BOOK REVIEWS

The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family Volume 3 The Belfield Farm Years, 1810-1820 Edited by LILLIAN B. MILLER (New Haven and London Yale University Press, 1991 xlvii, 914p Illustrations, maps, selected bibliography, indexes $75.00)

A model of careful scholarship, this volume covers Peale's life at Belfield Farm from 1810 to 1820, beginning when he was sixty-nine years old. Great care was taken to transcribe each document accurately, complete with crossed-out words, faults of grammar, and strange spellings. Yet despite the occasional oddities of Peale's writing, the book is not difficult to get through and in fact makes engaging reading. The length of the text, and the variety of topics that it touches on, make it difficult to summarize. A man of wide-ranging curiosity, Peale engaged in agriculture, gardening, museum work, mechanics and invention, painting, medicine, and the care, support, and education of his children. The letters touch on all these concerns.

Peale had ten children, most of them with wives, husbands, and children of their own. The adventures and misadventures of this large brood caused him much concern. His son Raphaelk was in constant financial difficulties and drank too much. "I am very uneasy about Raphaelk," he once wrote, "blessed with great talents yet lost I fear by evil habits" (p. 558). His son Linneaus served on a privateer in the War of 1812, to his father's great distress. Peale would rather have seen him become "an honest man conducting a small factory than the greatest general in the United States—a killer of men." Franklin made an unfortunate marriage to a woman who was eventually declared a lunatic, and legal proceedings were necessary to liberate him. Rembrandt had constant financial difficulties, both with his museum and with other ventures. The gas company he founded in Baltimore teetered for years on the brink of bankruptcy before it finally began turning a profit. At a typical moment we find Peale concerned that Linneaus had brought his wife to live with him, that he needed a nurse for Franklin's child, and that he needed to help pay to keep Franklin's wife in the hospital.

Recently a lurid theory has developed that Peale deliberately poisoned his son Raphaelk with arsenic and mercury. This notion was first presented by Phoebe Lloyd in an article titled "Philadelphia Story" (Art in America, Nov 1988). Lloyd has since refined her theory in partnership with Gordon Bendersky, a professor of clinical medicine. (See William H. Honan, "Suspicion of Hatred in a Family of Artists," The New York Times, July 5, 1993.) The Lloyd-Bendersky theory contains two separate hypotheses. First is that Raphaelk Peale suffered from arsenic poisoning. This seems conceivable, although unlikely, since his symptoms could easily be explained in many other ways, and it is not...
clear why his brothers did not suffer from a similar condition. Second is that Charles Willson Peale deliberately poisoned his son, but this hypothesis seems out of keeping with the tone of affectionate concern that marked all his relations with his family.

Belfield was both a country retreat and a working farm. Peale intended it to be a source of income, and he carefully chose a place that was close to urban markets. Many of the early letters describe his extensive activity on the farm and are filled with curious diagrams of cranks, wheels, and gears, which provide a vivid picture of the process by which farming was revolutionized in the nineteenth century through the employment of scientific methods and new machinery. Despite all this effort, however, Belfield never showed a profit. Some of Peale's ideas, such as contour ploughing, were essentially logical but expensive to carry out and did not yield immediate economic benefits. In addition, his farm was too small to repay the effort he put into invention, since most farm machinery, to be economical, needs to be used on a large scale. In his eagerness to get quick results, he hired too many men. Moreover, he allowed such amusements as designing ornamental garden pavilions to distract him from the practical side of agriculture.

In 1815 he sensibly relinquished the farm work to a tenant so that he could concentrate on painting. As he confessed to Thomas Jefferson: "I have not mended my pecuniary affairs; in my first setting out, I hired too many hands, and then, on building a Mill, I spent my time and money in making machinery, now totally lost. . . . My desire to aid sundry friends who had lost their teeth also engrossed too much of my time" (p. 473). Nonetheless, Peale continued to entertain himself with gardening, although he could ill afford the expense, reasoning that "Happiness is worth millions" (p. xxix).

Although as early as 1816 he declared mechanics to be one of "the follies of my life," afterwards he continued to engage in it (p. 431). In 1819, for example, when he visited Washington, D.C., he did research to determine if he should patent his design for an improved windmill, and later in the same year he became involved in constructing a "velosipede," a kind of primitive bicycle, which he had seen described in a newspaper.

When he moved to Belfield, Peale relinquished the management of his museum to his son Rubens. But he continued to be involved in its future, since he hoped that it could be transformed into a public institution, providing both amusement and instruction to people of all classes. With this goal, Peale made three unsuccessful attempts to find government sponsorship, lobbying government officials in Philadelphia, New York, and Washington. These efforts all fell through, however, in part because Peale insisted that he was entitled to remuneration for his efforts. Consequently, he was forced to find funding in a very different fashion, by incorporating the museum in partnership with his children and selling common stock.
As Peale's daily involvement with the museum lessened, the institution gradually moved away from his original approach, which had emphasized educational enlightenment. Both Rubens and his brother Rembrandt (who in 1814 established a second Peale museum in Baltimore) found that they could make more money through sensationalism, by displaying, for example, exotic animals, freaks, and paintings of nude women, or by arranging special events, such as electrical demonstrations or performances of puppet shows or music. Thus, they gradually moved their focus towards the showmanship of P.T. Barnum.

Peale seems to have largely relinquished his career as a naturalist after leaving his museum, but his son Titian continued in this vein. In December 1817 Titian accompanied George Ord, a naturalist, on a collecting expedition to the Georgia Sea Islands and Florida. Warfare between settlers and Indians made it impossible to go inland and cut short the trip; nevertheless Titian's letters provide a memorable account of shooting pelicans, deer, and alligators, dining on parakeet, harpooning fish by firelight, and listening to alligators roaring in the night. The following year, Titian accompanied the western expedition of Major Stephen H. Long, which traveled by steamboat to the upper reaches of the Missouri River. Sadly, only a few of his fascinating drawings were published in the account of the expedition, but he was able to deposit both his sketches and the specimens he had collected in the family's Philadelphia museum.

Since one or another of his relatives was generally ill, Peale developed theories of medicine that mingled common sense with quackery. His more sensible ideas generally allowed nature to take its course. For example, he was strongly opposed to corsets and trusses for women, considering them injurious to health; and he seems to have had reservations about the common practice of bleeding, on the ground that it weakened the system. (When a woman fell on his porch, however, he called a doctor in to bleed her.) He deduced that city living caused disease and conjectured that impure air was the cause. When he moved to Belfield he wrote that, "the breathing of pure air is a leading part of the plan" (p. xxvi). He viewed the medical profession with suspicion. "I have no Dctrs. Bills to pay," he once wrote. "Having once paid an enormous bill, it cured me of calling for their aid, and from the experience I have had in many years past, I have found that my family has done fully as well without calling for the advice of Physicians as any of my neighbors" (p. 315).

These sensible ideas, however, were mixed with others that were more peculiar. For example, he strongly opposed eating pickles, since they were not cooked; and he once filled his ear with milk as a cure for deafness—producing not better hearing but a painful infection that oozed pus.

For the first several years at Belfield, Peale did no painting but concentrated on the work of the farm. Around 1815, however, he returned to portraiture with new enthusiasm, finding that his work was better than ever, in part because
"my judgment is ripened," and also because he had received a number of helpful tips about the handling of colors from his son Rembrandt who had studied in Europe. To compensate for his failing eyesight, Peale took to using spectacles of three foot focus. Since these altered his perception of scale, he developed the unusual habit of roughing in his painting without glasses, to get the general shapes, and then putting on his spectacles and reworking what he had done to add finer detail. As his painting activity increased, Peale began to discuss art more frequently in his letters, often including reminiscences. One fascinating letter, on the origins of painting in America, includes an account of a visit he made as a young man to Smibert's former studio in Boston and describes his first meeting with John Singleton Copley.

Along with Peale's own letters and journals, and those of his children, the book contains a variety of documents related to his activities, such as letters written to him by Thomas Jefferson and a report of the Pennsylvania legislature on the rent that should be charged for his museum. Peale's sketches of his farm and diagrams of machinery are faithfully reproduced, as are a number of the paintings that he mentions—many of them fascinating—such as Raphaelle Peale's portrait of the African-American minister, Absolom Jones. There are also excellent footnotes.

The book is not quite error-free. The subject of the portrait in figure 20 is wrongly identified as Victorian Elizabeth du Pont Bauduy Quimby. In fact, she is Victoire Elizabeth du Pont, daughter of Eleuthere Irenee du Pont, who married Ferdinand Bauduy. Nevertheless, with the presentation of all this material, the letters are generally not hard to follow, despite the range of matters that they address.

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

HENRY ADAMS


Two hundred years after his death in 1790, we still had much to learn about Benjamin Franklin, as this wonderful collection illustrates. Editor of the revised proceedings of a conference held at various venues around Philadelphia, J A Leo Lemay presents us with an embarrassment of riches. Concise summaries that situate the essays in their historiographical context, a copy of every known portrait of Franklin plus illustrations of his scientific experiments, and even the words and music to songs he wrote. All the essays read smoothly and are of
reasonable length. Twenty-four individuals could not have achieved such uniform excellence without a skilled editorial hand.

This collection’s greatest virtue, however, is the new ground it breaks in Franklin research. Logically, it begins with Franklin’s printing and publishing, the career that brought him to the brink of the public sphere where he achieved immortality. As one of a very few printers in early eighteenth-century America, he was the only one to have lived in New England, old England, and Pennsylvania. This experience enabled him to pioneer in publishing the first novel typeset in America (Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*) and probably the first New Testament. Although assured of a steady income from *Poor Richard’s Almanac* and government business, Jeffery A. Smith and James N. Green demonstrate how Franklin took risks in presenting new genres for American printers to the public. Other fine essays shed light on Franklin’s crusade against alcoholism, which Robert D. Arner interprets as the young man’s effort to convince himself his sober habits were indeed worth the sacrifice. In his career as a crime journalist Franklin provided sensational accounts that would have delighted our own *National Enquirer*.

Splendid essays focus on Franklin’s political career. Jack P. Greene shows we have much to learn from Franklin’s interpretation of the American Revolution as provoked by British jealousy of their extraordinarily successful American colonies. Claude-Anne Lopez and Esmond Wright prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that neither the French alliance of 1778 nor the Treaty of Paris of 1783 would have been remotely as advantageous for America had not Franklin been able to ingratiate himself so successfully not just with the French nation, but with the British negotiators. Barbara Oberg rehabilitates the image of Franklin at the Federal Convention. He was not just an old man who frequently dozed off in the torrid summer heat; he was the primary reason the delegates successfully compromised their differences. His final speech on reconciliation may have even tilted the balance in favor of the Constitution for the ratifying conventions. As the most reprinted piece of Federalist propaganda, it was of far more practical importance than the *Federalist Papers*. What is probably the most accurate version of the text is printed in full on pages 176-77.

