of powers the executive department should neither propose legislation to Congress nor provide information to its members. That, Jefferson said,
would make the government one "of chance and not design" (p. 189). No President in American history, probably, more favored "design" over "chance," and Noble Cunningham has now shown us, in revealing detail, how Jefferson used "design," order, reason and persuasion during his eight years in office to provide guidance and leadership in government. Though Cunningham blessedly spares us long quarrels with other historians, his book, aptly titled, rejects implicitly Henry Adams' argument that Jefferson became a Federalist in office, Leonard Levy's that he was inattentive to preserving freedom, and Forrest McDonald's that he was entrapped in a merely "oppositionist" ideology. Altogether, Cunningham's Jefferson in office conforms closely to Dumas Malone's characterization, and generally restores to us the picture of a skilled, diligent man of good will earnestly trying to conduct government according to republican principles.

As we have come to expect from Cunningham, though, he sets aside secondary interpretations and draws his story entirely from source materials, using more thoroughly than any previous scholar the records of Congress and of the executive departments, 1801-1809. He thus tells us in clear detail about how Jefferson used his cabinet colleagues to help draft messages to Congress and settle patronage problems, but also how he let them manage their own departments. The President emerges as both attentive to routine problems facing his subordinates and willing to give them wide discretion and accept suggestions from them. He was master of his own house, that is, because he so thoroughly mastered its affairs, rather than because of any heavy-handed or devious manipulation of his associates. The same style guided his relations with Congress; he supplied information, drafted bills, counselled his supporters, and even devised legislative strategy, but always in a deferential way, depending upon his ability to enlist willing assent and cooperation. He exercised a perhaps unparalleled influence over Congress, not because he was corrupt or domineering, but because he was supremely persuasive. Furthermore, he knew what he wanted, and he had no compunction about working to get it.

Cunningham also goes beyond Leonard White's standard administrative history in describing how government worked in Jefferson's day. He shows how the 120 or so members of the executive department (its entire force in Washington; the President's office included two people, Jefferson and his private secretary!) went about their tasks, and he shows how Congress did its business: when its debates took place, the "anatomy" of its committees, its party alignments, how it received petitions, and so on. He also demonstrates that James S. Young's picture of Congress as divided into "boarding house blocs" is misleading. The boarding houses were themselves segregated on party lines (and therefore generally on regional lines as well), and there was "no instance [where] a boarding house bloc ... commanded" a higher loyalty than party affiliation. In fact, Cunningham insists throughout, according to the theses of his earlier books, that the political parties were alive, well, and of crucial importance during Jeffer-
son's presidency. This is certainly true if one attends to the details of their programs, loyalties, organizations, and so on, but it overlooks the attitude toward party which for Jefferson and probably for most of his fellow Republicans was fundamentally different from that of Jackson's day and subsequently. As Cunningham's own analysis makes clear, the Jeffersonians, like their Federalist opponents, sought not to prevail through party but to overcome the very idea of party. Thus Jefferson could declare "we are all republicans, we are federalists," could retain most of the Federalist-appointed officers of government, and could hope the need for an opposition party would disappear entirely. This is, in fact, why he conducted "the process of government" as he did, and it may even be true that he was as successful as Cunningham shows him to have been, not because he was determinedly partisan in a modern sense, but because he held to a loftier ideal. This book is of great value, that is, for its revelation of a "good ruler" in the classic sense rather than for its demonstration of the workings of "party spirit"—Jefferson, at any rate, it is clear, would only have accepted its vindication of him on that ground.

Syracuse University

RALPH L. KETCHAM


The many students of Lincoln over the years have ignored or minimized his economic thought. Some of them, it is true, gave attention to his insistence that all men should have equal opportunity to make of themselves what they could, should have what Professor G. S. Boritt, the author of the book under review, calls in a happy phrase "the right to rise." However, they treated this idea as a part of his political thought and a development of his later years or his years of greatness. None of them attempted to explore Lincoln's earlier thinking, as for example, in his Illinois years, or to determine if he had a systematic body of economic beliefs. The common assumption was that he had no connected or consistent opinions.

