

THE
PENNSYLVANIA
MAGAZINE
OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

VOLUME CXXXIV

July 2010

NO. 3

THE POLITICS OF THE PAGE: BLACK DISFRANCHISEMENT
AND THE IMAGE OF THE SAVAGE SLAVE

Sarah N. Roth 209

PHILADELPHIA'S LADIES' LIBERIA SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
AND THE RISE AND DECLINE OF NORTHERN FEMALE
COLONIZATION SUPPORT

Karen Fisher Younger 235

"WITH EVERY ACCOMPANIMENT OF RAVAGE AND AGONY":
PITTSBURGH AND THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC OF 1918–1919

James Higgins 263

BOOK REVIEWS

287

BOOK REVIEWS

FUR, <i>A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters among the Delaware Indians</i> , by Jean R. Soderlund	287
MACMASTER, <i>Scotch-Irish Merchants in Colonial America</i> , by Diane Wenger	288
SPLITTER and WENGERT, eds., <i>The Correspondence of Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg</i> , vol. 3, 1753–1756, by Marianne S. Wokeck	289
BUCKLEY, ed., <i>The Journal of Elias Hicks</i> , by Emma J. Lapsansky-Werner	291
WOOD, <i>Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815</i> , by Peter S. Onuf	292
HALL, <i>A Faithful Account of the Race: African American Historical Writing in Nineteenth-Century America</i> , by Karen N. Salt	293
FLANNERY, <i>The Glass House Boys of Pittsburgh: Law, Technology, and Child Labor</i> , by Richard Oestreicher	295
UEKOETTER, <i>The Age of Smoke: Environmental Policy in Germany and the United States, 1880–1970</i> , by Aaron Cowan	296
TOGYER, <i>For the Love of Murphy's: The Behind-the-Counter Story of a Great American Retailer</i> , by John H. Hepp IV	298
MADONNA, <i>Pivotal Pennsylvania: Presidential Politics from FDR to the Twenty-First Century</i> , by James W. Hilty	299

COVER ILLUSTRATION: View of Monrovia from a membership certificate for the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, engraved by P. S. Duval. For an examination of the role of women in the colonization movement, see Karen Fisher Younger's article on Philadelphia's Ladies' Liberia School Association in this issue.

Editorial Advisory Committee

STEVEN CONN
Ohio State University

MATTHEW COUNTRYMAN
University of Michigan

THOMAS DUBLIN
Binghamton University

ERICA ARMSTRONG DUNBAR
University of Delaware

LORI GINZBERG
Pennsylvania State University

ANN N. GREENE
University of Pennsylvania

JOHN HEPP
Wilkes University

RICHARD N. JULIANI
Villanova University

RUSSELL KAZAL
*University of Toronto at
Scarborough*

HOLLY A. MAYER
Duquesne University

GUIAN A. MCKEE
University of Virginia

CARLA MULFORD
Pennsylvania State University

MARK E. NEELY JR.
Pennsylvania State University

LESLIE PATRICK
Bucknell University

JUDITH RIDNER
Muhlenberg College

DONNA J. RILLING
*State University of New York,
Stony Brook*

DAVID SCHUYLER
Franklin & Marshall College

Editor

TAMARA GASKELL

Editorial Intern

ERIC KLINEK

THE PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY (ISSN 0031-4587) is published each quarter in January, April, July, and October by THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-5699. Periodicals postage paid at Philadelphia, PA and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** send address changes to PMHB, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-5699. **Yearly subscriptions:** individual, \$40.00; institutional, \$75.00. **Back issues:** Selected issues and annual bound volumes are available. Query editor for availability and price. **Authorization for academic photocopying:** For permission to reuse material, please access www.copyright.com or contact the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. (CCC), 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400. CCC is a nonprofit organization that provides licenses and registration for a variety of uses. **Submissions:** All communications should be addressed to the editor. E-mail may be sent to pmhb@hsp.org. Manuscripts should conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Electronic submissions are welcome. For submission guidelines, visit the PMHB Web page (<http://www.hsp.org>). The editor does not assume responsibility for statements of fact or of opinion made by the contributors.

