

dents' dual status as "Georgian Germans" and as *verfeinerung* citizens of the early republic.

University of Pennsylvania

ROBERT ST. GEORGE

A Country Storekeeper in Pennsylvania: Creating Economic Networks in Early America, 1790–1807. By DIANE E. WENGER. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008. 280 pp. Illustrations, figures, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.)

Founded in the mid-eighteenth century, Shaefferstown was a largely German crossroads village approximately seventy-five miles northwest of Philadelphia and surrounded by the most productive iron furnaces and forges in early America. In the years before the Revolution, Shaefferstown supported two or three country stores and associated taverns. Trading collapsed during the Revolution, but in the late 1780s it picked up again, which may have been why Lewis Kreider traveled to Philadelphia to hire a new clerk, Samuel Rex, to help him manage his store. Within a year, Kreider had moved on, and Rex had opened a store of his own (using money from his father, a Philadelphia-area storekeeper). A year later, in 1791, Rex, now twenty-five years old, married the thirty-four-year-old daughter of a local innkeeper, cementing relations in the community. He would run a thriving store in Shaefferstown for almost two decades.

Diane E. Wenger systematically analyzes Rex's day books and store ledgers to address several questions that have informed scholarly debate about early American economy and society. Did this Middle Atlantic region undergo a disruptive "transition to capitalism"? How caught up in a "consumer revolution" were the region's German inhabitants? Were the villages that provided the fuel and housed the workers for iron furnaces integrated into the regional economy? While answering these questions she also provides a richly nuanced portrait of the village that will appeal to those interested in local history.

Wenger argues that Rex's storekeeping operations provide strong evidence of the embeddedness of market relationships in the village and surrounding area. Rex charged (and his customers accepted) market prices for goods, collected interest, held produce back from sale until he could get a better price, provided his customers fashionable textiles for their homespun cloth, and routinely stocked European and West Indian goods. But Wenger complicates this depiction of the market with several crucial qualifiers. Market relationships did not force Shaefferstown's inhabitants to abandon their German cultural heritage. Nor did the market impose impersonal, long-distance imperatives on the village. Rather (and this is Wenger's central point) market transactions occurred through personal networks and face-to-face transactions that differentiated the economy

from the capitalism of a later era.

Wenger makes additional and major contributions with chapters on the iron industry and Rex's market trips to Philadelphia. She demonstrates that iron-furnace villages depended heavily on nearby storekeepers both to supply their workers with goods and to purchase meat for food; she also shows that the iron bars the iron works produced passed through the economy as a commodity currency. She sketches out more fully than any other scholar the way hinterland communities traded with Philadelphia. She follows Rex on a ten-day buying and selling trip to the city. Wagoners had to be hired, over two dozen city merchants dealt with to put together a return cargo, and agents employed to assure the sale of country produce (especially meat). In emphasizing the importance of butter to the city trade, Wenger reinforces our sense of the role of women as producers in the market economy.

Why was Rex, who retired a gentleman farmer, successful? His success was the result of help from his family, fluency in German and English, the security of the market at the iron furnaces, cultivation of personal relationships, attention to detail, and an ideal location. The moment did not last. Bypassed by the railroad, Shaefferstown retains even today some of the look of an eighteenth-century village.

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey PAUL G. E. CLEMENS

Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789–1859. By ELIZABETH R. VARON. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 472 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.)

In *The Impending Crisis, 1848–1861* (1976), David Potter's magisterial treatment of the political events leading up to the Civil War, the author identified a "sinister dual quality" in American nationalism that reached a crisis in the 1850s when American expansion into Mexico came at the expense of American ideals. The issue that lay at the heart of this duality was slavery, of course, which for Potter emerged abruptly as a political issue only in the 1850s. In her book *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789–1859*, Elizabeth Varon picks up where Potter left off, extending his analysis backward and, significantly, expanding it outward to consider the social context that created a generation of Americans who had reached a linguistic consensus about the threat of disunion. In the half century leading up to the war, Varon argues, "Americans with rival political agendas . . . honed the art of casting their opponents as traitors bent on destroying the Union" (337–38).

In this very important book—the first in the Littlefield History of the Civil War series—Varon, professor of history at Temple University, explains that from