

BOOK REVIEWS

At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America. By ERIC HINDERAKER and PETER C. MANCALL. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. ix, 210p. Illustrations, notes, essay on sources, index. Cloth, \$49.95; paper, \$17.95.)

The appearance of *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* marks the maturation of colonial backcountry studies. Building on the work of a generation of scholars who focused on the edges of European settlement, Eric Hinderaker and Peter Mancall have written a concise, synthetic narrative of the backcountry from Georgia to Maine. In the process, they successfully argue for its centrality in colonial American history. They also recognize the importance of Native Americans to the distinctive character of the region and incorporate the native perspective in an effort to create “a balanced and complex portrayal of a vast and contested land” (p. 7).

As much as Hinderaker and Mancall seek to build a balanced narrative, however, the dominant theme of the story they tell—as they admit—is the unstoppable expansion of English trade and settlement. The ambitions of English traders fueled both intercultural contact and the expansion of market forces into native territories. The land hunger of the ever-increasing population of European farmers propelled the fringes of the empire outward. Indeed, Hinderaker and Mancall remark repeatedly that no one could have foreseen the speed with which the English pushed westward, or the pervasiveness of the changes they would enact. Migration in this period, they argue, was a revolutionary act because it “cemented the legitimacy of westward migration as a viable, and increasingly universal” (p. 151) family strategy that would strain the British Empire’s ability to rule the colonies.

Hinderaker and Mancall also repeat that residents of the backcountry, European and native, sought to establish a pattern of peace in the region. Yet, their narrative starkly illuminates the defining role war and violence played in the backcountry and the colonial American experience. Much of *At the Edge of Empire* reads as a litany of war. The Powhatan Wars, the Pequot War, the Iroquois Mourning Wars, Bacon’s Rebellion, Metacom’s War, King William’s War, Queen Anne’s War, the Yamasee War, the Tuscarora War, and, finally, the Seven Years’ War punctuated the steady stream of conflicts in which the British pushed Indians off their land, pitted native groups against one another, and deployed native allies against their European rivals. This pattern of war and conflict, on top of the devastation wrought by disease, resulted in the continual diminution of native power throughout the colonial period and was essential to

the English program of expansion.

The final conflict of the colonial period, the Seven Years' War, not only led to the withdrawal of the French counterweight to British imperial aggression, it proved the beginning of the end for British control of the colonies. As Lord Hillsborough recognized at the time, the far-flung backcountry made the colonies too expensive to defend and too cumbersome to rule. As this history of the backcountry demonstrates, we should not be surprised that English colonists turned to violence to rid themselves of what they saw as an impediment to their steady expansion and prosperity. They had been practicing for the Revolution for more than a century and a half.

Seattle, WA

KRISTA CAMENZIND

The Papers of George Washington. Revolutionary War Series. Vol. 11, August–October 1777. Edited by PHILANDER D. CHASE and EDWARD G. LENGEL. Series editor, PHILANDER D. CHASE. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001. xxxiv, 693p. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$70.00.)

The Papers of George Washington. Revolutionary War Series. Vol. 12, October–December 1777. Edited by FRANK E. GRIZZARD JR. and DAVID R. HOTH. Series editor, PHILANDER D. CHASE. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002. xxxiv, 778p. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$70.00.)

“George Washington” was a prodigious correspondent. John McPhee, a writer who pays closer attention to word count than most historians do, estimates that Washington wrote more than *thirty thousand* words during March and April of 1778. The commander in chief, of course, had the assistance of a military “family” of ambitious and talented aides-de-camp. The role of those men, especially the impact of their collaborative mode of literary production on Washington’s oeuvre, remains to be explored. It is an almost fortuitous fruit of this excellent editorial project that such a difficult but potentially rewarding study could now be attempted.

Volume 11 opens in the late summer of 1777 with the Continental army poised north of Philadelphia, awaiting news of the object of General William Howe’s British expedition into the Atlantic. It ends two months later with Howe in precarious possession of Philadelphia, with the Americans trying to recover their equilibrium after two frustrating losses on the battlefield, and with Washington digesting reports of General Horatio Gates’s triumph over John Burgoyne at Saratoga. Volume 12 details the rebels’ unsuccessful efforts to maintain control of the Delaware River below Philadelphia in order to deny the British the enjoyment of their victory and the convoluted dialogue between

American military and political leaders over the army's winter disposition. It closes on Christmas Day with the Continental army newly arrived at Valley Forge and coping with a severe subsistence crisis and Washington contemplating an attack on Philadelphia modeled on the previous year's audacious raid against the exposed Hessian outpost at Trenton.

One of the starker lessons of these papers is in how truly bare-boned and ad hoc military management was during the Revolution. Washington faced endless "big picture" tactical and strategic problems, of course—where Howe might land, how to grapple with him there, and what to do if that effort failed—but he never could escape the daily press of small importunities. While the Continental Congress, in exile in interior Pennsylvania after mid-September, struggled with fiscal and diplomatic crises that threatened the viability of the Revolution itself and worked to create an external Board of War to handle routine administrative affairs, the crowded tables in Washington's field marquee were the real center of army operations. A straying herd of cattle at a distant point in the supply chain, a delayed or disputed promotion in some remote theater of operations, or even a farm crisis at Mount Vernon might at any moment compete for the commander in chief's immediate attention with problems of critical military importance.

Occasionally, attentive readers of these materials will be rewarded to see a quotidian problem evolve into a big picture solution during the course of a few letter cycles. As late as August 19, 1777, the "*Marquis de, le, Fiette*" was both a spelling challenge to Washington and a discouraging example of foreign volunteers' expectations of immediate military gratification. After a Council of War a few days later, however, a horseback ride to reconnoiter Howe's positions in northern Delaware the week after that, and the seriously wounded Lafayette's battlefield bravery at Brandywine on September 11, the Frenchman had apparently advanced sufficiently in the general's esteem to merit the status of a "son" and a "friend." Washington had also gotten the young man's name straight. (vol. 11, pp. 4, 20, 78, 201, 506).