Other gems in the book reinforce Franklin’s reputation as one of the eighteenth century’s preeminent scientists: Heinz Otto Sibum’s engaging essay demonstrates how he applied bookkeeping metaphors to describe electricity. Articles by Wayne Craven and Ellen Miles contrast American and British portraits of a bewigged Franklin with the French images, which emphasized his large, bald pate as a sign of intelligence and his long, unkempt hair as a sign of unspoiled America. Ellen R. Cohn lovingly traces Franklin’s astonishingly broad musical interests, and a piece by the late Edwin Wolf 2d explores Franklin’s library, one of the half-dozen best in colonial America.

In general, the collection emphasizes Franklin as an amazingly public-
spirited individual with hardly a trace of the spirit of capitalism. John C. Van Horne and Michael Zuckerman have, I think, finally laid to rest Max Weber’s most famous but least persuasive argument. Ralph Lerner traces Franklin’s numerous pseudonyms, showing them to be useful masks for achieving laudable public ends. Daniel Royt similarly shows how Franklin used humor to mediate between high and low culture and take the sting out of potentially bitter issues. Editor Lemay also notes how Franklin struggled mightily to subdue his vanity to serve the commonweal. Stephen Fender recounts Franklin’s support for open immigration to America, a support tempered by the belief that newcomers would assimilate as successfully as he had himself to a different social milieu.

It may be useful to compare Lemay’s volume to a similar compilation of essays devoted to a founding father, *Jeffersonian Legacies* (1993) edited by Peter Onuf and published by the University Press of Virginia. The books have complementary strengths and weaknesses. The Jefferson collection breaks less new ground, but it features essays by people who are not primarily Jefferson scholars but who define his significance for American history. And whereas Onuf includes one essay scathingly critical of Jefferson (Paul Finkelman on Jefferson’s inveterate racism and support of slavery), Lemay concentrates on those aspects of Franklin’s life that are easiest to praise. His machinations in Pennsylvania and British politics, his involvement in British western lands schemes, and his philandering are definitely underplayed.

To conclude on a negative note would be unjust to this marvelous book. It will surprise and delight even the most fervent fan of Franklin, and make it much harder for his detractors to prove that he was not one of the most remarkable human beings who ever lived.

*Penn State, Ogontz*  
*William Pennak*

*Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793.*  

J.H. Powell’s *Bring Out Your Dead* is undoubtedly the most republished of all books of local history. Three publishers have issued four editions since 1949. The book did not inaugurate a new interpretation of history, nor did it appeal, at least on the surface, to civic pride. Rather, as the three editors of this most recent edition note, its popularity derives from the fact that it is “a remarkably good read.”
The appeal of the book comes in part from its dramatic presentation of the yellow fever epidemic. There are two villains in the story. One is the fever itself. The epidemic of 1793 resulted in one of the deadliest years in Philadelphia history—9 to 15 percent of the population died. It would be more than a half century before the germ theory of disease would be discovered, and another half century before the mosquito would be identified as the vector carrying the virus. Powell is very good at portraying the panic, heroism, and callousness induced among Philadelphians by the mysterious disease. Some of his success in capturing Philadelphians' incomprehension comes from his artful prose and the dramatic pacing of the narrative. Some, unfortunately, seems to come from Powell's own incomplete understanding of the disease. He assumes that some people caught the disease twice, although in fact survivors have lifelong immunity. He generally ignores the presence of other diseases that caused the supposed relapses. He thinks that yellow fever follows a clear course, but the virus produces varied responses. He is baffled by the localized pattern of the outbreak, although the *aedes aegypti* mosquito's breeding and flight patterns explain the slow geographic spread of the epidemic.

If the disease itself is an implacable foe, the other villain of this dramatic piece is Dr. Benjamin Rush. Rush's embrace of the harsh treatment of bleeding and mercurial purges, often fatal in itself, is irrational—a triumph of theory over reality, according to Powell. Rush, whose relationship to religion is characterized as erratic and contentious, falls into a delusion of perfectionism and absolute self-righteousness. He is surrounded by the adoring but frightened masses: "the people . . . were his real masters." Those who question his theory become his enemies, and he sees conspiracies everywhere, but "Rush was impregnable in his fortress of error." On the other side, are Powell's true heroes. These are the "new managers" who take over the administration of the city's government and pest house. There is Stephen Girard, pious, efficient, business-like, an organizing genius. Dr. Jean Deveze is pragmatic, moderate, "the least contentious of men," who "proceeding from observed fact to hesitant generality" represents "true experimental science." Two world views are at war in Philadelphia. One side is dogmatic, demagogic, destructive. The other is moderate, middle-class, entrepreneurial, constructive. One side subverts true religion, the other represents morality. If yellow fever appears as a metaphor for the Cold War, remember this was written in 1949. Powell sometimes gets carried away by his own metaphor. The medical community did not fall so neatly into two opposing camps, but was fragmented. Rush was, of course, not an opponent of mainstream religion, as Powell himself recognizes after briefly toying with the idea. The statements that one manager "conducted the prison so well that no inmates contracted the fever" and that others preserved orphans from the epidemic are nonsense. Luck and the habits of mosquitoes kept some populations disease free, not administrators as ignorant as any of the causes of disease. One
Technique of producing a good read is to provide a happy ending, and so the oppositional metaphor is dissolved by the end of chapter 10. Rush is resurrected as a hero. His courage is lauded and his theories are seen as a failed experiment that nonetheless pointed scientists closer to truth. Medicine continued to advance, and yellow fever is eventually mastered. Readers have nothing to worry about. Powell is writing as sulfa drugs and penicillin heralded an era of optimism. One contemporary wrote that, "It is not too much to say that at the present time no acute infection occurring in a previously healthy individual will result in his death if he reaches a well-equipped hospital" (Sir Macfarlane Burnet, The Natural History of Infectious Disease, [2nd ed., Cambridge, 1953, 250]). The current editors wisely remind readers that viral diseases are still deadly and that AIDS represents the ever-present possibility of new deadly epidemics. In 1994, the epidemic of 1793 seems both more familiar and more threatening than it did in 1949.

Powell also lulls and entices readers by presenting a nostalgic view of the eighteenth century as a simpler time when most men are brave, decent, prosperous, or hard-working, the few women are good wives, and each child is an innocent—all in their appropriate sphere. Men in authority are efficient, the one woman is "sympathetic and maternal." There are the "great men" and the little men—whom "history usually forgets." Then there are "the Negroes Jones and Allen," who are undismayed by terror or injustice because "their lot as Negroes in white America had formed them to endure both." It was a nobler time than our own—a heroic age.

Bring Out Your Dead is showing its age. It is still a good read, if the condescension toward the poor, African Americans, and women can be overlooked. Its descriptions of panic, fear, self-interest, financial anxieties, professional jealousies, courage, selfless service, and muddling through are useful reminders of the range of responses to the unknown. But Powell, in placing the epidemic safely in the past, devotes little space to the consequences of these epidemics. Especially interesting would have been a discussion of the evolution of the Board of Health and the Philadelphia General Hospital (its services about to be privatized in 1949). Readers should also consult recent demographic, medical, epidemiological, and social histories for more sophisticated, if less dramatic, discussions of yellow fever and Philadelphia.

Rider College

Susan E. Klepp


This book provides a rich, detailed picture of the daily struggles of tuberculosis patients and their frontline medical and nursing workers in pre-World War II
Philadelphia and eastern Pennsylvania. As Barbara Bates puts it, her central concern is with "the interactions of patients and their caretakers, and not just the leaders of the [tuberculosis-control] movement but also the families, friends, clergymen, superintendents of institutions, nurses, and a variety of physicians—all with their own reasons to participate in the care of the tuberculous" (p. 2).

To build this picture, Bates has deftly mined a treasure trove of letters maintained by the Philadelphian, Dr. Lawrence F. Flick (1856-1938). Flick was one of the nation's leading physicians in the antituberculosis movement, and Bates uses his professional career as the central story around which *Bargaining for Life* is organized. The author supplemented the Flick letters and his other manuscript materials by examining a vast range of medical and nursing literature, the records of leading medical facilities and social welfare agencies involved in the long-term care of tuberculosis patients, as well as magazine and newspaper material.

Bates begins her study when the earliest organized assistance to consumptives was provided by religious charities sponsored by Episcopalians and Roman Catholics, and when the first sanatoriums were founded. Part II chronicles the great build-up in the more secularized and scientific movement to control tuberculosis as entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and voluntary groups joined the campaign's ranks. The period from World War I through the Depression decade is dealt with in Part III. At this time expectations among health authorities that a broad-scale institutional system could prevent and cure tuberculosis began to dampen. The book's final part addresses the decline of tuberculosis, which Bates convincingly argues owed very little to Flick's well-intentioned strategies.

Bates's perceptive book does much to fill the void about the tuberculosis-control drama in the Philadelphia region. However, when weighed against the newer national and international scholarship on disease, poverty, race, and industrialization, *Bargaining for Life* is more biography and institutional history than social history. The broader political and economic forces (for example, unsafe occupational hierarchies, working-class housing patterns, and bitter political conflict) that produced the largest segments of tuberculosis victims, and the ways medical theories and practices reflected or reinforced these forces, are only briefly noticed in this book. By contrast, the complex relationship between economic transformation, geography, caste, disease persistence, and medical casework (both philanthropic and government derived) are dealt with head-on in such works as R.M. Packard's *White Plague, Black Labor: Tuberculosis and the Political Economy of Health and Disease in South Africa* (1989) and R.J. Evans's *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years* (1987).

Nonetheless, *Bargaining for Life* is a must read for historians and biographers interested in the impact of contagious disease on turn-of-the-century ordinary life and medical philanthropy. It is a meticulous description of the ways that the most charitable of heart, and the best of minds—among both the tuberculosis
victims and their caregivers refused to become dispirited in the face of a disease menace that had no medical cure.

Pennsylvania State University

David McBride


Anyone, whether historian, architect, archaeologist, or local history buff, who has tried to get information about an excavation will appreciate the contribution of this summary of the archaeology of Philadelphia. Not only are site reports rarely published or widely disseminated, but interesting discoveries are often buried in technical jargon and indecipherable tables. _The Buried Past_ summarizes over thirty years of archaeology—nearly 300 reports of 150 sites in Philadelphia and surrounding counties—in concise, well-illustrated prose. It provides a compendium of information on when a site was excavated, by whom, why, and what was found. It is less compelling in its answers to what the finds mean, but then this brain child of John Cotter's does not purport to be an analytical work. Begun during Cotter's days on Independence National Historical Park excavations in 1965, the book's scope was broadened as a joint effort by the authors to cover the entire region through 1989. The final, artfully designed publication, supported by the Samuel S. Fels Fund, the Barra Foundation, and John Milner Associates, is accessible to the lay person and invaluable to the professional.