Contributors

JAMES HIGGINS earned his PhD at Lehigh University in 2009. He began his research on the influenza pandemic in 2000 as a graduate student at Duquesne University.

SARAH N. ROTH is an associate professor of history and the coordinator of the newly inaugurated African and African American Studies program at Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania. She has just completed a book manuscript on images of black masculinity and white femininity in antebellum popular narratives and has begun work on a new project that explores the kidnapping of free African Americans in the antebellum North.

KAREN FISHER YOUNGER is a lecturer in history and managing director of the George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center at the Pennsylvania State University and is managing editor of the *Journal of the Civil War Era*. She is the editor of the book *Lincoln's Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered* (2009).

The *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, from 2006 to the present, is now available online to members and subscribers at The History Cooperative, <http://www.historycooperative.org>. In order to access the full text of articles and reviews, subscribers will need to register for the first time using the identification number on their mailing label. To obtain your member identification number, you may also call the editor at 215-732-6200 x208, or e-mail pmhb@hsp.org. Back issues, presently from 1907 through 2005, are freely available on the Penn State University Libraries Web site, at <http://publications.libraries.psu.edu/eresources/pmhb>. Back issues from 1877 through 2004 are also available on JSTOR to JSTOR subscribers. All three sites can also be accessed from the Historical Society's Web site, at <http://www.hsp.org/default.aspx?id=68>.



*The Politics of the Page:
Black Disfranchisement and the
Image of the Savage Slave*

IN RECENT YEARS, historians have characterized the 1820s and 1830s as a period in which an important transformation occurred in the racial culture of the antebellum North. During these two decades, scholars have suggested, white northerners began to discard older, more paternalistic attitudes toward African Americans in favor of a newer, increasingly intolerant hostility. According to James Brewer Stewart, northern whites began condemning all African Americans specifically because of their race rather than judging each person based on variable criteria such as class status or individual comportment. This cultural shift, in conjunction with the monumental economic and social changes taking place in the North that helped to cause it, contributed to a movement within many northern states that sought to deny African American men the franchise at the very moment when voting rights were being extended to virtually all white men. Seen as irretrievably dependent and servile, black men came to represent for many whites the antithesis of the ideal citizen and, as historians have long noted, were thus deliberately excluded from the democratizing trend sweeping through the United States during the “Age of Jackson.”¹

¹ See especially James Brewer Stewart, “The Emergence of Racial Modernity and the Rise of the White North, 1790–1840” *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (1998): 181–217; Christopher Malone, *Between Freedom and Bondage: Race, Party, and Voting Rights in the Antebellum North* (New

As historians also recognize, white Americans' association of black Americans with slavery played an important role in justifying their disfranchisement in the North. In offering explanations for how white northerners came to classify African Americans as beyond the pale of citizenship, however, most historians acknowledge only one representation of the slave in northern culture—that of the incompetent, childlike dependent.² An exploration of the propagandistic fiction that abolitionists and their antiabolitionist and proslavery opponents created during the 1830s reveals a different but equally important image of black men available to white northerners in the era of black disfranchisement. In many respects the polar opposite of the cringing, servile male slave, the image of the black man as savage aggressor played just as critical a role in helping to rationalize efforts in many states to remove African Americans legally from the body politic. The predominance of the figure of the “savage slave” in this literature promoted among white northerners the idea that African American men were not only unfit to exercise the franchise, but that they actually were, as David Roediger has put it, “anticitizens,” or, as James Flint described them, “enemies rather than . . . members of the social compact.”³ In contrast to black caricatures like the simple-minded, happy-go-lucky slave or even the fun-loving trickster of minstrel fame, the ominous black aggressor encouraged whites to classify black men as a dangerous threat to the security of white society and to the preservation of the American republic.