Professor Boritt demonstrates that the previous judgments are all wrong. Lincoln thought in economic terms from his entrance into politics and throughout his career made economics the central or cementing element of his political philosophy. In the Illinois legislature he was a leading, if not the leading advocate of internal improvements and state banks. In Congress and in national politics he supported a protective tariff, a national bank, and internal improvements. He had what Boritt calls a "Whig mind": he believed that government, state and national, could play an important role in expanding the economy. But, and this is
a point that Boritt emphasizes over and over, Lincoln did not champion an expanded economy just to benefit a favored few who would profit from expansion. He had a vision or, to use Boritt’s term, a “dream,” “an American Dream,” of the future. In that dream the common man would be the primary beneficiary of an expanded economy. Given an equal chance to rise, or, in modern jargon, assured of social mobility, the average individual would achieve a better life in the kind of economy Lincoln envisioned than in one characterized by government neglect.

Economic ideas developed early in his career shaped and determined Lincoln’s actions during his later years. Thus, his devotion to equal opportunity, as well as moral objections, caused him to oppose expansion of slavery: slave labor in the territories would degrade free labor, would endanger the “right to rise.” Economic perceptions also dominated his thinking as President, according to Boritt. He brought economics “to bear” even on military policy. The man who had demanded a centralized economic system found it easy to establish a centralized command system, and the politician who had measured internal economic strength in terms of numbers found it natural to instruct his generals to make enemy armies instead of territorial acquisitions their proper objectives.

Boritt is not satisfied to establish that Lincoln had a systematic body of economic thought. He is equally interested in determining why historians have neglected this aspect of Lincoln. He suggests that most of the writers have not been interested in the subject or have not known much about it. A more compelling reason he finds in the Lincoln myth as developed in Lincoln historiography. Previous writers broke Lincoln’s life into two parts, or saw two Lincolns. They depicted Lincoln up to 1854, or to 1860, as being a small or an ordinary politician. Then suddenly he became great. They explained the change by saying that he “grew.” They missed the point or the reality, Boritt says. The greatness—the power of mind, the devotion to principle—was there all along. The historians would have discovered it if they had only ventured into his economic thinking. But they were deterred by the second half of the Lincoln myth, the “god” half. “Gods in our epoch do not deal in money.”

This is that rare book that deserves superlatives. Boritt occasionally goes too far in ascribing everything that Lincoln did to economics. But he has written a brilliant and an original book, and his accomplishment far outweighs any fault.

_Louisiana State University_  
T. Harry Williams


A major if controversial labor leader and a key public figure of the 1880s, Powderly has long deserved a biography, especially since his ex-
extensive papers became available in the mid-1940s. This volume, however, is not biography but a chronicle of Powderly's labor and public career. Of his family background and his education, formal and self-acquired, it says next to nothing. Falzone confines his story of Powderly's early years to the jobs he held and the labor organizations he joined—accepting Powderly’s own account in his autobiography, since disproved on the basis of his diaries, of how he first became aware of the labor movement. Only in an aside, and without comment, does the author mention the entrepreneurial dimension of these years, Powderly’s presidency of a local insurance company and proprietorship of a grocery store.

Falzone’s treatment, here and later, has the traditional shortcomings of a doctoral dissertation, particularly those of a generation ago when fledgling historians were likely to ground their work reverentially in the standard secondary sources. In writing of Powderly’s youth, the author gives a full, textbookish account of each of the labor organizations he either joined or, in the case of the Knights of Labor, might have known about. Even in the heart of his study, where he deals with Powderly’s leadership of the Knights of Labor, Falzone in his footnotes cites secondary works by Norman Ware, Gerald Grob, Henry Browne, Ruth Allen and others more often than the Powderly Papers. His method is to recount the full story of each main event of Knights of Labor history during Powderly’s regime: strikes, political ventures, relations with the Catholic Church, the conflict with the trade unions. To these familiar stories he sometimes adds details, but not clarity or insight. His conceptual framework is entirely traditional. So too, for the most part, is his view of Powderly: middle-class in orientation, heir to the reformism of the 1850s, an effective orator but aloof in personal contacts, cautious and indecisive as an administrator, yet, in one surprising judgment, an “organizational wizard” (p. 193), at least as mayor and federal bureaucrat.