The book is divided into four sections. The first section sets the stage by presenting the prehistory and history of the area, along with descriptions of the few known Native-American sites. The second section offers highly readable, site-by-site summaries of downtown Philadelphia and Philadelphia county organized by location (Independence National Historic Park, Old Philadelphia, Delaware Waterfront, the city beyond the "Colonial Core," and Germantown). The third section covers sites in Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware counties. The final section presents interpretations of issues such as social stratification, commerce, and sanitation, as well as a discussion of future directions for Philadelphia's archaeology. An appendix gives brief descriptions of minor sites not treated in the text. The glossary is helpful for those not familiar with the specialized vocabulary, but its division into separate archaeological, architectural, military, ceramic, and glass categories makes it awkward to use if one does not already have an idea of what the word in question means. The
extensive bibliography will lead the reader to original sources. The index is very useful for locating sites and names although, reflecting the orientation of the entire volume, it is weak on subject headings.

One of the few weaknesses of the book is not so much that the authors tackle analytical questions only briefly, in the final section, but that they propose that the data "speak for themselves." The lack of consciousness of the subjective decisions made at every stage of archaeological and historical research leads to other problematic assumptions as well. For instance, human agency and the dynamics of power relations are lost in observations such as "The Industrial Revolution separated the haves from the have-nots. . . ." (p. 448). In their uncritical approach to the past, the authors miss an opportunity to evaluate the way archaeological evidence has been instrumental in constructing the story of Philadelphia's past—whether in the celebration of its "golden age" colonial era, the promotion of a select group of historically visible figures, or the development of a marketable "historical core."

The book is a review of what has been excavated, and in the process it also presents an interesting picture of the way archaeology gets done in a metropolitan center. The archaeological story of Philadelphia has typically been site-driven; that is, excavations of individual sites have been undertaken in response to questions about the site or threats of its disturbance. The archaeology of the city has been conducted under a variety of auspices, from contract firms to university-sponsored excavations, each usually with its own particular excavation techniques and recording systems. Combined with the highly varied lot histories of an urban setting, this disparate and often disjointed research has hindered accumulating comparable data needed for intersite analysis. Only recently have regional planning studies (five between 1979 and 1983) taken a broader view of the archaeological resources and priorities of the region. This lack of integrated research is most tellingly evident in the fact that at the time of the book's publication, there was no base map recording Philadelphia's known sites.

The story of Philadelphia's archaeology told in The Buried Past is generally a positive one, however. It tells of the development of new techniques—for example, the introduction of remote sensing to reveal underground features, such as foundations, before digging or the use of predictive models based on ecological and historical data to indicate the location and condition of buried remains. The compendium of site summaries also reveals the positive impact of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the National Environmental Protection Act of 1969, both of which require an assessment of the significance of a federally owned site or a site on which federal money is spent before it can be disturbed. Although arranged neither chronologically nor topically, the book tells of an emerging awareness of issues of ethnicity, gender, class, and race. It reflects the expanding scope of historical archaeology from the archaeology of famous white men (Franklin, Peale, Bartram, White, etc.) to a more inclusive
archaeology of industrial sites, African-American sites, vernacular architecture, and landscapes. It also tells of the remarkable history of preservation, from Philadelphia's downtown to the outlying historic village of Fallsington, where private, state, and federal interests have combined to sponsor more archaeological study than any other major city in North America. One can only hope that other metropolitan centers with active archaeological programs will follow this lead and sponsor equally accessible and thorough summaries of their buried pasts.

CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN THE VISUAL ARTS, NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

ELIZABETH KRYDER-REID


By RONALD SCHULTZ. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. xv, 298p. Illustrations, bibliographical references, index. Cloth, $45.00; paper, $36.00.)

In this splendidly written volume, Ronald Schultz argues that the origins of Philadelphia's working class are to be found long before the mechanization of the city's industries. So, when most historians begin their working-class histories with the founding of citywide unions and working-class parties, Schultz concludes his narrative. He looks not to debates over ownership of the means of production, but rather to the evolution of artisan moral values.

This book traces the evolution and maturation of a small-producer tradition. Derived from seventeenth-century English artisanal thought, this creed described a community in which work conferred dignity, equality, and a competence. Workers toiled in their homes and shops to assure collective well-being; their world—should they be allowed to create it—would be a republic of labor.

This vision emboldened workers as they faced the halcyon events of the century from 1720 to 1830. After all, the period witnessed successively rapid growth, depression, revolution, counterrevolution, war, another depression, and finally prosperity. Throughout much of this period the laboring classes suffer both material hardship and political disillusionment. From their rude awakening during the Revolutionary War, when "faced with powerful members of the community bent on profiting at their expense" (p. 51) to the "evident betrayal of the working man" (p. 231) by Andrew Jackson's Democrats in 1828, the laboring classes forged more perceptive critiques of their situation. By the nineteenth century, the small-producer tradition has been transformed into a full-fledged labor theory of value with political as well as economic implications. Increasingly class-conscious workingmen assert that only the producing classes generate wealth and to them belongs political leadership.
As this all too brief synopsis suggests, the author sustains a narrative about those for whom we have few records. To a considerable extent, this work represents prodigious research in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century records. But it also is a triumph of conceptualization, as Schultz builds his analysis not on the transformation of work but the politicization of the laboring classes. Relying upon pamphlets, sermons, speeches, mob actions, and electoral results, he weaves a coherent analysis that extends for more than a century.

With the resurgence of interest in alternative conceptions of political economy, particularly that of the producer mentalité, this book provides an invaluable introduction. It serves as yet another reminder that participation in politics made American laboring-class history different from that of England. But such participation did not sap activism as some have suggested; it promoted working-class consciousness.

Ironically, this laboring-class politicization depended heavily upon foreign ideas and individuals. Just as the original producer’s creed found its origins in England, its maturation in America depended at critical junctures upon migrants from the British Isles to promote and modify the set of beliefs. With such a derivative genealogy, this reviewer often questioned how much of the ideology seeped down to the laboring classes.

Perhaps all of our writing reflects our politics, but I found the author’s penchant for locating good among the producers and evil among the nonproducers jarring. To offer but one example: “All the issues, rhetoric, charges, and counter-charges of the era came ultimately to be measured against this standard: a choice between, on the one hand, a rushing grasping, commercial society wedded to an ideology of the main chance and, on the other hand, a more treasured producer’s society where human cycles, and not business cycles, claimed the community’s allegiance” (p. 71).

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Diane Lindstrom


The Delaware River is not an especially large body of water; perhaps sixty rivers in the United States drain larger areas. But despite its comparatively small size, it remains both historically and environmentally a river of tremendous importance. The longest free-flowing river on the eastern coast of North America and the most northerly river not covered by glaciers during the last Ice Age, it is home to species found nowhere else in the world. Situated in the heart of America’s most densely populated and intensely industrial region, the river has
long been subjected to tremendous, often contradictory, demands including water supply and waste disposal, commerce and energy, fisheries and recreation. In the process it has been filled, dammed, diverted, dredged, rechanneled, silted, and polluted to the point that throughout most of the twentieth century the lower stretches of the Delaware ranked among the most polluted waters of any major river system in the United States. Improvements in water quality and the growing environmental awareness of the past few decades have brought a renewed appreciation of the river and its denizens and a small but growing literature on its history. Bruce Stutz's *Natural Lives, Modern Times* provides an eclectic and engaging introduction to the natural and human history of this wonderful body of water.

Determined to "explore both its nature and its people, its past lives and present lives, its farm lives, industrial lives, city and rural lives—all, these days, river lives" (p. 4), Stutz immersed himself in the history of the river and spent two years traveling its waters and shores, from the lowest reaches of the Delaware Bay all the way to its headwaters in upper New York State. *Natural Lives, Modern Times* charts the succession of natural and human ecologies along different stretches of the river, in the process introducing the reader to a broad sampling of the river's past and current denizens: hemlock forests and peat bogs, muskrats and sturgeon, watermen and paleontologists, industrialists, community activists, timber rattlers, naturalists, and others, telling us about their lives and their relationships to the river. This is a fascinating and, at times, a beautifully written book, reminiscent of the wonderfully eclectic studies written by some of the gentleman historians and amateur naturalists of the nineteenth century who the author obviously holds in such high esteem. Following in their footsteps, he integrates a broad range of perspectives and interests, combining an affection for the river based upon a relationship dating back to his youth with the skills of an environmental writer and journalist—Stutz is currently an editor at *Audubon Magazine*—and the unselfconscious curiosity of the amateur historian. Unhindered by the constraints of academic style, he freely mixes natural history, personal observation, and excerpts from his many interviews with quotations drawn from more than 300 years of written observations about the river.

Guided by his own grave concerns about the impact that current human activities are having upon the river's health and welfare, Stutz deftly leads the reader into a consideration of ecological issues invisible to the casual observer. What does it mean, for example, when biomass is high but monotonous? What comprises a "natural" habitat? What impact is runaway residential development along the upper stretches of the river having upon the region's watershed? What is the significance of the maintenance of good "average" water quality when stream life cannot survive the extremes? Stutz's conclusions about the Delaware's future are not reassuring. He presents compelling evidence that current threats to the river's health are as deadly serious as any in its history, be they the impact
of increased human presence along its banks, the ongoing loss of biodiversity, or what ornithologist Larry Ryman calls "the depersonalization of the land." As Stutz explains most eloquently, a river can look and smell good but still be in very serious trouble.

West Chester University

Charles Hardy III


In the Ordeal of the Longhouse Daniel Richter has written what will now certainly become the standard work on the colonial Iroquois. He moves through materials of daunting complexity with grace, deftness, skill, and an impressive economy. This is the book that will define the issues and mold future discussions of the place of the Iroquois in the history of colonial America, and it will be central to any serious discussion of cultural contact.

Richter paradoxically produces a reduced but more impressive Iroquois League. This is a League defined for much of its history by its weakness as much as its strength. The Iroquois are a people repeatedly in the throes of military, demographic, and economic disaster. The image of the militarily invincible and imperial Iroquois is, as it has been before, revealed to be in large part a European creation designed to serve European purposes. But these reduced Iroquois still emerge as a formidable, innovative, and resilient people more intertwined than ever in a common European/Indian world.

Richter in his account of the Iroquois League largely works with familiar elements: the mourning war, the covenant chain, the rituals of condolence. But all are thoroughly historicized. They do not exist in some constant relation. Instead, they emerge at different times, take on different meanings at different periods, and exist in a shifting relationship to each other.

The Ordeal of the Longhouse does so much so well that a short review cannot do justice to its fullness and complexity. Richter discusses the origin of the League itself as a religious rather than a political construction. Its "role was to preserve the Great Peace through ceremonial Words of Condolence and exchanges of ritual gifts" (p. 40). European colonization, the fur trade, and the demographic disasters brought by exotic disease, however, turned practices such as the mourning war (designed to bring back captives to replace, either figuratively or literally, the dead) into cancers that corrupted the League's ideals of peace.
Richter devotes much of his account to the crisis brought on by the wars of the late seventeenth century. The wars transformed the Iroquois into a multi-ethnic melting pot. They prevented demographic collapse but they spawned new political, economic, and social crises. Weaving religion, trade, and diplomacy together, Richter gives a masterful account of how the Iroquois both create and adjust to new conditions. In Richter's account the League Council at Onondaga does not emerge as a political force until quite late in the seventeenth century, and even then the council remains in the background of this account. Instead Richter details an intricate and shifting set of arrangements between Anglophiles, Francophiles, and neutralists that determine the course of Iroquois politics—a politics which remained at their root profoundly localistic.