More often the trajectory of small problems was less linear, and Washington multitasked and delegated with the distracted earnestness of, well, a plantation manager. This may have been just as well. The constant need to immerse himself in administrative minutiae had a stabilizing effect on the sometimes volatile general, forcing him to allow complicated military situations to mature on their own terms, rather than counterproductively attempt to force their resolution. Washington could hardly have realized it, but he was preparing his "Main" army, and himself, for a future that involved more distended garrison duty and occupation work than focused fighting. Creative small- and middle-level problem solving would be indispensable to success in that mission. Certainly, Washington recognized the cumulative policy implications of mundane administrative tasks. During the winter at Valley Forge he struggled grimly and successfully with Gates and with the new Board of War—through the medium of congressional

committees—to keep the locus of such activity in his own staff departments rather than with the board. This, more than any coherent effort to supplant Washington through a supposed “Conway Cabal,” was the source of political tension between Washington and Gates, and within American political and military institutions, during these months, as these papers at least begin to suggest.

Washington emerged in 1777 as much more than just a deft juggler of concrete problems. He showed an increasingly confident ability to weave fragments of information about the murky circumstances facing him in the field into narratives and then to orchestrate complex discourses between different levels of the Continental military and political establishment. This skill is shown by his brokerage of the decision—with importunate state and Continental political bodies—over the winter mission that could realistically be expected of the army after the loss of forts on the Delaware confirmed the British in possession of Philadelphia. He solicited views on the matter from his general officers on December 1. These recommendations, printed here with light but judicious annotation, allowed Washington to interrogate his own impressions of the army’s condition at the end of the campaign, to gauge the temper of his officer corps, and to guide his political superiors toward a workable compromise, which turned out to be Valley Forge. This complex and subtle process nearly escaped the attention of the reviewer a decade ago, working with recalcitrant microfilm versions of the recommendations of varying orthographic quality and studded with hard-to-discern allusions or obscure backstage contexts. Such ironies are worth recalling when critics of the “national papers” editorial projects wonder why it is necessary to update the editions of these sources every generation or so, or when researchers themselves defiantly insist that they would rather work even with blurry copies of “the actual documents.”

A few weeks after Washington fashioned this compromise he escorted his army to Valley Forge, where he demonstrated an even more evolved game of military command as a version of three-dimensional chess, but now mixing behavioral with representational elements. There, he worked to patch the breach in the army’s logistical systems produced by even a short movement. He took the occasion—in several lengthy and tendentious letters to the president of Congress—to convince that body of the real hardships that the army faced because of his recent agreement to stay in the field and of the resulting constraints on his own ability to carry out that commitment. And he cautiously deployed those units of the army that were still able to function in the open in a largely successful, if highly improvisational, effort to contain and resist a large British foraging expedition into the countryside between his barely established camp and Philadelphia.

These potentially contradictory enterprises led directly to a document, “Intended Orders for a move that was intended ag[ains]t Phila[delphia] by way of surprize 25th Dec[embe]r 1777,” in Washington’s own handwriting, that has

been overlooked or underestimated by historians for generations and that is barely annotated even here. The plan contemplated military mobility and operational precision at odds with Washington's contemporaneous laments to Congress, and it envisioned the army leading a Saratoga-like swarming of local militias "poured In to Crush Howe before he could recover from the Surprise or regain his Ships" (vol. 12, p. 703).

This reverie—redolent with widespread and unmistakable headquarters' nostalgia for the stroke at Trenton exactly a year before—again raises interesting questions about Washington's military "family" as a literary animal. Of thousands of words, more or less, how many were directly the old man's heartfelt choices, and how many fell within the envelope of his decisional consent, but also expressed the perceptions of the carefully chosen aides who crowded in with him in rented or borrowed quarters, doggedly defended him through the Conway nastiness in early 1778 and the controversy with General Charles Lee the following summer, and in some cases went on to have important public careers of their own? What, if anything, was the rotational pattern of staff drafting assignments, and what might we extract from it about the evolution or operation of Washington's executive personality and temperament? This is perhaps a tantalizing but unrealizable open niche in the largely mature edifice of Washington studies, but the careful editorial work exhibited throughout this project, including the identification of the handwriting of the scribes in question, makes it a worthwhile question.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

WAYNE BODLE

A Leap in the Dark: The Struggle to Create the American Republic. By JOHN FERLING. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. xv, 558p. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$30.)

John Ferling once complained that early American historians, "committed to social history, and shaped by political correctness and multiculturalism . . . have neglected the role played by leaders in important events. Indeed, they often have ignored seminal events." And he is determined to do his part to counter what he perceives to be a historiographical currency that would have "bewildered" the founders (*Setting the World Ablaze: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and the American Revolution* [2000], ix). His is decidedly not the stuff of "chimney sweeps or unwed mothers"; rather Ferling writes about colonial wars and politics, about Revolutionary leaders and presidents, and above all about "dead white men" (*ibid.*, x). *A Leap in the Dark* is Ferling's latest, and arguably his best, book on the era of the American Revolution.

Covering the years from 1754 to 1800, from the onset of the French and

Indian War to the election of Thomas Jefferson, *A Leap in the Dark* deals with all of the major events of the period. Scholars will find little that is new in Ferling's discussion of the imperial crisis of the 1760s–1770s, the problems of the Confederation, the Constitutional Convention and struggle over ratification, and the party contests of the early republic. But if Ferling tells a familiar story, he nevertheless tells it well. A master in the genre of historical biography, Ferling also packs his text with biographical sketches of the famous and not so famous leaders of the Revolution and early republic. Yet he moves so seamlessly between actors and action that only the most impatient readers will not welcome these polished gems.