The appearance of novels in the mid-1830s that promoted the image of the savage slave coincided most closely with the legal disfranchisement

York, 2008); and David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (London, 2007), 56–59.

² Joanne Melish writes that “by the 1820s and 1830s . . . most northern whites had allowed the middle member in the progression ‘negro > slave > servile’ to wither along with the institution of slavery itself, fixing permanent inferiority upon people of color as a group.” Joanne Pope Melish, “The ‘Condition’ Debate and Racial Discourse in the Antebellum North,” in *Race and the Early Republic: Racial Consciousness and Nation-Building in the Early Republic*, eds. Michael Morrison and James Brewer Stewart (Lanham, MD, 2002), 84. David Roediger quotes Rowland Berthoff, who summed up the rhetoric the New York constitutional convention of 1821 used to justify disfranchisement: “Many Negroes had been born in slavery [and] they were filled with a spirit of dependence and consequently would vote according to the wishes of their employers . . . which would foster an aristocracy.” Rowland Berthoff, “Conventional Mentality: Free Blacks, Women and Corporations as Unequal Persons,” *Journal of American History* 76 (1989): 771, quoted in Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 57.

³ Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 57; James Flint, *Letters from America, 1818–1820* (London, 1822), 218, quoted in Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 57.

of black voters in Pennsylvania.⁴ Partly in response to the massive abolitionist propaganda campaign that had begun in 1835, proslavery and antiabolitionist authors published novels in 1835 and 1836 that were popular throughout the Northeast and that featured male slaves in prominent roles.⁵ These writers included the nationally renowned South Carolina author William Gilmore Simms, the prolific southern transplant Joseph Holt Ingraham, and Philadelphia's own Robert Montgomery Bird.⁶ The printing of these novels coincided with the 1836 publication of the first American-penned antislavery novel, Richard Hildreth's *The Slave*, and the first book-length autobiographical slave narrative of the antebellum abolitionist movement, Charles Ball's *Slavery in the United States*. These texts featured threatening black men who committed violent acts that would have likely alarmed white readers. The next year, delegates to the state constitutional convention in Pennsylvania began debating the exclusion of African Americans from the state's electorate. In January 1838, the convention voted to restrict suffrage to white males, and, in October, Pennsylvania's voters ratified the constitution that would bar black men from exercising the franchise until the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution went into effect in 1870.

Throughout the period of debate over the measure, state lawmakers and newspaper editors who favored black disfranchisement alluded to the savagery of people of African descent and the physical dangers they posed to whites. On November 17, for instance, the *Bedford Gazette* alarmed its white readers by concocting the story that black men had tried to participate in the recent election by bringing guns with them to the polling

⁴ North Carolina prohibited black voting in 1835, Arkansas in 1836, Michigan in 1837, and Pennsylvania in 1838. New Jersey (1807), Connecticut (1818), and New York (1822), as well as various states in the Old Northwest and the South, had placed restrictions on African American suffrage well before 1835.

⁵ In the mid-1830s, presses across the northern states churned out various antislavery periodicals, including the *Liberator* in Boston, the *Emancipator* in New York City, the *Philanthropist* in Cincinnati, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, the *Slave's Friend*, and *Human Rights*. In May 1835, the American Anti-Slavery Society enlisted the U.S. mail system to begin distributing abolitionist pamphlets and newspapers to religious and political leaders throughout the North and the South. "By the end of 1837," James Brewer Stewart notes, "the American Anti-Slavery Society had posted over a million pieces of antislavery literature." In 1835, abolitionists also launched a campaign that sent some 415,000 petitions to Congress within three years, urging an end to slavery in the District of Columbia and the passage of a law to prevent the admission of new slave states into the Union. Both of these efforts led to widespread antiabolitionist violence in the North. James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York, 1997), 69, 70, 81–83.