Only in coverage does Falzone break new ground. His account of Powderly’s three terms as mayor of Scranton, based on newspaper and other local sources, was the first to appear in print, although a more extensive study exists in the unpublished dissertation of Samuel Walker. Falzone pins down the basic facts about Powderly’s participation in the Irish Land League (though not his membership in the secret Clan na Gael). He adds material on the declining years of the Knights of Labor: Powderly’s internal feuds with Thomas Barry, Joseph Buchanan, and eventually John Hayes; his campaign in Pennsylvania for the Australian ballot; the New York Central strike of 1890. Falzone’s treatment of Powderly’s relationship with the Populist movement is superficial. The book ends with a brief but useful account of Powderly’s final two decades in Washington as an immigration official.

The volume’s physical form reinforces the impression of an unreworked dissertation. Published in paperback by a commercial firm misleadingly called the University Press of America, it is reproduced from typed copy, lacks preface or index, and, on the evidence of the text, was untouched by
an editor. On balance, Falzone's contribution is marginal. This is narrative history of the plainest sort, lacking subtlety or reflection. That applying these qualities to the Powderly Papers can yield fresh insight is demonstrated by Samuel Walker's study of Powderly's early working years in the Spring 1978 issue of Labor History.

Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College

Edward T. James


This is a series of essays by different authors which, read consecutively, provide a concise and original history of the American Navy from its start to today, including the Confederate Navy and the various forces during the Revolution that were manned and controlled by individual colonies or army units. The contributors come from universities, service academies, government offices and research groups; and they are all revealed in the notes about them to be scholars of stature, and of experience in the areas which influence the Navy, and are influenced by it. International relations, national politics, service rivalries, conflicting demands for raw materials and skilled workers, and many other variable and uncertain factors all combine to make the Navy what it is at any given time, and it is the emphasis on these molding forces which makes this book something new as naval history.

It did not of course spring full blown into the world, like Venus; the notes on further reading at the end of each essay show that much of this sort of work had been done before about the period covered therein. The editor, Kenneth Hagan, has however done a real service in pulling it all together so that we have a naval history that instead of glowing but essentially two-dimensional accounts of naval victories and the heroic deeds and words of famous leaders, with long silences in between, shows us the Navy day to day, "in peace and war," with the unglamorous factors and usually less than heroic figures that made the victories possible, as well as the defeats. As Dr. Hagan points out in his preface, in these "dispassionate voices of careful scholars" we have a much more objective naval history than was previously available. This reviewer is reminded of the "hagiographic and eulogistic tone" of the textbooks used to teach naval history at the Academy before World War II, and is pleased to note that with Kenneth Hagan, an Associate Professor of History there, today's midshipmen will join the fleet with a far better understanding of what controls the profession of arms at sea than did their predecessors.

The story through these two centuries reveals a series of ups and downs in the Navy's fortunes, the causes of which have been far more complex
than the obvious reaction to national crises and relaxation after they were
over. The various philosophies as to the proper role of a navy are given
full treatment in these essays, and one of these emancipated scholars has
the temerity to challenge the olympian pronouncements of Admiral Mahan,
generally considered infallible even when his precepts have been success-
fully violated, as by the two-ocean Navy of World War II. The explication
of the complex influences that have affected the fortunes of the Navy
provide the meat of this book. All sorts of interesting points turn up which
have escaped the standard histories. One which comes to mind is the way
the Navy, working within the restrictions imposed on it by the post
World War I Washington treaties, which were designed to clip its wings,
greatly increased its capabilities by pioneering developments in aircraft
carriers, submarines, and electronic communications. As the notes indicate,
this point had been made before in periodicals of limited circulation, but
has not been generally appreciated.