Indeed, it is precisely because *A Leap in the Dark* is such an accomplished piece of writing that one is more than a little surprised to find that errors have crept into the text. Some of these are the result of simple carelessness, as in the use of “lead” for “led” (p. 275) and “appraised” for “apprised” (pp. 378, 433). Others, however, are not as innocuous. It makes little sense to speak of the “Six Nations Confederacy, which included the Mohawk and Iroquois” (p. 5), when in fact the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora together constituted the Iroquois or Six Nations Confederacy. Patrick Henry delivered his “Give me liberty or give me death” speech not in the House of Burgesses during the Stamp Act crisis in 1765 (p. 34), but rather in the Virginia Convention of 1775 when moderates opposed his resolutions pertaining to military preparations. The Boston Tea Party resulted in the destruction of ten thousand pounds *worth* of tea, not tea weighing “10,000 pounds” (p. 106). That “Howe could have taken Bunker Hill almost bloodlessly” (p. 146) is almost certainly true, for the colonists had fortified Breed’s Hill. The famous battle, of course, was not fought “at Bunker Hill,” nor did the colonists defend the “farmlands that rose above the Charles River to form Bunker Hill” (pp. 146, 183). “Fifty-five men from twelve states” did not gather in “Philadelphia in May 1787” (p. 281). The convention commenced its deliberations on May 25 because it had finally achieved a voting quorum with twenty-nine delegates representing seven states. Other delegates and state delegations continued to trickle in over the next few weeks. The contest between the large and small states did not pit the “six smaller provinces” against the “half dozen larger entities” (p. 286). During the debates over equal versus proportional representation, William Paterson of New Jersey, who introduced the so-called small-state plan, singled out Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania as “large” states. And in any case, North Carolina, with a total population approaching 394,000 and ranking fourth in size, just behind Pennsylvania in the 1790 census, was not, as Ferling has it, one of the six “smaller provinces.” Lastly, it is not true that in 1800 “free blacks everywhere were denied the vote” (p. 465). Free blacks voted in at least four states: Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and New York. Ferling commands a wide audience among the general reading public, and deservedly

so. All the more reason, then, that errors such as these be expunged from his popular narrative.

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MELVIN YAZAWA

Gentleman Revolutionary: Gouverneur Morris, The Rake Who Wrote the Constitution. By RICHARD BROOKHISER. (New York: Free Press, 2003. xvii, 251p. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$26.)

Gouverneur Morris was an important figure during the early years of the American republic, though not so significant that his image stares out at us from our currency or that towns and counties are named after him. Whether or not it was the intention of Richard Brookhiser, the author of this fine biography, many readers likely will come away convinced that Morris does not belong anywhere near the pantheon inhabited by the most illustrious among those who secured American independence and established the republic.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Morris was his own worst enemy with regard to establishing his reputation for greatness during the American Revolution. Born in 1752, he remained politically inactive almost until independence was declared, and he deplored the break with Great Britain until nearly the end, hoping against hope that a compromise settlement might be achieved that would leave the British Empire intact. Although he was twenty-three years old and in good health when hostilities erupted in 1775, Morris chose not to soldier or, as best as one can discern, make other substantive personal sacrifices in the course of the war. Once he entered into public office, he at times appeared to be feckless and languid, given to bombastic rhetoric, and prone to muddled ideas. In the wake of Philadelphia's nine-month occupation by the British army in 1777–1778, Morris proposed that Congress fine the city one hundred thousand pounds for having collaborated with the enemy. Later, he shamefully conspired with Continental army officers to misuse the military to compel Congress to strengthen the powers of the national government.

It is difficult to grasp why Morris supported independence, save that his pecuniary interests might be advanced by American autonomy. A foe of many of the progressive changes ushered in by the American Revolution, he would have been content had the United States been constructed on the political and social template furnished by Great Britain.

Late in the war, with victory more tenuous than many today any longer acknowledge, Morris worked diligently to overcome the problems brought on by America's feeble government and its enervated credit. Morris additionally distinguished himself at the Constitutional Convention, attacking slavery and especially the unseemly decisions that enhanced the power of the slave South.

Perhaps his greatest service during that hot Philadelphia summer was the role he played as editor and author, putting the document into an easily readable form and drafting the preamble to the Constitution. Nevertheless, toward the end of his life, Morris advocated breaking up the Union and jettisoning the Constitution.

Morris was born to wealth and privilege, and throughout his life he remained dedicated to the proposition that nothing should stand in the way of his quest for happiness and personal fulfillment. In many respects, that quality makes him more multidimensional than many of the founders, and considerably more engaging and likeable.

Brookhiser, who has previously written on Washington, Hamilton, and the Adams family with considerable insight, has produced a lively and engaging life history of a fascinating man and the crucial epoch in which he lived.

State University of West Georgia

JOHN FERLING

Thomas Jefferson. By JOYCE APPLEBY. (New York: Henry Holt, Times Books, 2003. xviii, 184p. Notes, chronology, notes on sources, selected bibliography, index. \$20.)

Joyce Appleby's spirited look at Thomas Jefferson's presidency in one of the small volumes in Arthur Schlesinger's series, *The American Presidents*, portrays a President Jefferson who is of a piece with the Jefferson she has been explicating and championing for many decades. The heroic Jefferson we find here is absolutely vintage Joyce Appleby. He is Jefferson in the best, most human, most liberal, and most ideal sense: the father of American democracy, the transformer of the American political and social landscape, and the fulfillment of the Revolution. The portrait echoes the earlier sketches of Jefferson's presidency that Appleby gave us in *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (1984), where she explained clearly that he detached republicanism from its classical context and made it a commonly used term for democracy. He "was ready to put himself at the head of the common man's cause when it materialized" (p. 53). Nearly a decade later, in *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (1992), Appleby, invoking Jefferson's oft-cited characterization of the election of 1800 as "as real a revolution in the principles of our government as that of 1776 was in its form," almost exults with the same "apocalyptic fervor" (p. 5) that Jefferson did. Highly cognizant, of course, of the paradoxes and ambiguities of Jefferson's life and career, Appleby is still unabashedly a fan of Thomas Jefferson and the high hopes of Jeffersonianism. She uses broad strokes and bold words to describe Jeffersonians' ideals and the dangers the rabid Federalists posed to those dreams. If we grant Appleby her premise and are ready

to be carried along by the drama of the triumph of good over evil, democracy over aristocracy, and Republicanism over Federalism, hers is a refreshing perspective. I too would like to think, for example, that Jefferson “defined his presidency by setting a new direction for the country and the century” (p. 32).