⁶ Ingraham was born in Maine but had married the daughter of a wealthy Natchez planter and settled in Mississippi during the early 1830s.

place and threatening to shoot anyone who stood in their way.⁷ Although convention delegates did not explicitly evoke the figure of the black savage in official debates over black suffrage, they employed a type of coded rhetoric that white Pennsylvanians would undoubtedly have been able to decipher. In particular, they repeatedly expressed fears that the “public safety” in the commonwealth would be put in jeopardy if African Americans and whites were granted equal political rights. Some lawmakers undoubtedly used this term to suggest a potential backlash by white Pennsylvanians against African Americans if the new constitution expressly granted black men the right to vote. “The prejudice of the white is sufficiently strong against him now,” a delegate from Luzerne County pointed out in January 1838. “[B]eware how you increase that prejudice. Injury, annihilation to the black, sir, would be the result of making him the equal at the ballot box, with the white.” Some delegates seemed to fear violence by men of both races. Benjamin Martin, a representative from Philadelphia County, warned that enfranchising African Americans “would, in all probability, bring about a war between the races.” Similarly, John Sterigiery of Montgomery County predicted that the “antipathies” between blacks and whites would “produce conflicts and bloodshed at our elections, where all must meet, and on the same day.”⁸

In other instances, however, lawmakers expressed fears for the safety of whites in particular. Many indicated the racial specificity of their concerns by the use of the pronoun “our,” combined strategically with the term “own,” to reinforce the sense that white Pennsylvanians, represented by white lawmakers, were the ones put at risk by the legalization of black voting. “Our own safety . . . imperatively demand[s] a positive and express prohibition of negro suffrage,” John Sterigiery declared on January 18, 1838, two days before disfranchisement passed the convention. Two months earlier, on the same day the *Bedford Gazette* reported black men with weapons strong-arming their way to the ballot box, Charles Brown of Philadelphia County had argued that black suffrage was not “compatible with the interests and the safety of our own people.” At this point in the debate, disfranchisement became entangled with the issue of whether Pennsylvania should restrict migration into the state by race. Lawmakers like Brown expressed concern that if Pennsylvania’s “gates should be

⁷ Malone, *Between Freedom and Bondage*, 93.

⁸ *Proceedings and Debates of the Convention of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA, 1837–38), 5:456; 9:328, 321, 365, available on Pennsylvania Constitution Web site, http://www.paconstitution.duq.edu/PAC_CC_1837.html (accessed June 2008).

thrown open to all persons of colour who chose to enter them,” *and* if the new constitution affirmed the right of African Americans to vote, “the evil” of an increased black population “threatened to increase to an extent which no man could tell.”⁹

Though neither Sterigiére nor Brown elucidated the precise nature of the “evil” or the threat to the “public safety” that they feared would accompany black suffrage, they were clearly employing a type of cultural shorthand that other white Pennsylvanians would have immediately understood. Another lawmaker’s response to Charles Brown’s comments provides one clue to how his contemporaries would have interpreted his language. Thomas Earle—a resident of Philadelphia County, as Brown was—opposed the disfranchisement measure and stood to address his fellow delegates on the issue once Brown had yielded the floor. In championing the cause of black suffrage, Earle asked whether there had been “any member of this convention who ha[d] even suffered a particle of injury, in his person or his property, by the existence of the colored population among us.” A memorial written by black Philadelphians to the convention likewise stressed that “no where on the pages of history does it appear that insurrection, or similar violence, originated with us”—meaning, presumably, black Pennsylvanians. In these remarks, Earle and the petitioners were attempting to refute the notion that African Americans were likely to cause bodily harm to whites or to destroy their property. They must have believed, therefore, that when proponents of disfranchisement warned of “evil” and threats to “public safety,” they were drawing on the image of the dangerous, aggressive black man. Earle was asking convention delegates to consider their actual experiences with African Americans rather than to defer to popular stereotypes in deciding their position on black suffrage. These comments by Earle and the black petitioners suggest that the anxieties lawmakers like Brown and Sterigiére expressed about black voting drew on a well-known conception of African Americans as a violent and destructive race of people.¹⁰

Legislators employed other rhetoric during the constitutional convention of 1837–38 that marked African Americans as being irretrievably below the level of civilization that whites had attained; this was another critical element in the image of the black savage. “When I look at them, and then at myself, and at what the world is composed of,” Benjamin

⁹ Ibid., 9:358; 5:455.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5:457.