The end result of this tumultuous seventeenth-century history is the Grand Settlement that becomes the precarious framework for a new system of intercultural relations. The Iroquois adopted a policy of neutrality based on a principle of balance. It was only a qualified success. By the 1720s Richter sees Europeans as having gained control. The Iroquois had to confront their own weakness and their inability to risk war with either European power.

In a book whose reach is so wide, not all its conclusions seem equally secure. Richter does not appear to have made full use of the French sources, and this renders some of his account less full, and thus less convincing, than it might have been. He gives much attention to English trade, less to French, and very little to the flow of gifts Europeans sent to Iroquoia. And there are times when tradition seems less an object of analysis than a cornerstone always in place. Still, these are minor objections to a superb account.

University of Washington

Richard White


With this "narrative biography," Allan W. Eckert hopes to bring both drama and truth to the reader. "The reader may, as with a good novel, feel himself drawn into the current of events and be able to identify closely with the characters. It is designed to be a book that utilizes all the better elements of the novel form, for excitement, pace, and continuity, yet at the same time remains reliable as an accurate depiction of the history it embraces" (p. xvi). The subject of the biography is the great Shawnee leader Tecumseh (1768-1813).

In reconstructing Tecumseh's story, Eckert claims to rely upon more than 850 historical resources. In utilizing these sources, Eckert assumes he has a special, almost clairvoyant ability to read between the lines. He finds "not only
hidden dialogue in [the documents], but hidden emotions, thoughts and physical actions as well.” These “bits and pieces,” he continues, “when properly and accurately reconstituted, form the flesh and blood that bring to life the bare bones of history” (p. xvii). Eckert is extraordinarily confident in his own abilities to make sense out of the documentary record.

Unfortunately, the reader cannot share this confidence, because Eckert’s manner of citation is unprofessional. His footnotes do not direct the reader to pertinent scholarly or archival materials. Note 9, for instance, concerning the ethnicity of Tecumseh’s mother, states “in the continued research over more than a quarter-century, data has been unearthed that Methotasa was, indisputably, Cherokee” (p. 680). But no documentation is specified. Other footnotes are equally cryptic. An additional section, entitled “Principal Sources,” fails to clarify how Eckert’s conclusions are based upon the historical records. This makes it very difficult to determine which parts of the story are true and which are pure fabrication.

The general story told by Eckert seems sound enough, and parts will be familiar to readers of works such as Richard White’s *The Middle Ground* and Michael N. McConnell’s *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724-1774*. Eckert’s book describes how interior Indians responded to the rise of Indian-hating in the late eighteenth century, to the birth of the U.S. nation-state, and to the massive influx of settlers into the Kentucky region. Although *A Sorrow in Our Heart* does not detail the cultural, social, and material changes produced by contact, it provides lively descriptions of battles and evokes the smells, sights, and sounds of everyday life.

An old-fashioned frontier history, much of the book must not only be doubted, it must be sharply rejected. Eckert’s biography perpetuates many stale stereotypes. The British are portrayed as spineless combatants (pp. 207, 491, 634, 661), Indian women are depicted as “squaws” (pp. 51, 138, 394), and most Indians come across as bloodthirsty savages. Eckert gives extensive and lurid descriptions of Shawnees torturing their prisoners (pp. 134, 154, 169, 235, 640) without explaining the cultural background and world view that mandated such acts. This forces the reader to conclude, incorrectly, that Indians were simply sadists.

Perhaps the most hackneyed aspect of the book is its treatment of Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet Tenskwatatawa. In the earliest biographies of Tecumseh, e.g., Benjamin Drake’s *Life of Tecumseh and his brother the Prophet* (1841), Tecumseh and Tenskwatatawa are sharply contrasted. The former is a brave patriot, the latter a lazy coward. In Eckert’s book, this dualism is carried to ridiculous extremes so that Tecumseh becomes a near super-hero, and the Prophet a buffoon. Eckert assumes that the two brothers differed “in almost every respect” (p. 205). Tecumseh’s birth was marked by an “awe-inspiring spectacle” in the heavens (p. 33). A child prodigy, he mastered the bow at age...
three (p. 46), showed leadership qualities at age six (p. 48), and asked questions his elders could not answer (p. 96). As a young man, he possessed a phenomenal memory (p. 215), made profound theological insights (p. 218), developed a superior moral conscience (p. 196), proved to be an incomparable warrior, rejected the practice of torture (pp. 256, 261, 339), and began to refine the idea of a pan-Indian confederacy. As an adult, he became the Robert E. Lee of American Indians, leading the underdogs gallantly and honorably in a cause destined to be lost.

In contrast, Tenskwatawa was a failure from the beginning. His birth produced "an undercurrent of fear and dark mutterings" (p. 42) among the people. Unlike his stoic brother, Tenskwatawa was a cry-baby (pp. 46, 47, 63). As a youth, he was "notable only in a negative manner" (p. 98) and "signally incompetent in virtually all fields" (p. 178). Already an alcoholic at age ten, Tenskwatawa became lazy and manipulative as an adult. Most damning, the so-called Prophet possessed no real spiritual powers. Rather, Eckert argues that Tenskwatawa was at worst an egomaniacal and cruel charlatan (p. 405, 426), at best a puppet used by Tecumseh to lend religious authority to Tecumseh's political goal of Indian unification (pp. 431, 441, 444, 455). So long as the Prophet merely regurgitated the prophecies fed him by Tecumseh everything went well. Whenever Tenskwatawa took independent action, disasters resulted. These included witch-hunting inquisitions and military defeats (pp. 443, 465, 469, 497, 558).

These simplistic portraits show no comprehension of how power worked among groups like the Shawnees. As Gregory Evans Dowd's A Spirited Resistance and Joel Martin's Sacred Revolt argue, Native Americans fused religion and politics. And as R. David Edmunds's The Shawnee Prophet has demonstrated, the pan-Indian movement depended to a great extent upon Tenskwatawa's visions and leadership. From 1805 to 1809, he was as important as Tecumseh.

Out of touch with recent scholarship, this book is a disappointment. Promising drama and truth, it delivers far too little of either. Most important, it diverts the reader's attention from the incredible drama of intercultural struggle that more accurate histories are beginning to reveal. For this reason, this book must produce a sorrow in our heart.

Franklin and Marshall College

JOEL W. MARTIN


Seven-term governor, war hero, and leading Antifederalist, New York's George Clinton was a man of undeniable consequence in Revolutionary America.
Yet, as John P. Kaminski observes, because most of Clinton's papers have not survived, historians have overlooked or distorted his accomplishments. Drawing on an impressive array of newspapers, pamphlets, and private correspondence, Kaminski gives Clinton his due, and more, in this sympathetic biography.

"Without the Revolution and its concomitant social upheaval," Kaminski rightly declares, "George Clinton would have remained a lawyer-farmer of the Ulster County middling gentry" (p. 1). Clinton's opposition to British policies after 1765 and his service during the Revolution propelled him to prominence at the state and national levels. Kaminski asserts that Clinton "typified many others of the gentry . . . who filled the political vacuum created by the Revolution" (pp. 1-2), though he introduces no specific parallels to support this observation. Throughout the book, Kaminski neither acknowledges nor engages in wide-ranging historiographical debates—even in the book's endnotes where he includes a few references to secondary sources.

Instead, Kaminski presents a chronological narrative of Clinton's public life. Son of a Presbyterian immigrant, by 1768 Clinton had parlayed a combination of effort, ability, and connections into a seat in the provincial legislature. Although Kaminski wrongly asserts that the Whig Livingston faction, to which Clinton belonged, controlled the assembly until 1769, he correctly notes that the Livingstons' electoral losses in the late 1760s accelerated Clinton's emergence as a party leader and led to his appointment, in 1775, to the Continental Congress.

Clinton's greatest public service, however, would be at the state level, where he served as governor for twenty-one years (1777-95, 1801-04), shaping politics and policies during a crucial formative era. Kaminski devotes five of seven chapters to Clinton's governorship, showing how he led New York both politically and militarily in wartime and how he promoted republicanism by adopting economic policies that benefitted ordinary citizens. Kaminski suggests that the success of Clinton's economic programs made most New Yorkers skeptical of plans to strengthen the national government in the postwar era. He includes a useful synopsis of the debate between New York's Federalists and Antifederalists, persuasively asserting Clinton's authorship of the "Cato" letters.

While Clinton accepted the ratified Constitution, he remained a proponent of limited government and thus aligned himself with the Republican party. After several unsuccessful attempts to win the vice presidency—a quest that may surprise some readers—Clinton became Jefferson's vice-president in 1805. He retained that office until his death in 1812, despite his own unsuccessful bid for the presidency and his pronounced hostility toward the policies of Jefferson's successor, James Madison.

Clinton was a conscientious and effective leader, but Kaminski exaggerates his considerable accomplishments. He inexplicably attributes New York's ratification of the Constitution to the governor's willingness to admit defeat and finds in Clinton's economic programs precedents for Hamilton's fiscal policies.
In this unwavering portrayal of Clinton as a man of principle, Kaminski sometimes downplays his capacity for savvy politicking and his willingness to ignore principle to win votes—as in 1788, when partisan motives prompted him to allow the legislature, rather than the people, to choose presidential electors, and in 1792, when Clinton won reelection in part by compromising his opposition to slavery.

Clinton was an admirable public servant and a successful politician. Kaminski has written a much-needed account of his public life. Although some readers will wish he had used Clinton's story as a point of departure for addressing broad historiographical issues, this comprehensive narrative will surely satisfy many others.

University of North Carolina, Charlotte

CYNTHIA A. KIERNER


What Julian Boyd hath wrought when he began modern documentary editing with the Thomas Jefferson papers in 1944 is now reaching its culmination in the papers of early American political, literary, and artistic figures being published by various university presses across the nation. No series is more central to the history of the early republic than The Papers of George Washington. In many ways the Washington papers constitute a pioneering and innovative leader in the changing world of documentary editions. Most importantly, the editors reduced the amount of annotation, omitted extensive, analytical essays on various aspects of the letters, and avoided the "post-hole" approach by publishing several simultaneous series, rather than using Boyd's straight chronological approach. The consequence of the latter has been much more rapid publication of the most extensive papers of any early American on record. Before it is all over, we may see something close to one hundred volumes. And the innovation does not end here. With the assistance of David Packard, Jr., the Washington papers are being converted to a CD-ROM format that will be cheaper and more inclusive than the letterpress editions reviewed here.