This book (and Schlesinger’s series) is not intended to be an original contribution to scholarship, but rather to introduce the general reader to Thomas Jefferson by drawing upon a few works from the secondary literature. The general outlines of the narrative are familiar. The descriptions of inauguration day have oft been told, beginning with Margaret Bayard Smith’s recording in her diary an account of Jefferson making his way without fanfare from his boardinghouse to the ceremony. Noble Cunningham, Robert M. Johnstone, and other historians have analyzed Jefferson’s policy on removal of Federalist officeholders and the substitution of Republicans, as well as his smooth, consensus-based way of dealing with his cabinet. The failure of the embargo is also a familiar story of American diplomatic and political histories. (Garry Wills, in his biography of Madison for this series, dubs it a “Madisonian embargo,” which the secretary of state convinced Jefferson to adopt [Wills, *James Madison* (2002), 53].) *Thomas Jefferson* does not skirt the issues of race and slavery, drawing on very recent scholarship to explore in detail Jefferson’s relationship with Sally Hemings.

Appleby has a wonderful knack for linking together broad sweeping universals and smaller details, the stories on a personal level. In attempting to understand the altered temper of the country between the years of the Revolution and the peak of Jefferson’s popularity (1804), Appleby posits a dichotomy between the “chaste political values” of the Enlightenment and the reshaping of American Christianity by the Second Great Awakening. Having set the scene of the country writ large, she goes on to capture the historical moment in the personal contrast between Jefferson, sixty-three years old and “an iconic figure from the Revolution,” and a “nation with a mean age of sixteen” (p. 90). This adds a sharp specificity to a general cultural description. She does not leave the matter at a generic clash of generations, but renders it concrete in a sixty-three-year-old statesman talking to a teenager. In miniature, the contrast she draws is that of the larger story laid out in her *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (2000).

The most intriguing and lasting part of this work is chapter 7. “Coming to Terms with Thomas Jefferson” is Appleby’s personal and professional voyage with Jefferson. This thoughtful and elegantly written chapter sums up a historian’s life of learning and writing about Jefferson, from the Anglo-American traditions of liberalism and capitalism out of which in part he came, to the democratic culture he envisioned for the early American republic. The chapter is a mini sketch of Appleby’s life as a Jefferson scholar. The threads that weave together her scholarship and explain the democratic transformation of early America are her coming to terms with Thomas Jefferson. But, on a more general level, this is also a national voyage and a crucial coming to terms with an ambiguous past that is

necessary for the American people. As she beautifully concludes, and as many have argued before her, "Americans' most pressing history assignment is coming to terms with Thomas Jefferson" (p. 132).

Princeton University

BARBARA OBERG

The Selected Letters of Dolley Payne Madison. Edited by DAVID B. MATTERN and HOLLY C. SHULMAN. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003. xv, 442p. Illustrations, notes, biographical dictionary, index. \$29.95.)

The prevailing Dolley Madison story for almost two centuries has highlighted her rescue of George Washington's portrait from the fire that destroyed the White House in 1814. With just minutes to spare as British troops descended on the new capital city, she ordered her servants to remove the canvas from its frame, rolled it up, and sent it off to safety in a wagon bound for New York. It's a true story. At least this is the account that she wrote to her sister in a letter that survives only in transcript among the three hundred collected letters in this fine volume.

David B. Mattern, senior associate editor at the Papers of James Madison, and Holly C. Shulman, professor of women's studies at the University of Virginia, have expertly chosen a selection of the more than two thousand surviving Dolley letters, and, importantly, contextualized them in brief essays that appear before each of the five sections into which they have chronologically ordered this volume. Their mission, as they tell it in the introduction, is to capture the real Dolley Madison, the woman who had eluded and frustrated biographers until the last decade. More recently Catherine Allgor, in her excellent *Parlor Politics* (2000), and several anthologies of first ladies have presented a truer picture of this nation's fourth first lady.

The purpose of this volume, its editors explain, is to allow Dolley Madison's own words to serve as her self-portrait. They complain that Dolley's previous biographers fail to capture her "inner life," the feelings, sensitivities, and character that motivated the public figure. Certainly, to the extent that private letters, written to family members and close friends, can reveal the private person, these letters do just that. The flamboyant Dolley of ostrich feathers and *colletage* wrote of love, longing, anxiety, grief, pleasures, sickness, and disappointment. She also gossiped. And she worked very hard.

Dolley Payne was born in North Carolina to Quaker parents who left the big city to escape its complexities and materialism. The family did not prosper, and ultimately the Paynes with their eight children returned to Philadelphia, where in 1790, Dolley married James Todd, a lawyer, who sadly perished in the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, along with their youngest child. This surfeit of tragedy

for the young Dolley was followed by the demise of three brothers, her father, and in-laws. The ubiquity of death in eighteenth-century families is one tale that these letters tell. Another is the frequency of illness and morbidity that even the wealthiest and most enlightened families could not escape.

Happily, Dolley attracted the attention of the forty-three-year-old James Madison, already an important political figure, and they were wed in 1794. The marriage was a good one, as James's letters attest ("My dearest," he addressed her); she, further, cared for him and smoothed aspects of his persona, which enhanced his political career. That career took him to the White House in 1809 for two terms. These letters form the center of the correspondence in this volume. They tell of her social life and her work as first lady. They tell of her close family connections and her dependence upon sisters and brothers. They tell of the difficulties with her errant son Payne Todd, who could not be rescued by various political appointments from his step-father. They tell of exciting times and weariness.

The years after the presidency were mostly fraught with difficulties, caused primarily by the constant struggle with indebtedness. The editors eloquently describe the circumstances that bring into focus an endless stream of letters in which Dolley negotiates or pleads for funds to support herself (and her dissolute son, whom she frustratingly indulged, though her impoverishment was in great part due to him). The final series in this collection, her widowhood after the 1836 death of James Madison, are particularly poignant. We see her negotiating the sale of her husband's papers (he had willed them to provide for her by their sale), and finally of Montpelier and her slaves, many of whom had been in the Madison family for generations.