Martin remarked, "I cannot but see a vast difference." The whites, Martin posited, "have been in advance, and have given a tone to civilization throughout the world"; in fact, he pointed out, "our sires were the 'masters of the civilized world.'" If the convention treated whites and blacks equally by giving African Americans voting rights, Martin emphasized, whites would be "retrograding and going down." Charles Brown wondered aloud "if these persons can ever rise to the elevation of civilized man." Brown even likened African-descended peoples to animals, cautioning that if the government decided to set the slaves free, they would simply be turning "them loose, like the wild horses, to prey upon and destroy one another."¹¹ White delegates to Pennsylvania's constitutional convention thus described African Americans both as hopelessly uncivilized and as violently destructive.

In doing so, Pennsylvania lawmakers drew on a long-standing literary tradition that classified African Americans as savages beyond the bounds of civilization. Earlier in the century, the texts—and, presumably, the people—that came out of the Haitian Revolution led to a proliferation of images of black savagery in Pennsylvania. Besides newspaper coverage of the slave revolts and military battles that had been a part of Haiti's thirteen-year attempt to gain its independence from European domination, Philadelphia presses also published numerous books focusing on the conflict. In part, Philadelphia became an important center for the publication of texts on Haiti because it was also the destination of some five thousand whites and blacks fleeing the violence in Saint-Domingue during the 1790s. Thus, both written and oral accounts of atrocities committed by black rebels during the revolution would have reached white Pennsylvanians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹²

Books like Bryan Edwards's *Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, which was published in Philadelphia in 1805 and 1806, would have imprinted on the minds of white readers the notion that people of African descent were barbarians who would stop at nothing to satisfy their animalistic desires to torture and slaughter whites. Edwards, a Jamaican planter who had witnessed some of the conflict in Haiti firsthand, wrote in sensationalistic language that during the revolt in Saint-Domingue, "upwards of one hundred thousand savage people,

¹¹ Ibid., 3:85, 697, 698.

¹² David P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, SC, 2001), xiv.

habituated to the barbarities of Africa, avail[ed] themselves of the silence and obscurity of the night, and [fell] on the peaceful and unsuspecting planters, like so many famished tigers thirsting for human blood.” Edwards noted that “all the shocking and shameful enormities, with which the fierce and unbridled passions of savage man have ever conducted a war, prevailed uncontrolled.” He went on for pages, describing specific acts of sickening cruelty that marked the rebels as being beyond the pale of civilization, or even humanity. The author detailed the nailing of a planter to one of the gates of his plantation, followed by the chopping off of his limbs while he was still alive. According to Edwards, one man, a carpenter, was sawn in half, and an impaled infant was used by the insurgents as a standard. Gang rape, the mutilation of pregnant women, and patricide rounded out the catalog of crimes Edwards charged the “savages,” as he deemed them, with having committed.¹³