The Washington papers series began in 1968 under the general editorship of Donald Jackson, who had already distinguished himself with the editing of the Lewis and Clark expedition letters and the journals of Zebulon M. Pike. His major task was to gather an outstanding editorial staff, to collect the various letters and documents relating to the most eminent founding father, to secure adequate financing, and to devise editorial policy. In all these he did well, and under his direction appeared the six-volume first series in the project, The Diaries of George Washington (1976-79). Before turning over the project in 1977
to its second general editor, W.W. "Bill" Abbot, Jackson had gathered at the University of Virginia two critical editorial assistants, Dorothy Twohig from the Alexander Hamilton papers staff and Philander D. Chase, a National Historical Publications and Records Commission fellow. These four—Jackson, Abbot, Twohig, and Chase—constitute the critical fulcrum of the Charlottesville editorial decision makers.


The Confederation Series, covering 1784-88, is expected to be only eight volumes in length, the shortest of the four chronological series. But if the first two volumes reviewed here are an indication, brevity does not make it the least important.

What is interesting is just how quickly the former commander-in-chief of the Continental Army returned to being the squire of Mount Vernon and a leader in his community. It was as though he had never been gone, as if he had not become a figure on the international stage. Sometimes he became involved in the most mundane of matters, such as the size of the mesh in wire sieves (1:49-50, 193-94). Other issues revolved around regional concerns that extended back to the prewar era, such as the opening of the Potomac River to navigation (2:86-100, and passim). Few problems were more vexing than the attempts to conclude estate settlements that he had begun well before the war (e.g., the John Colvill estate, 2:64-66, and the George Mercer estate, 2:458-65). His personal real estate holdings, especially the claims to western lands that were his from purchases and bounties for military service (2:338-58), were a frequent object of his attention.

But the Washington of the Confederation Series is a man of international and national importance, and it is the correspondence regarding these interests that make these volumes—and this series—most significant. Washington returned to Mount Vernon in the hopes of retiring to his estate, to recuperate from the toils of war, and to restore his deteriorated plantations. This was not to be the case. In the first month of his retirement he received notice from Gov. Benjamin Harrison of Virginia that "almost every power in the Union from the Congress downwards" appears "to have lost sight of greater objects, and our critical situation, and to have given themselves over to an indolent security, to party disputes, or to disputes unworthy of a great nation." While Harrison alluded to possible divine intervention in the nation's behalf (1:22), it is clear that others
found the general “not only . . . the fittest, but . . . the only Person on Earth, that together with the inclination, possesses the Probity and Abilities sufficient to avert the impending ruin” (1:505).

Nowhere was this probity and ability better demonstrated than in the controversy over the Society of the Cincinnati. As antirepublican accusations of the organization filled the air, Washington sought the opinions of others (Thomas Jefferson, for instance) regarding the suitability of his serving as its president. At the society’s meeting in May 1784, he negotiated a series of compromises that modified its constitution to his wishes (1:274-76, 287-92, 328-70). That probity was echoed in an interesting exchange of letters with Virginia Congressman William Grayson and with Governor Harrison (e.g., 2:134-35, 256-57, 280-84, 328-30, 419-24, 498-501, 519-21, 535-39). It becomes clear as one moves through these volumes that Washington’s final destiny in the young republic was still unfulfilled in May 1785.

As we have grown to expect from this series, the notations are brief without being incomplete. The few short headnotes have none of the extensive editorializing found in Boyd’s edition of Jefferson. One finds few reasons to criticize the editorial process. However, the decision not to print translations of letters where there was no contemporary translation seems frivolous. The omission either in the table of contents or in the index of the location of the headnotes is disconcerting. The reprinting of letters from Washington’s correspondents already published in other modern editions seems a waste of money and space. Yet these are minor cavils. The Papers of George Washington continues as it began—a noble idea, a thorough editorial process, an exquisite printing. Bill Abbot and his staff deserve one more “Well done.”

Bowling Green State University

David Curtis Skaggs


The Documentary History of the Federal Congress, 1789-1791, is an ongoing project supported by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, George Washington University, and Johns Hopkins University Press. The project envisions a total of more than twenty volumes, numbers ten and eleven of which are reviewed here, that will present to the scholarly public the entire documentary record bearing on the work of the First Federal Congress and its members. The first nine volumes produced by this project include the
Senate Legislative Journal (Vol. I, 1972), the Senate Executive Journal (Vol. II, 1974), the House of Representatives Journal (Vol. III, 1977), the Legislative Histories of every bill introduced into the first Congress (Vols. IV-VI, 1986), the Petition Histories of every petition received by the first Congress (Vols. VII, VIII), and the Diary of William Maclay (Vol. IX, 1988). Volumes ten and eleven are the first of five volumes (Vols. X-XIV) that will contain all of the nonmember, mostly newspaper, accounts of the work of the first Congress. Finally, volumes sixteen through the end of the series will contain all of the letters written by or to members of the first Congress. Moreover, throughout the series are scattered lists of members, dates of attendance, frequency of speeches, charts of the progress of legislation through the Congress, and similar information that scholars will find useful.

The Documentary History of the First Federal Congress is part of an extraordinarily rich outpouring of original materials on the founding of American political institutions that have appeared in recent years. For example, the several volumes of letters of the members of the first Congress will fit very well with the definitive new edition of The Letters of the Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789 now being edited by Paul Smith at the Library of Congress (19 volumes covering the period through March 1783 have already appeared). Other similarly rich documentary collections include The Founders' Constitution, edited by Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner (5 vols., University of Chicago Press, 1987); The Complete Anti-Federalist, edited by Herbert J. Storing (7 vols., University of Chicago Press, 1981); the Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution, edited initially by Merrill Jensen and later by John P. Kaminski and Gaspare P. Saladino (18 vols., State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976-); and the Documentary History of the First Federal Elections, 1788-1790, initially edited by Merrill Jensen and Robert A. Becker (4 vols., University of Wisconsin Press, 1976-). These important collections of original materials have changed the nature of historical research into the origins of American political institutions.

What makes the materials under review here of particular historical interest is that they represent one of the first sustained records of democratic legislative debate. The British Parliament actively suppressed all attempts to publish its debates from the institution's inception in the fourteenth century to well into the conflict with her American colonies. Many colonial assembles did the same and both Continental and Confederation Congresses (1774-1789) and the Constitutional Convention (1787) met behind closed doors, publishing only the results of their activities and the briefest outline of the formal motions and votes that led to their final decisions. Even the U.S. Senate met in secrecy until 1795.

The U.S. House of Representatives, on the other hand, conceived of itself and was popularly seen as "the people's house." As a result, it threw its galleries open to the press and the public from its first day of business. Both the press
and the public took full advantage of this unprecedented opportunity to observe their government in action. James Kent, later a famous constitutional commentator, but a young man in 1789, recalled that “all ranks & degrees of men seemed to be actuated by one common impulse, to fill the galleries, as soon as the doors of the House of Representatives were opened for the first time, & to gaze on one of the most interesting fruits of their struggle, a popular assembly summoned from all parts of the United States” (I:xvii). Citizens were joined in the galleries by the editors and recorders of New York City’s major daily, biweekly, and weekly newspapers. Accounts of House debates, reproduced from shorthand and summary transcripts, appeared regularly in the New York City papers from the opening of the first session of the First Congress.

The Documentary History of the First Federal Congress, once volumes twelve, thirteen, and fourteen are completed, will replace the first two volumes of the venerable Annals of Congress as the principal source upon which scholars will draw. The Annals of Congress, edited by William Winston Seaton and Joseph Gales, Jr., and more formally known as The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States (42 vols., Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1834-56), was drawn almost exclusively from a single source (Thomas Lloyd’s Congressional Register) until it ceased publication in March 1790 and John Fenno’s Gazette of the United States thereafter. The Documentary History of the First Federal Congress will contain twice as much material drawn from as wide a range of sources as are currently available.

The new materials available in the Documentary History will throw valuable new light on the critical debates surrounding the implementation of the new Constitution. Extended debates occurred over such divisive issues “as creation of a revenue system, the power of removal of executive officers, the Bill of Rights, location of the federal capital, funding of the Revolutionary War debt, creation of the Bank of the United States, and federal regulation of the militia” (I:xxvii). Moreover, delegates explored every issue in great detail, no matter how minor it might appear on the surface, because both the substance of the decision and the procedure by which it was reached might later be cited as a precedent. Most members were convinced that the decisions being taken in the first Congress would set the tone—democratic, aristocratic, and even potentially monarchical—of the government then taking shape. The materials provided here and those still to come will add greatly to the richness and texture of our understanding of the critical debates surrounding the implementation of the new Constitution.

University of Colorado, Boulder

CALVIN C. JILLSON

The second volume of The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History, seven years in preparation and production, has been eagerly awaited by naval historians and others interested in the War of 1812. Produced and published by the Early History Branch of the U.S. Naval Historical Center, Volume II, 1813, is the second of a planned three-volume set that presents a broad sampling of primary documents relative to the war. The final volume will cover 1814-15.

Series editor William S. Dudley has designed and developed an overall strategy that varies considerably from three other sailing navy history series: Dudley W. Knox, ed., Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War Between the United States and France (7 vols., Washington, D.C., 1934-38), and Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers (7 vols., Washington, D.C., 1939-45); as well as the ongoing series edited first by William Bell Clark and later by William James Morgan, Naval Documents of The American Revolution (9 vols., Washington, D.C., 1964-86). Where these series attempt to present all extant documents concerned with the naval history of their subject conflict, Dudley's Naval War of 1812 adopts a totally different, less extensive, but more informative format.

To accommodate more material than Volume I, under Dudley's direction the compilers redesigned the page style, layout, and switched to a lighter weight paper. One unchanged feature is a remarkably comprehensive index, which occupies sixty-four pages at the end of Volume II and guides the researcher to the most minute subject headings. In content, the book presents over 500 documents arranged chronologically under the rubric of five operational theaters: the Atlantic, the Great Lakes, the Gulf Coast, Chesapeake Bay, and the Pacific, the latter two being additions to the categories in the first volume. Each section opens with a stage-setting essay for its theater, followed by introductory paragraphs for every topic. The writing style is unobtrusive yet informative, and adept editing carefully presents each document as close to its nineteenth-century character as possible.

The naval battles afloat and ashore are well-covered, but the scope of The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History extends beyond them to a broad range of policies and people, from the British Admiralty to the Navy Department in Washington, from stalwart British Admirals of the Fleet to intrepid American ship commanders, from sailors and marines to the citizens they were charged with protecting.