In the end, the nobility of Dolley Madison is less her rescue of Washington's portrait than the character, "the inner life" that the editors select for, of a woman who managed to put a good face on a life that was often difficult and even tragic.

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EDITH GELLES

Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity. By SUSAN ZAESKE. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. xii, 253p. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$49.95; paper, \$19.95.)

In the years after 1830, extensive petitioning campaigns drew hundreds of thousands of men and women into the American political process—at least long enough to sign their names. What more may have resulted from this political act is the focus of Susan Zaeske's *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery,*

and Women's Political Identity. Zaeske's analysis of the many, and lengthy, political petitions sent to Congress in the nineteenth century reveals that not only was women's participation in the antislavery petition campaigns essential to the success of that movement, but that the traditional right to petition enabled several generations of otherwise politically disestablished American women to affect national policy and to define their own rights as citizens. What is perhaps most surprising is how quickly what began as a "humble" plea for attention from august authorities evolved into a demand for action from elected representatives.

Zaeske's study begins with a brief overview of the English and colonial American traditional right to petition government for redress of grievances. By the early nineteenth century, when the right to vote was expanding to include most adult white men, the notion of representative democracy took on great cultural force in America, and the political petition became a tool by which disenfranchised groups could still make their views known. Women's benevolent organizations routinely petitioned state legislatures for charters or for temperance reform, Zaeske notes, but since these petitions fell within approved gender categories, they aroused little formal opposition. Petitions to Congress opposing the Cherokee removal bill, however, had quite the opposite effect, and Zaeske's discussion of how gender became the focus of the Jacksonians' attacks on their political opposition is compelling.

The heart of Zaeske's study is the antislavery petition campaign, which emerged in force after 1835, and in which women played key roles. As the author argues, "[t]he extremism of affiliating with abolitionists by signing a petition cannot be underestimated" (p. 38). This was particularly the case for women, whose role in America's still-developing political system had yet to be decided. Zaeske's analysis of the antislavery petitions in the National Archives reveals a four-phase evolution. In phase one, which she finds lasted from 1831 to 1836, the petitions were sex segregated, gender conscious, and highly deferential. In phase two, from 1837 to 1840, the petitions were sex integrated and, because petitioners intended them to be read quickly, before Congress could invoke the infamous Gag Rule, were much briefer. In phase three, primarily from 1840 to 1854, men dominated the petitions, although in response to women's petitions John Quincy Adams articulated a defense of women's claim to citizenship. Moreover, after 1854 women's commitment to limiting the expansion of slavery led them to employ much bolder language in the petitions than previously. In phase four, 1861 to 1865, the petitions proved essential to the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment.

The author's discussion of each of these phases is forceful and persuasive, especially in the way she links the evolution of the petitions to changing concepts of gender and citizenship. Zaeske also deftly weaves individuals into the fabric of a national campaign, as when, for example, she points out that popular writer Catharine Beecher, an outspoken opponent of women's petitioning in the 1830s,

signed a petition opposing the repeal of the Missouri Compromise in 1854 (p. 164). Beecher was indeed a bellwether, for long after the Civil War petitioning remained a reliable weapon in women's political arsenal, and was employed in opposition to such issues as lynching and polygamy, and in favor of women's right to vote.

The significance of women's petitioning is suggested by Zaeske's finding that the number of women's signatures on antislavery petitions may conservatively be estimated at three million (p. 174). But numbers are not the whole story; Zaeske's point is that women's antislavery petitions set in motion a national political debate that pushed slavery to the center of American politics. It was, she notes, "a feat petitioning by men alone had failed to accomplish" (p. 174). Indeed, one might ask, if antislavery women had not petitioned Congress, would the history of the 1830s and 1840s have unfolded as it did? The answer would seem to be a clear "no," and *Signatures of Citizenship* explains why.

Old Dominion University

CAROLYN J. LAWES

Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics. By MICHAEL D. PIERSON. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. xiii, 250p. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$49.95; paper, \$19.95.)

The coalition of Whigs, abolitionists, and nativists who came together to form the Republican Party in 1854 often had very little in common other than a distaste for southern economic power and a commitment to stopping the spread of slavery—a sectional ideology encapsulated by the party's motto "Free Soil, Free Labor, and Free Men." In a period in which the issues and the candidates changed rapidly and party spokesmen often contradicted each other, however, antislavery politics, Michael Pierson argues, are inadequate to explain the party's ability to attract and retain voters. The Republican Party's articulation of a new gender ideology—illustrated by the party's slogan "Free Hearts and Free Homes"—allowed the party to identify "with a larger constellation of cultural identities or values that complemented or even transcended the issues" and that appealed to a wide cross-section of northern voters with a condemnation of the patriarchal family (p. 3). Pierson shows how in party literature, political debate, and election day celebration and pageantry, Republicans advocated new sex roles for men and women, encouraged women's presence and their participation, and linked party loyalty to an acceptance of companionate marriage. Embracing domestic feminism allowed early party spokesmen to make room for antislavery radicalism by embracing a "sexual critique of slavery"—offered by women such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jane Swisshelm, and Clarina Nichols—that condemned southern male licentiousness and the rape of slave women (p. 179). But while a

commitment to domestic feminism characterized the party's early years (1854–1860), by the time of the Lincoln campaign party spokesmen retreated to a more conservative stance on gender, abandoning their critique of patriarchy and silencing women in the process.

Free Hearts builds on a growing body of literature that examines the relationship between abolitionism and feminism and seeks to discover how the Civil War changed the way people thought about gender. In particular, Pierson's work complements Rebecca Edwards's *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (1997), which argues that women's nonpartisan Progressive Era reform initiatives marked the defeat of several decades of women's intense participation in party politics, rather than the success of women's traditional nonpartisanship, as historians had long argued. Here, too, Pierson finds antebellum women politicking rather than demurring, and, indeed, he adeptly shows how male politicians adopted antislavery women's partisan language when, on the eve of war, they juxtaposed northern domesticity with southern sexual impropriety. But whereas Edwards continues to see women as successful political actors—in both political parties and particularly in third parties—until the end of the century, Pierson argues that women and women's issues were excluded some thirty years earlier, as evidenced by the Republican Party's failure to utilize the images of companionate marriage to sell the Lincolns to voters as it had done with Jessie and John Fremont four years earlier.

