

otaged her own attempts to return to the limelight. Disappointed by the fleeting currency of fame, she felt entitled to perpetual payment for her aid to the war and the Republicans. More than once she blackmailed prominent men to pay her bills. “[T]hought *centred on one’s self* is sure to bring that one to grief sooner or later,” said Susan B. Anthony in 1891, “& with poor Anna it has been sooner.”

One of the great mysteries of Dickinson’s later life is the remarkable loyalty she elicited from very busy people, loyalty that survived her outrageous treatment of those who tried to help her. To them she stood for something worth protecting, even at her most unpleasant. Dickinson was not an original thinker, nor a singular example of economic independence. In her prime, she had clothed in her glamor the ideas of reformers who spent the postwar years rethinking the heroines of history, the family economy, women’s need for rewarding work, and the concept of universal rights. For hundreds of women practicing medicine, setting type, or breaking into journalism, she existed in the imagination as the archetypal new single woman who crafted a public, novel, and self-supporting life. None of them could afford to let the aging Anna Dickinson crash and burn, a sign of their own vulnerability. Her importance lies in that community.

Rutgers University

ANN D. GORDON

Robber Baron: The Life of Charles Tyson Yerkes. By JOHN FRANCH. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006. 374 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$45.)

When author John Franch needed a vivid example for the dictionary definition of “Robber Baron,” he selected an unscrupulous plutocrat in the person of the influential and wealthy John Tyson Yerkes. The nineteenth-century street-railway czar gained influence, wealth, and power, but his corporate chicanery and personal tawdriness tarnished the hoped-for favorable impression he desperately sought to create as his legacy. Yerkes, a contemporary of Andrew Carnegie, J. P. Morgan, and John D. Rockefeller, has remained an obscure figure of Gilded Age, business America. This biographer believes he deserves greater visibility. Freelance writer Franch presents the controversial but colorful Tyson in impressive detail, obviously reflective of persistent, thorough research.

The book tells the story of a man whose family came to America from Germany circa 1700. In a sense, it may be called a tale of three cities: Philadelphia, Chicago, and London. Yerkes, born 1837 in the Quaker City, graduated from high school, and started work as a bookkeeper in 1834. Within five years he formed his first company.

Franch describes this ambitious maverick financial tyro as having a bewitching personality and possessing almost hypnotic powers. He could disarm men’s vigilance and influence them against their better judgment. Yerkes achieved early

investment success and soon earned the title "Little Napoleon of Third Street" (p. 44). His arrogance and greed, however, led to dishonest speculation, which brought charges of embezzlement and larceny. In 1872, along with former Philadelphia treasurer Joseph Marcer, Yerkes was convicted of misuse of public monies and incarcerated in Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary. Ever the survivor, Yerkes shortened his two years and nine months prison term to seven months through manipulative testimonial refutation of former affidavits, and he was soon back in business.

Within the next few years Yerkes experienced failure in a Philadelphia street-railway investment, soured on the Quaker City, divorced his wife, and moved to Chicago. By 1886 he bought the Chicago Northside (horse car) Railroad and soon thereafter also acquired the Chicago West Division Railroad as he moved closer to his new goal of creating a unified Chicago transportation network.

Business historian Franch achieves his purpose by punctuating his subject's commercial exploits with frequent personal tidbits. For example, Yerkes had fifteen lawyers on his staff, became known as a womanizer, abandoned his Quaker religion, and turned to art for meaning in his life. By 1893 he began a relationship with New York City. While still functioning in the Illinois metropolis, the financier bought a Fifth Avenue mansion and a lot in Greenwood Cemetery. He placed a bust of the Roman Emperor Nero in the entrance of that Gotham residence.

Yerkes was one of New York's most powerful men by 1899, but opposition from the press and earlier exposure by the visiting British journalist William Stead turned the streetcar magnate toward London, England. Within two years, running true to form, he formed a holding company there to control the existing but struggling underground lines of that city. Failing health brought him back to America where he died in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel of Bright's disease in 1905. This reviewer recommends the book because of the importance of its subject, the cogency of its argument, and the felicity of the author's expression. There are really no negatives.

Eastern University

JOHN A. BAIRD JR.

We Are a Strong, Articulate Voice: A History of Women at Penn State. By CAROL SONENKLAR. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006. xiv, 232 pp. Illustrations, index. \$24.95.)

One can write a separate history of women at Penn State because for most of its history women at Penn State led an existence largely separate from the men. President James Calder introduced coeducation in 1871 when he arrived from coed Hillsdale College and brought two female students with him. Ironically,