A satisfying highlight for readers whose loyalties lie with the minuscule United States Navy appears under the heading "The Admiralty's Prohibition
against Single-Ship Combats.” The 1812 victories won by the American 44-
gun frigates staggered the British world, a result detailed in several highly
critical London Times editorials. The Naval War of 1812’s lead-in paragraph
summarizes “It was incomprehensible that any warship, let alone an American
one, could defeat one of the Royal Navy’s own.” Stung by the censure
directed at them from all quarters, the Admiralty took the unprecedented step
of forbidding frigate commanders from engaging their American counterparts
in single-ship combat.” The replicated document confirms that Their Lords
Commissioners of the Admiralty decreed on July 10, 1813, that they “do
not conceive that any of His Majesty’s Frigates should attempt to engage,
singlehanded, the larger Class of American Ships” (p. 183)

A coverage anomaly attends the section on the Chesapeake Bay theater.
Unfortunately, one facet of Rear Admiral Sir George Cockburn’s 1813 summer
war, which he conducted primarily along the shores of the bay, and which
brought a season of raping and pillage down upon the American populace,
becomes an orphan “The British Attack on Ocracoke,” although an integral
part of British Chesapeake Bay operations (which receive overall coverage on
pp. 339-44), immediately follows the Admiralty decree in the Atlantic theater
section (pp. 184-86) Cockburn’s report on the Ocracoke operation to his
commander-in-chief, Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, however, properly
comes under the Chesapeake Bay theater (pp. 365-66) The barbarous 1813
attack on Hampton, Virginia, conducted by turncoat French troops, Les Chaus-
seurs d’Angleterre, led by British officers is not covered, although there is consider-
able extant documentation available concerning it.

The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History, Volume II, 1813 achieves
its objectives, and the above criticisms are both minor and truly represent “the
exceptions that prove the rule.” The Naval War of 1812 series is a work of
excellence that will become and remain that war’s standard naval reference.

Southampton College, Long Island University

W. M. P. Dunne

Arms Makers of Colonial America By James Whisker (Selinsgrove and Lon-
don Susquehanna University Press, 1992 217p Bibliography, appen-
dixes $55.00)

The Longrifles of Western Pennsylvania Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties By
Richard F. Rosenberger and Charles Kaufmann (Pittsburgh and London University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993 xxxiv, 139p Illustra-
tions, lists of gunsmiths and hardware dealers $60.00)

James Whisker set himself a daunting task to identify all of the gunsmiths,
cannon casters, makers of edged weapons, and provisioners in the American
colonies, from earliest settlement through the War of Independence. As he admits, seventeenth-century artifacts are scarce and written information, even from the eighteenth century, can be sketchy. "The fact is that we have no idea what a gun made in the Carolinas before 1783 looks like," so that what remains "is a history of the names of arms makers without having a clear idea of what they made" (p. 15). Information for some of the other colonies is better, especially for Pennsylvania where the author has already done a study of its arms makers. Even so, the author's search through various archival and printed sources notwithstanding, there is much that cannot be known for any of the colonies.

Professor Whisker opens with a sixteen-page introduction that is actually more the length of a chapter, partly disguised by the double-column, oversized format of the book. He tips his hat to the work of Harold Peterson and M.L. Brown on firearms in the colonies and alludes to more specialized studies, most notably those by Henry Kauffman and George Shumway on the "Pennsylvania" rifle. He does not really try to add to what these authors have said, but that was not his primary concern. After touching on the militia procurement system and the weapons trade with Native Americans, he ends his introduction and presses on to the real subject: his list of arms makers.

He moves alphabetically, beginning with Abraham Aaron (of Virginia) and ending with Frederick Zorger (of Pennsylvania). In between are hundreds of names, some in a simple entry of a few lines and others with a thumbnail biographical sketch—like that of the well-known Lancaster, Pennsylvania, gunsmith, William Henry. Sprinkled throughout are excerpts from primary sources, and included with each entry is a brief citation (full information can be found in the bibliography at the end of the book).

Any sort of listing would have been problematic, an authorial version of the "trade offs" so often discussed in the history of technology. Although an alphabetical approach is useful to those seeking a specific name, it does little for readers interested in locating arms makers by region or tracing their spread or development over time. If Professor Whisker had included a discussion of either of those topics, the value of his efforts would have been much greater. Similarly, although he inserted a number of good, clear photographs of various muskets, fowling pieces, and rifles, he did not indicate overall length, barrel dimensions, caliber, or furniture type—the very sort of information necessary for close study. And, unfortunately, some of his labels are misleading, e.g., his calling a rifle shown on page 101 a Revolutionary era piece, even though, if it was, it had later been converted to a percussion-cap firing mechanism—which he did not mention; see, too, the German jaeger rifle on page 27. Some of the source citations are rather sloppy as well, e.g., "Martin Calvin" for Calvin Martin, on page 22. Thus, I am not sure what the intended audience is here
or what benefits readers would derive from Professor Whisker's hard work. For those wanting to locate a particular arms maker, this book could be helpful; those seeking precise descriptions or a true history of arms making should probably look elsewhere.

Richard Rosenberger and Charles Kaufmann, have, by contrast, done a very satisfying study, combining concise prose with attractive photographic illustrations—including two color sections showing the meticulous craftsmanship that went into some rifles. The authors are rifle collectors as well as students of rifle making, and they approached the subject with great respect, even awe, for a weapon that was both tool and work of art.

They give a very quick overview of the rifle and its evolution after it was brought into the colonies. They then briefly review gun making in western Pennsylvania, after which they concentrate, through a score of biographical sketches, on Allegheny and Westmoreland counties. They did so, not because the rifles made there were necessarily superior to those made elsewhere, but because enough examples have survived to give us a sense of the craft skills involved and the regional types that emerged. Although there were rifle makers in the Monongahela Valley by the 1750s who followed the fur trade, real development came after the War of Independence. The authors call the period from that point to 1815 the "Golden Age" of rifle design and construction. Rifles made in western Pennsylvania tended to have wider buttstocks, more ornate patch boxes, and more slender wrists than styles common to eastern counties. Since so many of the Allegheny County rifle makers learned their trade under Thomas Allison or one of his former apprentices, there was a greater uniformity among the rifles made there than in neighboring Westmoreland County. Rifle makers in both counties were likely to use English-made locks, at least until the percussion cap eclipsed the older flintlock firing mechanism by the 1830s.

The authors wind through their discussion carefully, pointing out what the rifles of those two counties had in common, what set them apart, and how they differed from—or were similar to—rifles made in other regions. One can sense the authors' disappointment at the advent of the Industrial Revolution, when machine tools displaced craft skills, so that, by the Civil War, very few gunsmiths could make a rifle by hand. Included are two appendixes based on information originally collected by Robert McAfee: one for gunsmiths in five western Pennsylvania counties, circa 1800-1900, and the other for Pittsburgh gunsmiths and selected hardware dealers over the same century. For those interested in western Pennsylvania history and, more especially, for those who appreciate
precise illustrations and descriptions of the early nineteenth-century rifle maker's art, this book is very rewarding.

**Brigham Young University**

**NEIL L. YORK**

*Imperatives, Behaviors, and Identities: Essays in Early American Cultural History.*

By **JACK P. GREENE.** (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992. xvi, 392p. Bibliographical references, index. $17.95.)

This richly detailed and wide-ranging work makes clear the reasons for Jack Greene's eminence as a colonial historian. It is a collection of sixteen essays mostly written in the 1980s but extending back to the late 1960s when he began to shift the focus of his scholarship from political to social and cultural history. The essays show how he has pursued over many years a set of related questions about the formation of corporate identities in the British colonies of North America and the Caribbean. His work is a model of sustained focus, applying elements of a conceptual framework to diverse areas of investigation, from the "changing identity" of British settlers in Barbados to the special terminology of republicanism on the eighteenth-century mainland.

Greene draws on a remarkable range of sources in these essays. He provides vivid summary accounts of the settlement and growth of colonial societies in Barbados, South Carolina, Georgia, and the southern backcountry. His studies of these areas provide specific examples disclosing the social and psychological patterns within which he analyzes the cultural and intellectual issues that are the subjects of later essays.

The essays are conceptually connected and arranged in a rough chronological arrangement that serves to illuminate how the Revolution and the formation of an American nation "grew out of, reflected, altered, transformed, or rejected" the processes of colonization and social development within the British North American empire. Greene emphasizes throughout the "continuities . . . between the colonial and Revolutionary periods." That is his most general point.

A more particular theme appears in his contention that "the concept of mastery was central to the definition of political and social relations during the early modern era." That concept is manifest in the work of colonization itself, in the European seizure of land, exploitation of other peoples, and imposition of social structures and values on "cultural spaces," which were also products of the interaction between physical environments and human intentions, and thus resulted in significantly diverse colonial regions. "Mastery" is also as unmistakably important in the eighteenth-century meanings assigned to words like "liberty," "slavery," "equality," "improvement," "experience," "virtue,"
and "independence." Several of the essays carefully rehearse the historical definitions and uses of these terms.

There is remarkably little repetition of detail. Greene does, however, repeat in different places the exhortation of Tom Paine to Americans not "to think better of the European world than it deserves" and to learn "the manly doctrine of reverencing themselves." The psychology of dependence and independence is a thread running through the essays. It most explicitly informs discussions of: the motivation of settlers to secure "material betterment" as "the vehicle by which dependent men in Britain and Europe could become independent, masterless men"; the special sensitivity of white South Carolinians to threats against their independence and liberty "precisely" because of "their intimate familiarity with chattel slavery"; the colonial mentality that measured itself by the standards of the British "cultural hearth" and found itself wanting and deeply dependent psychologically on metropolitan approval and support; and that same mentality, formed in the desire for individual autonomy that had prompted migration, threatened with "slavery" from the source of hoped-for nurturance, finally transformed by a compelling need to affirm the very individual and rustic simplicity that made the colonial world an inadequate reflection of Britain and fostered the sense of dependence, so that "the Revolution became a cathartic event, serving as a psychological release."

In several essays, offered as "speculations," Greene examines the key vocabulary of eighteenth-century Anglo-American politics. He is at special pains to dismiss any imputation of radical ideas about "equality" to Revolutionary leaders. Rather, he insists upon "the deep and abiding commitment of the Revolutionary generation to political inequality" founded upon reverence for property as the condition of personal independence that is itself the basis of meaningful citizenship. Perhaps, he suggests, in Jefferson's language the proper emphasis is on "men" not on "equal," "that those who could meet the full requirements for being a man—and, therefore, a citizen—were equal." He argues, in a similar vein, that the case for the influence of a "country ideology" and particularly the republican concept of "civic virtue" on American political thought merely assumes and does not demonstrate that those ideas had anything like the same currency, much less the same significance, here that they had in Britain. Before the 1760s the term "virtue" in America was "noncivic, personal, Christian and Lockean," focusing on "self-dominion," not on the subordination of the individual interest to the communal. In fact, republican ideas of civic virtue became important only in 1774-76. They were shallow-rooted and feeble, indeed, in a new nation grown out of a colonial world formed in the pursuit of private happiness and suspicion of public authority.

