

## *A Roundtable Discussion of Gary Nash's The Urban Crucible*

*The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution.* By GARY B. NASH. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979. xix, 548 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical references, index.)

ANYONE WITH AN INTEREST in early American or Philadelphia history is in Gary Nash's debt. With this issue of the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, we attempt to repay some of that debt by recognizing his tremendous contribution to our understanding of our port cities' colonial past with his publication thirty years ago of *The Urban Crucible*, a study of Philadelphia, New York, and Boston in the years leading up to the American Revolution.

Gary Nash was one of the early practitioners of what was the "new social history," and he taught us that history was not just about the founders and what happened at Independence Hall, but that it was about ordinary people, everyday life, and about power and class and race. For those of us who were in college and graduate school in the early 1980s, Gary's work was an inspiration. He was a true archival researcher. He breathed life into individuals long forgotten and buried in the dusty documents of city archives and local historical societies. And he gave life, too, to the places those individuals lived and worked, to the urban centers that had too long been neglected in colonial historiography.

To examine how *The Urban Crucible*, so fresh thirty years ago, has fared with time, we have invited five scholars who have taught or built upon Nash's book in their own work to revisit this important book.

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