

City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870–1920. By JEROME P. BJELOPERA. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005. ix, 208p. Illustrations, notes, appendix, index. Cloth, \$45; paper, \$22.)

Between the Civil War and World War I, Philadelphia's businesses recruited an army of clerks to play vital roles in the city's burgeoning industrial economy. Many Americans believed that clerking in an office or store was a step toward enhanced social and economic status, though by the first decades of the twentieth century, clerks were finding it more difficult to advance in an economy dominated by the corporation. Nevertheless, skilled workers encouraged their children to obtain the education and connections that would propel them into a developing white-collar middle class, and the offspring of business proprietors continued to hope that clerkships would help them fulfill their ambitions. Jerome Bjelopera unearths new evidence that builds upon previous scholarly work tracing how ideological constructions of gender shaped the work and leisure experiences of these young men and women.

Bjelopera relies on census schedules as well as the alumni and employee publications of the Peirce School and Strawbridge and Clothier to support his contentions. He describes the ways in which this capacious occupational category came to include more immigrants and women and how after 1900 its members came to reside in streetcar suburbs like Angora in West Philadelphia. Bjelopera uses Peirce's alumni magazine to illustrate how the business school employed idealized gender norms to prepare young people for clerkships and obtain work for its graduates. In educational facilities and clerical jobs, men would learn the art of the deal and forge important commercial relationships that would help them become independent businessmen. It was considered inappropriate for young women to harbor such dreams of commercial success, but "dead-end" clerkships would help them cultivate the social skills and refined manners that would serve them well when they got married. Bjelopera also uses the Peirce and Strawbridge journals to examine male and female clerks in the workplace and explain how employees navigated through cultural mores prescribing how men and women should pursue leisure to form baseball teams, take vacations on the Jersey shore, and act in blackface minstrel shows.

Bjelopera might have made an informative book better by more explicitly assessing the complexities inherent in clerks' experiences. Early in the book, he focuses on the mild-mannered, hard-working, and respectable clerks identified by institutional sources, whereas the clerks who rejected middle-class proscriptions against embezzlement and premarital sex only appear in later pages. As Bjelopera's evidence shows, however, these were not mutually exclusive patterns of behavior for clerks in a fluid metropolitan setting that helped create uncertainties about their class, gender, and racial identities. In Strawbridge and Clothier, at the corner of Eighth and Market streets, clerks met respectable stan-

dards of deportment in serving elegant consumers at sales counters, but flouted those standards in store elevators as they chatted noisily and jostled the same customers. Aspiring Strawbridge employees could leave their reputable place of business and walk up Eighth Street to vaudeville theaters and the mixed-class and mixed-gender fun they offered. The Peirce Alumni Cyclers peddled through Fairmount Park in emulation of their social betters, while clerks planned illicit rendezvous in the same space for trysts not likely to be condoned by respectable sorts. Bringing these contradictions into conversation with each other might have allowed Bjelopera to affirm that it was clerks' indeterminate social status that made them important cultural figures whom contemporaries used to gauge the progress of economic and social transformations in this period.

University of Northern Colorado

BRIAN P. LUSKEY

Home on the Rails: Women, the Railroad, and the Rise of Public Domesticity.

By AMY G. RICHTER. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. xiii, 275p. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95.)

There is a significant body of scholarship on the commercialization of women's images and class aspirations in the United States during the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. In *Home on the Rails*, Amy Richter embraces the premises of these works but adds something important to the literature. Research on railroad history is dominated by institutional works and by cultural histories in which train travel is emblematic of either modernity or the commodification of the American land. Many studies of the public role of women in this era have focused on their participation in the world of mass consumption, via shopping and the display of "style." Richter has identified a space—the upscale, nineteenth-century railroad parlor car—where all of these phenomena came together.

At the end of the nineteenth century, railroads attempted to gain leisure-travel business by catering to the cultured sensibility of women, by creating an idealized domestic atmosphere with luxurious accommodations and obsequious employees. According to Richter, this strategy had broader implications: "the vision of a homelike public took on growing importance with the emergence of America's consumer culture—in hotel lobbies, department stores, photographers' studios, theaters, and even public parks. By the opening decade of the twentieth century, these spaces comprised a hybrid sphere—a social and cultural realm shared by women and men, where deference, privilege, and comfort were determined through commercial rather than personal relationships" (p. 8).

The public-private dichotomy is not the only clash of contradictions explored here; another interesting tension can be seen in the railroad's twin promises of