If Greene's contentions about the ideological history of eighteenth-century America are speculative and disputed, the challenge he poses is based on a very clear-minded statement of the issues, and a direct, provocative marshalling of
evidence about their historical context, as well as the straightforward meaning of the language of eighteenth-century debates. If equality, liberty, virtue, and independence will remain contested terms, Greene makes it plain that is no reason to obfuscate their history in America.

University of Wisconsin, Green Bay

Jerrold C. Rodesh

Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism. Edited by Alfred F. Young. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993. 385p. Index. Cloth, $35.00; paper, $15.00.)

Nearly twenty years ago, during the Bicentennial, Alfred F. Young published his first collection of essays on the American Revolution. It posed a modern and persuasive alternative to the consensus or ideological approach. In essays on land rioters, Thomas Paine, Native Americans, Massachusetts riots, and related aspects, the Revolution clearly emerged as meaning different things to different groups. Neither the shoemaker nor the yeoman reacted to events as did John Hancock or Thomas Jefferson. In this new collection Young brings together essays that are somewhat broader in scope and that probe more deeply into the question of just how radical the Revolution was. The first section, “Who Shall Rule at Home,” includes two essays. The first by Gary Kornblith and John M. Murrin depicts, via a breathless tour of elite power in Massachusetts, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York, from the late colonial era through 1800, a nearly successful attempt by the elite to capture the Revolution and maintain a deferential society. Their defeat through the election of Jefferson put the upper classes out of mainstream political channels throughout the nineteenth century. Allan Kulikoff portrays a yeoman culture or ideology, partly market-oriented and partly based on custom, in contrast to capitalist farmers. These yeomen were courted by the gentry during the Revolution through their concern for individual property. Yet the interests of the two were not compatible and Kulikoff sees differences emerge after the Revolution over paper money, poll and land taxes, and the roll of the yeoman in American society. The Revolution brought the issue of rural life to the forefront of politics and ultimately led to its triumph in the election of Jefferson.

The next section, “Liberty for Whom?” consists of an essay by Edward Countryman on the changing meaning of “liberty.” Countryman maintains that the early meanings, which included specific class identities and often encompassed customary rights, gave way in the Constitution to a wider playing field of liberty that encompassed “naked interest-group politics” (p. 138). It was a broader definition, offering men pride in themselves as citizens and producers and accepting self-interest, a sense suitable to the growing capitalist economy. Peter Wood discusses an enhanced black consciousness during the Revolutionary period, including many conspiracies that induced enormous fear within white
communities. W.J. Rorabaugh describes the Revolution's impact on apprenticeship: the termination of familial colonial indentures in favor of a business relationship that gave apprentices more rights and less paternal supervision. Ultimately the system was not workable in a country with an open labor market and a republican ethos.

In the final section, "In Victory and Defeat," Alan Taylor describes the fates of the northern land rioters after the Revolution. In the backcountry the Revolution continued for thirty years as yeoman fought speculators—often with success—over disputed land claims, particularly in marginal areas where rents were unaffordable, and became part of the Jeffersonian movement. So, too, analyzing farmer and tavern keeper William Manning's political treatise, "The Key of Liberty," Michael Merrill and Sean Wilentz also reveal Jeffersonian partisanship. Manning attacked Federalist policies during the 1790s, and in so doing he laid out a critique of commercial society while advocating an egalitarian nation in which a well-educated populace controlled government. Finally, Cathy Davidson describes the revolutionary impact of the novel upon women. She asserts that this relatively new literary form gave females new role models, led them to a perception of choices to be made within their lives, increased intellectual opportunities, allowed a deeper comprehension of their place in the new republic, and improved their ability to make rational choices within that place.

While many of these essays have been published in another form, taken together they make a major contribution to our understanding of the Revolution. They point out the profound impact that the Revolution had on the different peoples of America well into the next generation. If the Constitution emerges as a generally conservative movement to impede the egalitarian impact of 1776, then the Jeffersonian triumph looms even more clearly and with greater definition as an insurgency against a deferential society.

Florida International University

Howard B. Rock


Not that long ago, almost all historians attributed "American exceptionalism" to the capitalist genesis of the United States. As Carl Degler put it, capitalism came to North America with "the first ships" of Europeans. Born capitalist, the United States, according to conventional wisdom, escaped the wrenching transformations that accompanied the destruction of feudal regimes in the Old World. But conventional wisdom has changed as ideas about American
exceptionalism and about capitalist origins have come under fire. Over the last few decades, the intensive study of early American communities by social historians dramatically reshaped our understanding of the history of the countryside. These works showed the existence and persistence of rural worlds apart from capitalist norms and forms and opened up a spirited debate about the causes, timing, and outcome of agrarian America's transition to capitalism. This "transition question" debate, however, has grown stale of late as scholarly positions have stalemated and technical matters overwhelmed substantive concerns.

Enter Allan Kulikoff, whose study of rural America throws fresh light on crucial aspects of the transition question and holds the promise of a persuasive synthesis. Ranging boldly across time and space, Kulikoff ponders the stimulus given capitalist development by the American Revolution, probes the emergence of rural class languages in Jacksonian political culture, and traces the paradoxical consequences of migration across the Atlantic and the North American continent. Kulikoff's main focus and the chief contribution of his book is the rise and demise of the yeoman class.

To this theme he brings a subtle analysis of the culture of freeholding family farmers, an agrarian class which Kulikoff, in Marxist terms, sees as occupying a contradictory location. Recognizing the often substantial participation of yeoman households in commercial transactions, Kulikoff argues that most freeholders remained "alienated from capitalist social and economic relations" (p. 36). While the heads of yeoman households accepted the need to exchange commodities, they dedicated themselves to the maintenance and reproduction of a way of life that forestalled the commodification of male labor. Sounding a Turnerian note, Kulikoff identified the frontier as a "safety valve" for the "independence" and patriarchal authority of yeomen. "On every frontier, yeomen reinvented their class, remade a world of patriarchal family government, food-producing farms, local exchange, and local self-sufficiency" (p. 151). "What was exceptional about the rural United States," Kulikoff concludes, was "the formation and long history of regional classes of yeomen, living in a capitalist world but not of it" (p. 59).

Kulikoff ascribes the demise of the yeoman class to a combination of external forces and internal contradictions. While frontier lands allowed men to escape dependence on wage labor, migration to and development of those lands was financed and directed by capitalists intent on expanding their control over natural and human resources. Equally significant were tensions within patriarchal households. Always placed in a position of dependence, women had a different take on the strategies designed to sustain the household economy. According to Kulikoff, farm women facilitated the capitalist transformation of the countryside by acting as the bearers of bourgeois values.

Kulikoff deserves credit for highlighting gender divisions, but his emphasis
on women as the agents of consumerism risks reading rural history through male eyes. It is easy to document the charge that nineteenth-century women wanted more bourgeois comforts; many nineteenth-century men said so. But Kulikoff knows that what men said was not the whole story. Indeed, women's productive and reproductive roles within the household economy also placed them in contradictory positions, making them instruments of capitalist transformation and upholders of traditional neighborhood relations.

The chief defect of Kulikoff's book, however, is its misleading title. Truth in advertising demands that "Essays on" be added to the title, for the chapters do not yet cohere into a grand synthesis. Although the sum here is not greater than its parts, the parts demand attention.

Princeton University

STEPHEN ARON


These two works could not be more different and their differences tell us as much about the conflicting ways that historians are writing history and biography as they do about the two halves of the marriage of John Adams and Abigail Smith. John Ferling's biography is just what its subtitle indicates: a life of John Adams that begins at the beginning (or a little before) and goes through to the end. Edith Gelles, on the other hand, believes that the kind of biography exemplified by Ferling's Life is inappropriate when seeking to reconstruct the lives of women in past-time. Women's time, Gelles argues, was not linear or consecutive and women's biographies cannot simply be strung out by connecting the dots of public activity and achievements. To do so is to misunderstand, if not to miss altogether, the world of women. Instead, therefore, of Ferling's chronological structuring of his life of John Adams, Gelles's dissection of the world of Abigail Adams is topical. While John Adams is the subject of Ferling's biography, in Gelles's loosely linked series of topical essays Abigail Adams is the object. Implicitly, the framework that Gelles constructs challenges the notion that the long narrative life, such as Ferling's, is still desirable or even possible.

Both biographers have the advantage of the incredible richness of the Adams family papers. And since John and Abigail were apart for long periods of their marriage, their separation resulted in the most extensive and revelatory correspondence between husband and wife in American history. For John Adams the extent of this written record enables a thorough biographer like
John Ferling to account not only for all Adams's activities but for his state of mind as well. Like most of his contemporaries, John Adams was spurred by the thought of fame and skeined through Ferling's *Life* is the struggle of John Adams to reconcile his private ambitions with his public actions. While Ferling acknowledges the pricklier aspects of Adams's character, he presents a more rounded, and frankly pleasant, portrait of the man than has, for example, Peter Shaw in his psychological study, *The Character of John Adams* (1976). Supposedly each generation writes its own biographies and, if so, Ferling's *Life* is ours of John Adams. Still, it is not altogether clear that we need one. This biography, however complete, needs a historiographical essay to establish the necessity of this new narrative *Life*.

Edith Gelles begins her study of Abigail Adams with just such a historiographical essay, and it is the strongest of the linked series of essays (some previously published) in *Portia*. Gelles shows the extent to which existing studies of Abigail Adams have been driven by ideological agendas ranging from simple romanticism of the Revolutionary era to a presentist search for a "useable past." In all this, Gelles argues, the historicity of the actual woman has been distorted and lost. As Gelles maintains, it is necessary to write "social explanation rather than social criticism" (p. xvi). To do so she intends to focus on aspects of Adams's relational world, rather than the world of work, which included management of the household and farm.

Deeply informed in scholarship ranging from anthropology to psychological theories of gender and personality, Gelles's valuable discussions of such topics as gossip, flirtation, sorority, and illness are never less than stimulating and thought-provoking. But Gelles never really confronts the singularity of her case study, Abigail Adams. Social history, to be significant, must be social. When large theories are applied to a single—and, in this instance, an extremely atypical—case, it can devolve into triviality. For instance, Gelles does much to reclaim gossip from the pejorative dismissal of it as trivial women's chat. Instead, gossip served as an informal conversational network to help maintain the normative values as well as the structure of the family. But Gelles's application of this insight to its practice in the single episode of daughter Abigail's courtship by Royall Tyler does not do justice to it. "Social explanation" needs more than a single case study if it is to establish an event as something more than idiosyncratic.