While I find Pierson's reading of the 1856 and 1860 Republican presidential campaigns' rhetoric to be original, I have reservations about the conclusions he makes. First, I am not convinced that rank and file Republicans were as committed to a critique of patriarchy when they glorified Jessie Fremont in 1856 as they were to winning the election. Indeed, while the Fremonts were celebrated for their companionate marriage, local Republicans staged election-day tableaux in which they paraded young single women in front of eligible voters, suggesting that local party organizers found women to be more useful as silent and sexualized symbols than as active participants and potential companions. Second, because the link between Republican antislaveryism and antipatriarchy is not always clear, it is difficult to see how feminists had "lost their best chance to raise family and gender issues" in a Republican-dominated Congress with "the end of slave auctions and legalized rape" (p. 188). If the extent to which Republicans were willing to critique patriarchy was to condemn the sexual excesses of southern slavery, then it seems to me that feminism never had much of a chance in the Republican Party. Finally, while *Free Hearts* is richly illustrated with political cartoons offering readers the opportunity to see how the Republican Party successfully appealed to a "constellation of cultural values" of nineteenth-century Americans, Pierson does not analyze these images. If it was the party's ability to articulate a set of family values—rather than its communication of a stance on

more complicated issues such as the Fugitive Slave Act or popular sovereignty—that allowed it to appeal to average voters who “were less than wholly engaged citizens,” then these engaging images represent a missed opportunity to bring this point home to modern readers (p. 190).

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JUDITH ANN GIESBERG

Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era. Edited by JOHN DAVID SMITH. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002. xxii, 451p. Illustrations, maps, notes, notes on contributors, index. \$39.95.)

Black Soldiers in Blue helps explain why an increasing number of historians are seeking to write about the black Civil War experience. Rarely has the fascination with military valor and glory paralleled so closely fundamental issues of identity and democracy. In fighting for the Union cause, black troops warred against the evils of slavery and racism and helped give us our modern understanding of democracy. With a traditional narrative format and a measure of passion, the fourteen essays in this collection examine various aspects of the black military experience in the war. Some of the essays, like those on battles at Port Hudson and Milliken's Bend, provide convenient summaries of those early engagements involving African American troops and their impact on military attitudes toward black military service. Thomas D. May's lively examination of the Battle of Saltville, however, seeks to settle with some finality the question of Confederate atrocities against black soldiers in that 1864 engagement.

This reviewer finds John David Smith's attempt to present a defense of Lincoln's actions on slavery and emancipation as moving “cautiously, carefully, but consistently toward emancipation and the enlistment of African American soldiers” (p. 1) refuted by his own evidence. Moreover, in trying to present an overview of the black Civil War experience, Smith spent too little time presenting black opinions about Lincoln, the Republican Party, and the government's wartime measures and too much time reviewing what we already know. Had he examined the published volumes of the *Black Abolitionist Papers*, for instance, a different understanding of the wartime years would have emerged in his text. Several other essays focus too much on white commanders of black troops or on how military officials and official policy affected black troops, rather than on the black soldiers themselves. Certainly the well-crafted pieces that explore General Sherman's obdurate attitudes toward black soldiers and the little-known career of Lorenzo Thomas deserve publication, but a book that proposes to be about “black soldiers in blue” should focus on those black troops. The prolific Noah Andre Trudeau draws our attention to the men of the seven African American

cavalry regiments and the repulsive attitudes, such as those of Charles Francis Adams Jr., that the black cavalymen had to endure. The collection moves decidedly in the right direction with the last three fascinating essays on Henry McNeal Turner, Charleston, South Carolina, and the black veterans of eastern North Carolina. Robert J. Zalimas's essay on the racial strife in Charleston after the close of hostilities goes well beyond my preliminary findings in *A Voice of Thunder* (1997) and is a model of what new kind of work can be done on the service of black Civil War soldiers. So too is the research of Richard Reid, who generally found that the soldiers of North Carolina fared about as poorly as those that Edward A. Miller described in his study of the black troops of Illinois (1998). One cannot help but be haunted by Reid's assessment that many of the black veterans he researched ended their days in poverty, declining health, "and living out quiet lives of desperation" (p. 413).

Much of the history presented in *Black Soldiers in Blue* will be familiar to specialists in the field and is likely to be too specialized and too focused on white leaders for classroom use. Nevertheless, this collection draws together many themes that are central to the African American experience in the war and the editor's decision to exclude the 54th Massachusetts Regiment from the book is defensible given the enormous amount of attention that unit already has received. But there is more work still to be done. There are more stories to tell about the black Civil War experience. No one yet has written a scholarly analysis of the black experience with military justice or of the Union army's use of black people as laborers, and we are only just beginning to understand the black role in the U.S. Navy. Hard work still awaits us—the Civil War soldiers (and their families) earned our attention and devotion.

Massachusetts Historical Society

DONALD YACOVONE

The Middle-Class City: Transforming Space and Time in Philadelphia, 1876–1926. By JOHN HENRY HEPP IV. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. ix, 278p. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$36.50.)

In this close study of the development and use of three significant urban institutions—transit systems, department stores, and daily newspapers—John Henry Hepp proposes to modify Robert Wiebe's influential notion of a late nineteenth-century "search for order." Wiebe had stressed the dislocations and anxieties of a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing society, but Hepp finds a more positive dimension of the search for solutions to the problems generated by rapid social change. Among the Philadelphia middle class, at least, a sturdy faith in rationality, science, and the future accompanied a massive reorganization of space and time

within the growing metropolis and permitted the bourgeoisie (Hepp uses the terms “middle class” and “bourgeoisie” interchangeably) to embrace rapid change in the scale and pace of modern life. Indeed, it encouraged old-stock and white-collar Philadelphians to participate in change in ways that confirmed their own sense of well-being, as individuals and as a class.