The last of the ups is covered in the next to last essay, The Cold War
Navy, describing the successful exercise of sea power in checking communist
aggression off Korea, during the Chinese struggle over Quemoy and
Matsu, in Lebanon, and especially in the Cuban crisis. It is sad that the
final essay has to be called The Erosion of American Naval Preeminence,
1962–1978, an erosion brought about by a purblind antimilitarism and a
naïve belief in the strategic effectiveness of turning the other cheek. How-
ever the Navy has been brought low before, and has bounced back vic-
toriously when the need arose, and these essays as a whole give us confidence
that this will happen again.

Blue Bell, Pa.  

JOHN CADWALADER

The Pursuit of Equality in American History. By J. R. Pole. (Berkeley:

According to the information on the jacket, the theme of this book is
"the American commitment to equality, and what we have meant by it,
from before the Revolution to the present." That would be an undertaking
of considerable magnitude, and in fact the book's contents provides a
much narrower focus on the topic of equality in the American past than
the jacket indicates. It is primarily a study of the response of the American
political and judicial systems to the ideal of equality, with an emphasis
on national and traditional political forces.

The very concept of equality is open to numerous definitions and the
ambiguity inherent in such a term is reflected in this study. Professor Pole
lists such categories as equality before the law, equality of religion, equality
of opportunity, equality of sex and equality of esteem. Throughout the
book there is considerable emphasis on the issue of equality of esteem, which he uses as an occasional measure of the status of equality in America. The book grew out of the Jefferson Memorial Lectures at Berkeley and its organization reflects its origin. Separate chapters deal with the idea of equality in the colonial and Revolutionary period, the issues of religion and conscience as they relate to equality, equality of political power, equality as it relates to race, and equality as it relates to sex. In its entirety the book constitutes a chapter in the history of ideas in the United States, with special emphasis on political theory.

Far from being an oversimplification of the subject, the study calls attention to the complexity of the equality issue, both in theory and practice. Professor Pole assumes that the pure ideal is unattainable, and that when advances toward equality are made in one sector, another sector stands to lose.

Much of the book is devoted to a study of the writings of select individuals and to court decisions. A weakness is the failure to include numerous writers and activists who made contributions to the struggle for equality of treatment, often from a radical or dissenting perspective. Except for Edward Bellamy, for example, nothing is said about the many socialists who were deeply concerned with the issue under consideration. The utopian communists, twentieth-century socialists such as Eugene V. Debs and Norman Thomas, and black dissenters such as W. E. B. DuBois are all conspicuous by their absence in the pages of this study. Missing, too, are the contributions of Emma Goldman and other anarchist theorists whose views of equality challenged those of the most liberal political officeholders. Even such an influential organization as the American Civil Liberties Union finds no place in this study of the idea of equality.

There is recognition of the conflict between the goal of equality and official protection of a profit economy, yet the study seems to imply that correction of inequalities is possible within the existing political-economic system. Forces working against equality are delineated but there is virtually no recognition of the institutionalization of inequality, especially in the areas of class, racism, and sexism as expressed in a patriarchal society. In the basic question of reform or revolution, the author, by implication, comes out strongly for reform, though the issue is not faced directly.

This is not an easy book to read, for the author's erudite literary style sometimes stands in the way of clarity. Within its limited scope it is an important contribution to the history of the idea of equality in American history. Whether the pursuit of equality is, as Professor Pole writes, "the pursuit of an illusion" or a struggle for an attainable objective remains for the reader to decide. The contents of this study provides considerable material for a meaningful discussion of equality. That is its major contribution.