The most fascinating yet problematical of Gelles's essays is her discussion of gendered differences in cognition and how developmentally determined differences between men and women manifested themselves in Abigail Adams's correspondence with Thomas Jefferson in 1804. In this Gelles relies on the work of psychologists who argue that from birth a feminine personality develops that emphasizes relationships in contrast to the masculine personality that develops to emphasize autonomy. Following from this gendered polarity of personality
type, women, it is argued, deal with issues by relating them back to the people involved, while men extrapolate outward from the personal to deal with issues on an abstract level. It must be said that this developmental theory seems more of an ex post facto explanation to account for the cultural and social predicament of bourgeois women than an inviolable, transhistorical constant. For one thing, the ability or the opportunity for more than an elite segment of the world’s population to reason abstractly is itself a relatively recent and incomplete historical development. (And while Gelles’s decision to focus on Abigail Adams’s relational life might be seen as gender determined, her analysis is reasoned and abstract to the extent that the very existence of this book subverts her essentialist theory of gendered personality.) Above all, this theory is not convincing when applied to the episode that Gelles studies.

When Abigail resumed correspondence with her husband’s political enemy, by sending Jefferson a condolence note on the death of his daughter, it was Jefferson who responded warmly and emotionally, adopting, in other words, the supposedly feminine role. As the continuing correspondence moved from personal or familial topics to political issues, Jefferson did become more abstract in defense of his conduct. In response, Abigail deployed a largely personal defense of John, seeming thereby to confirm the psychological differences between men and women. But these strategies derived less from gendered differences than from socially and historically determined differences specific to time and place. In particular, Jefferson, inhabiting many roles from bereaved father to president of the United States, had the freedom and the ability to write on many levels, ranging from the personal to the abstractly theoretical. Abigail Adams was constrained by her status as the wife of John Adams. Social etiquette and the highly charged personal relationship between the Adamses and Jefferson made it impossible, and she was supremely conscious of and chafed at the impossibility, for her to follow Jefferson as he moved the terms of their dialogue from the personal to the abstract.

In other areas of her life, namely the working life that Gelles chooses not to study, Abigail Adams showed herself perfectly capable of moving from the personal to the abstract. A cursory survey of her letters reveals many instances of dispassionate reasoning on numerous topics. This was a woman, after all, able to master the ultimate abstraction of modern society—the exchange relationship— and, in the absence of John, maintain and improve the family’s finances. It was the unfortunate predicament of Abigail Adams that the arena in which she could act was so circumscribed by custom and society. In choosing to focus only on Adams’s relational world through the lens of a theory that emphasizes the determinism of gendered characteristics, Gelles has created a tautological explanatory system that forecloses the possibility of other—arguably more convincing—explanations for aspects of Abigail Adams’s life.

Finally, it must be said that Gelles should not have chosen such an exceptional
case as the brief 1804 Jefferson-Adams correspondence to demonstrate the validity of a global psychological theory. Instead, why not survey the voluminous correspondence between Abigail and John in order to test for gender differences? Indeed, it is a remarkable feature of Portia that Edith Gelles spends so little space on Abigail Adams's most important relationship, the one that determined her historical importance: namely, her marriage to John Adams. The centrality of this relationship to Abigail is indicated by her adoption of the pen name (and the persona) from which Gelles takes her title: Portia, the faithful wife of the Roman statesman, Brutus.

The Peale Family Papers, Smithsonian Institution

David C. Ward


This is the fullest biography we have of Anne Gilchrist, the accomplished British woman who, after an impassioned reading of Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass in 1869, later left England with three of her children and arrived in Philadelphia in 1876, convinced that she was destined to be the wife and eternal mate of the American poet. "When I read the divine poems I feel all folded round in thy love," she wrote Whitman in October 1871. "Try me for this life, my darling, see if I cannot so love, so grow, so learn, so love, that when I die you will say, 'This woman has grown to be a very part of me.'" Despite her forty-three years, she adds: "I am yet young enough to bear thee children, my darling, if God should so bless me. And would yield my life for this cause with serene joy if it were so appointed, if that were the price for thy having a 'perfect child.'"

The episode is extraordinary by any account, but all the more so because Anne Gilchrist was no ordinary woman. As a member of the Rossetti circle in England, the author of a series of articles on scientific topics, and a mother of four children, Gilchrist resisted traditional definitions of the Victorian woman, wife, and mother. At a time when even women who had overcome the obstacles to publication were writing novels, children's stories, poetry, or domestic treatises, Gilchrist's first publications included essays on such topics as "A Glance at the Vegetable Kingdom," "Whales and Whalemen," "What is Electricity?," "The Indestructibility of Force," and an essay on gorillas entitled "Our Nearest Relation." When Gilchrist's husband, Alexander, died unexpectedly of scarlet
fever in 1861, at the age of thirty-three, she completed and edited his two-volume *Life of Blake*, which was published to overwhelmingly favorable reviews in 1863. Later, in 1883, she also published a biography of *Mary Lamb*.

Despite her many accomplishments, however, Anne Gilchrist is still best known for her erotically charged essay on Whitman entitled “A Woman's Estimate of Walt Whitman” that was published anonymously in the *Boston Radical* in May 1870. After reading William Rosetti's edition of the *Poems of Walt Whitman*, which was lent to her in 1869 by Ford Madox Brown, Gilchrist wrote to Rosetti: “Since I have had it, I can read no other book; it holds me entirely spellbound, and I go through it again and again with deepening delight and wonder.” Rosetti lent Gilchrist the complete 1867 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which had been expurgated in his own edition of Whitman's poems, and suggested that Gilchrist publish her response to Whitman anonymously. As Marion Alcaro explains, Gilchrist's “brilliant, perceptive criticism of Whitman's poetry . . . was exactly the kind of criticism that, in 1869, was desperately needed by the poet upon whose work every unfavorable phrase and expletive in the vocabulary of criticism had been leveled. Anne’s criticism, because it came from a woman, especially a woman of culture and refinement, was doubly valuable as a testimonial to poetry that was considered unfit for a woman to read” (p. 122). Although Alcaro does not say so, Gilchrist’s erotically charged response to Whitman’s work was also used by Whitman’s contemporary admirers and later critics to, in effect, “heterosexualize” interpretations of the poet’s life and work.

After Anne Gilchrist arrived in Philadelphia in 1876, with three of her children, Beatrice, Herbert, and Grace, she and Whitman became close friends. In fact, the Gilchrist family created a special room for Whitman in their Philadelphia house, where Whitman often stayed for visits of several days. One of the less known dimensions of Whitman’s relationship with the Gilchrist family, to which Alcaro alludes, is the fact that Whitman’s actual sexual attachment in the family was not to the mother or her daughters but most probably to her son Herbert, who spent much time at Whitman’s house in Camden and at the Stafford house at Timber Creek, where he obsessively sketched and painted the poet. “Understanding the ‘Calamus’ poems completely, had Herby secretly responded to *Leaves of Grass* erotically with a passion much like his mother’s?” Alcaro asks. If he did, he would not have been alone. Several English writers, including Edward Carpenter, who visited and stayed with the Gilchrists in Philadelphia in 1877, John Addington Symonds, and E.M. Forster, would find in Whitman a prophet of the social and spiritual power of same-sex love among men. Although Anne Gilchrist had originally intended to live permanently in the United States, in 1879, after traveling and residing for a year in Massachusetts and New York, she returned to England, where she remained until her premature death from breast cancer in 1884.
In this informative and well-documented biography, Marion Walker Alcaro seeks, as she says, to present "a view of Anne Gilchrist as neither the widow of one distinguished man nor the friend and would-be lover of another. A view of Anne herself—the woman. Anne herself—seen on her own in close-up and quite apart from either man." But while the author seeks to present a view of Anne Gilchrist herself, as the title of her biography suggests, Walt Whitman's Mrs. G still tends to tell Anne Gilchrist's story from the point of view of Walt Whitman, as if her entire life was a preparation for their meeting in 1879. In fact, however, Anne Gilchirst was much more than "Walt Whitman's Mrs. G." She was a brilliant and multidimensional woman for whom the meeting with Whitman and her stay in Philadelphia was, as she herself said, a "strange episode in my life!"

University of Pennsylvania
Betsy Erkkila


Karin Calvert explores cribs and cradles, skeleton suits and frocks, toys, portraiture, and other material artifacts that Americans used to help confine, refine, and define their children over the course of three centuries. The author interprets these objects to illuminate the unarticulated assumptions that many people held about the nature, needs, and capacities of children. She shows that material culture can help historians understand beliefs too basic to be expressed in print. Yet she wisely reads the artifacts with an eye to what can be learned from written sources, from inventories to advice books to diaries. Careful in its conclusion, sound in its scholarship, and written in readable style, Children in the House represents a valuable contribution to American cultural history.

Two strengths stand out. First, Calvert reads individual forms, stylistic changes or survivals, and social practices as comprising together a pattern of culture. To plumb the meanings of particular usages—the decline of the cradle, say—we need to understand the item's historical relationship to other elements—in this case, to the practice of swaddling (which made cradles safe) and the ideals inherent in that practice. Calvert looks carefully at the artifacts (her reading of portraiture is particularly rich), but she moves far beyond viewing their formal properties to locate them as elements in a system of material life.

Second, Calvert conveys the complexity of the cultural logic inherent in the ways people pictured and treated children. Through the 1600s and 1700s, parents believed that a child should not crawl before walking, and they fashioned
walking stools, long gowns, and other items to prevent babies from going on all fours. Calvert explains this distaste as grounded in anxiety about humans’ tenuous difference from animals. Crawling was perceived as “a bad habit,” associated with beasts, savages, and the insane. Yet Calvert notes the less philosophical rationales too: the floors in most houses were cold and dirty in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Perhaps we would not want our babies “creeping” in such places either.

Calvert identifies two major transitions in the ways that adults constructed childhood, seen as “a period of vulnerability and deficiency,” a natural developmental stage, or a time of innocence and asexuality. Dramatic shifts in material culture, from costume to playthings to furniture, accompanied these changes in belief. Yet throughout, Calvert shows, gender was critical to perception and treatment of children. There are limits to these conclusions. They apply largely to the literate middle class, and one wishes that class were a more central subject. Were middle-class ideas about children meant to apply to children of other groups? Did working-class “childhood” sometimes differ because working-class adulthood did? How did relationships with siblings, grandparents, nursemiaids, teachers, or others make a given childhood a complex experience? Calvert might have mined those portraits of southern families that include African-American caretakers of white children. For the most part, however, the limits of her view reflect the limits of her material culture base.

Calvert’s historical construction of childhood is both material and intellectual (or ideological), rarely emotional. She avoids the pitfalls of those studies of “the family” that casually dismiss the affective lives of earlier generations as deficient, but she does so by sidestepping the topic of emotional bonds. While she treats “the nature of children’s experiences,” she means the external ways they were cared for, not the interior lives they led. Her reticence reflects a well-advised caution, a determination to stay close to the evidence. But, as the author notes, while past theories discounted young children’s experiences, we now think differently. Calvert’s account of swaddling is at times excruciating for this reader. Does historical perspective require us to abandon empathy, both to observe and to participate in the treatment of children as the objects of adult scrutiny and definition? This is a dilemma for all of us who historicize childhood. If one wishes for more from Karin Calvert, it is largely because she is so good at what she does. Her book helps us recover age as a category of analysis and a social relationship of power.

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