

provocative. Why does Liverpool have so many mercers, drapers, and haberdashers, for example, while Philadelphia has substantially more grocers? Haggerty suggests that the proliferation of Liverpool dealers reflects their role as middlemen between the city and “country or small-scale shops” (p. 87). But again, the seeming lack of such middlemen in the much larger Pennsylvania hinterland raises interesting questions—particularly about the relationship of port city to surrounding towns and counties. It is a point worth pursuing; while Haggerty correctly notes that historians have left most businessmen and women out of their interpretation of the commercial world by focusing on the wealthy few, the relationship of port cities to their overland rather than maritime trade has received even less scrutiny.

Haggerty also left me wanting more about women’s roles and limitations in both cities. She opts not to focus on women in a separate chapter but to weave “them into their place in the trading community” as some of the many lesser traders facing a common commercial arena (p. 13). The rise and fall of Philadelphia grocer Margaret Moulder and trader-turned-debtor James Astair, she argues, placed them on a continuum—“It was only the scale of success or failure that differed” (pp. 17–19). Yet in subsequent chapters she repeatedly characterizes certain kinds of traders, such as dealers and victuallers, as lower status because of “the involvement of women,” suggesting that gender fundamentally shaped women’s economic opportunities (p. 51).

In the end, the “community of interest” Haggerty pieces together is much like the models of Thomas Doerflinger and David Hancock, the historians she most positions herself variously against or alongside. She expands rather than overturns existing historiography but in so doing reinstates the smaller traders, retailers, grocers, and hucksters into the business of the larger Atlantic world.

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Founding Corporate Power in Early National Philadelphia. By ANDREW M. SCHOCKET. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007. xiii, 274 pp. Illustrations, notes, works cited, index. \$42.)

All politics is local. As Andrew Schocket demonstrates in *Founding Corporate Power in Early National Philadelphia*, the debate over the creation of corporations in the wake of the American Revolution had less to do with deeply held ideological beliefs than with individual and local self-interest—despite the rhetoric employed by both the proponents and opponents of incorporation. Throughout Schocket’s study of the major early corporate entities in Philadelphia and its environs, constantly shifting factions of politicians, merchants, and entrepreneurs—as well as the average citizen—might denounce the incorporation of banks, canals, waterworks, and municipalities as antirepublican

vestiges of the colonial era that granted monopoly privileges to a select few. And yet, when people desired greater access to cash and capital than private individuals could provide, when the state legislature was too regionally factionalized to construct internal improvements to help Pennsylvania compete with New York and Maryland, and when the city government failed to address the health hazards of a contaminated water supply, these same Philadelphians looked to corporations for a solution.

Unlike most previous studies of the political economy of incorporation, which focus on how the political process fashioned these new corporate entities, Schocket is more concerned with the corporate elites themselves—how they “shaped economic activity and economic expansion” (p. 12) and “influenced the state” (p. 13). Thus Schocket provides a refreshing new perspective on the relationship between early nineteenth-century corporations and the state. Unfortunately, Schocket does not remain content with telling this story. Instead, he repeatedly asserts that he has provided an “explanation of the apparent contradiction” between increasing “democracy and opportunity” within the political sphere and “consolidated power” within the economic (p. 5).

While the evidence he presents indicates that this consolidation of power was an unintended consequence of the rise of corporations—of which elites certainly took advantage but can hardly be credited with anticipating—Schocket contends that corporate elites in Philadelphia (feeling progressively disenfranchised by the encroachments of democracy on their political power) *consciously* sought to create corporations in order “to build a base of power from which to formulate and enact economic policies more to their likings than to those of state legislatures” (p. 6). He attempts to portray them as wholly self-serving men who consistently abused their economic power for personal gain, much like the robber barons of the late nineteenth century. Yet corporations such as banks, navigation companies, and waterworks served a very real public need that neither private individuals nor the state were willing (or able) to address. And Schocket’s list of alleged abuses of power is thin and (at times) contrived. Philadelphia’s corporate elites appear to have taken advantage of the opportunities as they presented themselves; by providing private solutions to public problems, corporate elites leveraged their situation for personal gain and tried to translate their position into a new form of power and influence divorced from politics. But Schocket is not convincing that they conspired to create those opportunities nor that they actively abused them once in hand.

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