Hepp bases this sunnier version of the “search for order” on the mostly unpublished diaries, memoirs, and other personal papers of sixty-three middle-class Philadelphians, as well as on the larger histories of those urban institutions, noted above, that increasingly reshaped their daily lives. This would appear to be an excellent strategy, one that explores the actual responses of more or less ordinary people to important institutional developments. Were these developments threatening or enabling? How might they have been both? How shall we find the “search for order,” and the forces that impelled it, in the words of these diarists? Unfortunately, Hepp allows his sixty-three Philadelphians to enter his text only briefly and in fairly trivial ways. There is no explicit analysis of the responses to change of any of his diarists, much less of their collective sentiments. Thus, we are left with frequent statements such as “For the bourgeoisie, the steam trains and the electric trolleys represented modern society’s triumph over nature” (p. 47) without reference to any such discussion in the many personal records Hepp examined. The closest we come in this instance is a statement by one Philadelphian, recorded at the conclusion of the Christmas season transit strike, that he “found the ‘thunder of the electric cars’ on Christmas Eve ‘music’” (p. 47). In other places even so truncated and problematic a citation is simply missing, and the reader must accept on faith that Hepp has found in his reading of the personal records the deeper meaning he inserts with little substantiation into his own text. I, for one, cannot make such a leap of faith.

Hepp’s institutional narratives are somewhat easier to appreciate. He provides fresh details on the histories of Philadelphia’s transit system, department stores, and newspapers and, more importantly, integrates these histories into a larger story of modern urban development. This larger story includes the observation that during the twentieth century Philadelphia’s major institutions were becoming accessible in new ways to the working class (Hepp points to such things as cheaper transit fares, bargain basements, and changes in the content of daily papers) and the reasonable argument that changes that originally seemed to deepen this inscription of class in the social order now tended toward the effacement of class boundaries. And yet, here too there is a curious absence, as the notion of the evolving “multi-class” city largely fades from view during the final chapters of the book. It is unfortunate that this idea is not sustained and that the author did not make more effective use of his sources to substantiate his central arguments.

At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882–1943. By ERIKA LEE. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. 331p. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$55; paper, \$19.95.)

Erika Lee's *At America's Gates* is a tour de force in Chinese immigration history. It is a labor of love that is deeply rooted in her own family's history in America; the final product, something that would make her grandparents proud. The central questions that guide her work are distinct, but interrelated: "How did the Chinese exclusion laws affect the Chinese in America? And how did they transform the United States into a gatekeeping nation, in which immigration restriction—largely based on race and nationality—came to determine the very makeup of the nation and American national identity?" (p. 6). Lee explores the development of America's gate and the subsequent transformation of America into a gatekeeping nation-state through an examination of the impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 on the Chinese in America, Chinese American communities, and individual Chinese identity, as well as by examining the consequences of Chinese exclusion on the national and international levels. At the heart of her book are "the stories of outspoken critics of the exclusion policy, of 'illegal' immigrants who posed as paper sons or surreptitiously crossed the northern and southern borders into the United States, of wives and children remaining in China, of immigration officials who struggled with an anti-Chinese public as well as with the bureaucratic demands of the government, and of Chinese American citizens who found their citizenship status threatened because of their race" (p. 7).

The book is organized into four parts. Part 1 discusses the first two decades of exclusion. Lee defines Chinese exclusion as "an institution that produced and reinforced a system of racial hierarchy in immigration law, a process that both immigrants and immigration officials shaped, and a site of unequal power relations and resistance" (p. 7). Lee argues that "it was in these years that America developed into a gatekeeping nation, one which sought to control the number, race, ethnicity, and class of immigrants admitted into the country and eligible for citizenship" (p. 9). Chapter 1 specifically examines how Chinese exclusion and immigration law changed the ways Americans viewed and thought about race, immigration, and national identity. Chapter 2 shifts to the relationship between local immigrant inspectors and interpreters, based in San Francisco, and their federal counterparts in Washington, DC, paying particular attention to their contesting interpretations and enforcement of the exclusion law.

Part 2 documents the interaction between Chinese immigrants and immigration officials on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. Lee explores how Chinese immigrants understood, experienced, negotiated, and challenged their exclusion. Chapter 3 examines how the enforcement of the exclusion laws by immigration officials resulted in additional exclusionary measures that doubly hindered

Chinese immigration while also reinforcing popular conceptions and constructions of the Chinese as “Orientals” and foreign “others” who threatened the American landscape. She neglects, however, the reverse relationship, in which popular stereotypes inform, shape, and configure how immigration laws are constructed and enforced. Chapter 4 shifts to the transnational discourse on the impact of Chinese exclusion. Lee demonstrates that local and global transnational social, economic, and political networks were directly (re)configured by the limitations established by exclusion.

Part 3 traces the growth of “illegal immigration” during the exclusion era as embedded in a larger transnational paradigm, which impacted subsequent immigration policies. Chapter 5 discusses the U.S.-Canada and U.S.-Mexico borders as the “back doors” into the United States through which the “illegal immigrant” circumvented the exclusion law. In chapter 6 Lee focuses on illegal immigration at the nation’s ports and notes that a cyclical interdependent and self-perpetuating relationship developed between the Chinese immigrants and the U.S. government, wherein the Chinese adapted to exclusion policies, and the government made it harder to enter the country (p. 148).

Part 4 reflects on the legacies of exclusion. Chapter 7 examines the visceral effects of exclusion on the Chinese community and individual psychology, which rendered all Chinese vulnerable to exploitation and extortion. Lastly, in her epilogue Lee notes that the principles of “American gatekeeping that originated in Chinese exclusion—racialization, containment, and protection” have been pushed to the forefront of U.S. immigration policy once more in the wake of September 11 (p. 253).