*Wilmington College*  
*Larry Gara*

Working from the New York City archives of Dun and Bradstreet which contain four unpublished volumes of a history, done in the 1960s by a former secretary of the corporation, and eight letterpress volumes of R. G. Dun’s correspondence, James Norris has constructed an interesting and readable history. At the very start he ends the myth that Lewis Tappan opened the first mercantile credit agency in the United States in 1841. It has been known that a group of New York merchants in 1827 sent S. P. Church on trips to check on distant customers, and two years later Baring Brothers commissioned T. W. Ward of Boston to send them information on American accounts. But these were not established credit agencies soliciting clients. By 1835, however, Griffen, Cleveland and Campbell claimed 100 clients and were expanding their coverage of credit risks from New York to neighboring states. Furthermore, when the successor to this firm went bankrupt Tappan acquired their books when starting his agency. Since collecting and reporting credit information was well known in Britain, none of these men were true innovators.

Credit information was initially secured from local lawyers, who in return were given the business of collecting overdue accounts by the agency’s subscribers. As the agency business grew, traveling representatives supplemented lawyers in collecting information.

After some shifts in partners Robert Graham Dun became sole owner of the mercantile credit agency in 1859. Two years earlier the agency had encountered in James Bradstreet its first strong competitor. Moving his credit information business from Cincinnati to New York City, he issued Bradstreet’s Book of Commercial Reports, giving ratings in a code the key to which was supplied to subscribers. More convenient than making trips to the agency office, the success of the publication led Dun to issue his first Reference Book in 1859. While for seventy-five years Bradstreet remained the principal competitor to R. G. Dun & Co., the latter might have monopolized the field because of a head start and the obvious advantages of scale in such a farflung enterprise. But Dun was not an aggressive entrepreneur, nor were his own estimates of business opportunities very penetrating. When, for example, the typewriter with carbons offered the possibility of a continuous reporting service to major customers, Dun adopted the typewriter but did not start such a service, which in the depression of the seventies might have eliminated Bradstreet.

While Professor Norris credits Dun with fine managerial ability, his perceptions seem often to have been limited to everyday matters with which he had had considerable experience. Even when the agency became a large company with well over 100 branches, Dun never introduced a controller or any rigorous system of audits. By including capital value of
the firm into his reports Dun was aiding larger companies in securing credit, but Norris sees no evidence that Dun was aware of his influence on money flows. He also lacked any great drive to have the agency expand into new types of service. In his late fifties he began to delegate authority and take much time away from the office, traveling in Europe, fishing in Canada, or staying at his “cottage” at Narragansett Pier. Yet in view of the continuing success of the agency along its traditional lines, Norris suggests that in general “the contributions of the heroic entrepreneur may well be overdrawn and the significance of the managers may well be underestimated.”

Historians of management would undoubtedly like more discussion of Dun’s precise methods than is available here, but such information is no doubt missing in the only available sources.

Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation

Thomas C. Cochran


Not long after its founding early in the Civil War, the Union League purchased Sully’s large equestrian portrait of “Washington Before the Battle of Trenton.” From this start, the League embarked on an active program of acquisitions, acquiring by gift, purchase, or commissions to artists an extraordinarily large collection. It formed its own Art Association and sponsored exhibits under the guidance of members who were among the city’s most notable art collectors. Maxwell Whiteman’s introductory essay ably describes how the collection was formed.

As might be expected, it contains many portraits of Civil War leaders and subsequent Republican statesmen. It embraces a series of portraits of Presidents of the United States and of the League itself, as well as landscapes and specimens of European art. Many notable artists are represented with Pennsylvanians much in evidence. The catalogue describes all these works, with biographical sketches of their artists. There are many illustrations, eleven of them in color, notably John Neagle’s dramatic, full-length portrait of Henry Clay. A portrait by C. W. Peale exhibited at the League in 1873 (p. 6) as Billy Lee, Washington’s servant, and owned since 1892 by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, is now recognized to be a likeness of Yarrow Mamout.

The Union League is to be congratulated for sponsoring this book.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Nicholas B. Wainwright