At America’s Gates will become a seminal resource for Asian Americanists, as well as for scholars interested in U.S. immigration history. Lee’s work is comprehensive in its historical and archival research and progressive in its transnational discourse, which explores both the local and global dimensions of Chinese immigration and exclusion that is embedded in the critical language of ethnic studies. Lee’s research yields provocative insights that add to the field of Chinese American studies. Her book is accessible to a wide readership and written with literary grace and passion.

University of California, Santa Barbara

JONATHAN H. X. LEE

Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution. By ALAN DAWLEY. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003. x, 409p. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95.)

Bancroft Prize-winning historian, Alan Dawley has once again produced a tour de force. In this compelling synthesis of American Progressivism in the first

two decades of the twentieth century, he brilliantly demonstrates that the famous domestic reform movement was also a quest for international peace and justice.

One of the great strengths of this book is that it reminds us that the Progressives came of age not simply at a time of increasing social divisions and discontent at home but also in an era of anti-imperialism, revolution, and war abroad. Dawley asserts that the reformers invented a new politics in response to the exploitations of laissez-faire capitalism and the unregulated marketplace both within the United States and overseas.

"Progressive internationalists" (p. 332) were divided, but the ones that Dawley admires sought to replace imperialism, armed intervention, and the anarchic system of rival nation-states with a "new internationalism" (p. 15 and *passim*) of cooperation with other peoples in pursuit of a just and peaceful world. Particularly impressive is Dawley's portrayal of the "new woman" as those college-educated professionals who cast off "the dovish sentimentality of the old pacifism" and embraced "a new moral realism, the view that the economic and social forces of modern life were making war obsolete" (p. 16).

Dawley paints vivid portraits of the origins of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), resurrecting the women's peace conferences at The Hague in 1916 and Zurich in 1919. Jane Addams, social worker, feminist, and first president of the WILPF, epitomized the Progressive engaged public citizen and the new politics. She believed that constructive movements such as trade unions and reform organizations were peaceful substitutes for the "primitive warfare" (p. 16) of the class struggle. She also held that by cooperating across international borders to restrain the excesses of unregulated capitalism and the anarchic state system, men and women might point the world toward the path of peace.

In his bid for international leadership, Woodrow Wilson eventually drew on ideas from the movement for peace and social justice. Dawley eschews cynical views of Wilson's pronouncements for "peace without victory" and the Fourteen Points and hails them as major acts of the new internationalism. He credits the Fourteen Points, Wilson's call for a new international order, as "one of the most important state papers of the twentieth century" (p. 183).

Vividly written, this book is filled with fresh insights on the Progressive Era, from its politics and diplomacy to its architecture. Philadelphia's new "free" public library, for example, is cited as a monument to republican principles intended to promote civic engagement by opening its doors to the general public. At the same time, the author states, the building's neoclassical design was chosen to impress viewers with the stability and power of the republic.

From Wilson on down, Progressives were torn between two impulses: the messianic and the cosmopolitan. Some Progressives like Wilson would change the world to American design by coercion, thus the president's military intervention in the Mexican Revolution and the war in Europe. Others like Addams

urged cooperation with other peoples in improving social and economic conditions, thus the pronouncements of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Wilson's Fourteen Points.

These attitudes as well as what Dawley calls the return of "laissez-faire with a vengeance" (p. 10) are challenges today as they were a century ago. *Changing the World* retrieves the reform tradition of an engaged citizenry and the Progressives' aspirations for peace and justice and makes them available for contemporary debates about democracy, government, and global responsibility.

Rutgers University, New Brunswick JOHN WHITECLAY CHAMBERS II

Moment of Grace: The American City in the 1950s. By MICHAEL JOHNS. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003. x, 148p. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95.)

American cities hit their peak in the decade of the 1950s. It was not simply that they grew to their largest sizes then, or that they wielded more political influence than they would again, or even that they were most central to the American economy. More than that, according to Michael Johns, the 1950s were the last time American society enjoyed "an over-all cultural coherence" (p. 5), and the American city was the source of that.

In this brief, almost elegiac book, Johns sketches the function of the downtown, the life of the neighborhood, and the emergence of the new suburb in the book's three substantive chapters. Taken together, these form the urban trinity of America's moment of grace.

The result is a kind of snapshot of the city during the 1950s, and remarkably, everyone in the picture is smiling. The overall sense one gets from Johns's book is that cities worked—they were places that provided jobs, culture, recreation, close-knit social relationships for their citizens. There is very little tension, conflict, corruption, violence, or even much of the edginess that became associated with the city at that time through film, fiction, and popular journalism. Even the new postwar suburb, seen by most people as one significant cause of urban decline, is here depicted largely as a place still connected to the urban center, symbiotically, not yet parasitically, attached.

Of course, the moment lasted just that long. Any student of American urban history knows that the city by 1970 had changed dramatically and largely for the worse. Johns, however, chooses not to look at this decline or even to foreshadow it. Perhaps the most frustrating thing about *Moment of Grace* is that it makes no attempt to explain or even suggest why these cities, painted by Johns as such idylls, should have come so unraveled and unhinged so quickly.

A book this slim dealing with a topic this large necessarily relies on a great

deal of generalization. Still, even granting that, *Moment of Grace* lacks the specificity to make the reader feel much of what Johns describes. Early on, Johns asserts that the 1950s feel “distant” and “far away” from us now. This book doesn’t help much to bring us any closer.

Perhaps the most important contribution *Moment of Grace* makes to our understanding of American cities is not so much stated as implied. Johns reminds us that the 1950s, a period which has now provoked a nostalgia in our culture for over a quarter century, were fundamentally an urban moment. While *Happy Days* and Ronald Reagan may have traded on a sense that America in the 1950s constituted an innocent, small-town world, American society—from abstract expressionism to industrial unionism—was shaped by things urban.

In the end, Johns himself seems nostalgic both for the cities of the 1950s and for the “cultural coherence” which they helped create. The latter, regardless of whether it really existed in the first place, has largely dissolved. What remains to be seen, for lovers of American cities, is how the American city can help define some new sense of cultural coherence for a new century.

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STEVEN CONN