In 1808, a Philadelphia publisher released Leonora Sansay’s book *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo*. Sansay’s text was a romance novel that was partially autobiographical; it was set in Haiti in 1803 and 1804, when the nation was shoring up its independence from France. Though she stressed numerous instances in which slaves had helped save the lives of their former owners, Sansay depicted the majority of black Haitians who fought in the revolution as “monsters, thirsting after blood, and unsated with carnage.” She related two stories, in particular, that revealed the savagery of these men. In one, a powerful rebel offered to protect a white woman and her three daughters if the mother would allow him to marry the eldest of the daughters. When the mother refused, the rebel had her and the two younger girls hanged; when the oldest girl continued to rebuff him, Sansay reported that “the monster gave her to his guard, who hung her by the throat on an iron hook in the market place, where the lovely, innocent, unfortunate victim slowly expired.” In the second anecdote, a mulatto—an “unrelenting savage”—was inhuman enough to be able to resist the weeping of a beautiful young girl as she pleaded with him to spare the life of a French planter. Sansay reported that the man, whose hands were already “reeking with blood,” merely vowed “with bitter oaths to pursue all white men with unremitting fury.”¹⁴

¹³ Bryan Edwards, *A Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, in *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia, 1806), 68–69, 79–80, 75, 98.

¹⁴ [Leonora Sansay], *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo, in a Series of Letters, Written by a Lady at Cape François to Colonel Burr* (Philadelphia, 1808), 147, 153, 170.

Such scenes laid the foundation for white Pennsylvanians' view of African-descended men as inhuman "monsters" eager to kill whites in the most ruthless and brutal ways.

After the first decade of the nineteenth century, however, these images of brutish cruelty by black rebels abruptly disappeared from literature about slavery that was published in the United States. In the quarter century between 1810 and 1835, American authors and publishers seemed to go into denial about the potential for slaves to turn against their masters with shocking violence. Instead, most writers who included black slaves in their texts presented them as docile, simple-minded people whose perspective never reached beyond their almost obsessive loyalty to their masters. While literature released on the eve of the debates over disfranchisement in Pennsylvania continued to identify these more innocuous characteristics as part of African Americans' fundamental nature, it also revived notions of black savagery that had proliferated in texts published in the wake of the Haitian Revolution during the early part of the century. In these novels that emerged in 1835 and 1836, even the black slaves who showed profound devotion to their masters ended up glorying in the violent acts they committed. In doing so, they exhibited a savagery that would have been familiar to those who had read Sansay's novel or Edwards's text.¹⁵

Almost certainly, the widely publicized slave revolt that had occurred in Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831 played a central role in inspiring the violent male slave characters that suddenly reappeared in fictional literature four years later. When Nat Turner and his fellow bondsmen slaughtered nearly sixty slaveholding whites, many of them women and children, a new generation that was unfamiliar with the horrors of the Haitian Revolution became witness to the "savagery" that many white Americans had long suspected was characteristic of black men. As immediatism exploded on the national scene at mid-decade, quickly followed by antiabolitionist and proslavery denunciations of its claims, writers on

¹⁵ See Sarah N. Roth, "The Mind of a Child: Images of African Americans in Early Juvenile Fiction," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25 (2005): 71–109. Other examples of this trend not noted in this article include John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn, or a Sojourn in the Old Dominion* (Philadelphia, 1832) and James Kirke Paulding's *Westward Ho! A Tale* (New York, 1832). Bruce Dain has noted that Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the Haitian leader who in 1804 ordered the expulsion of all whites from Haiti and the execution of those who would not leave, frightened white Americans to such an extent that they "turned to a form of denial," preferring to believe that "on their own, blacks could never launch or lead a slave rebellion." Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 90.

all sides of the slavery question appeared unavoidably drawn to the type of dangerous male slaves who had elicited such a powerful emotional response from whites and blacks in all parts of the United States. Antiabolitionist and proslavery authors incorporated violent black aggressors into their fiction chiefly as a warning to white Americans that only slavery had the power to contain the savage tendencies of African-descended peoples. Antiabolitionist authors also suggested that simple-minded slaves—contented as they were under their masters' care—would never, on their own initiative, organize and execute a slave rebellion. The danger lay in the possibility that antislavery advocates or their propaganda would mislead slaves into doing so. Abolitionist authors, for their part, reinforced the notion of black savagery in the 1830s, seizing on the violent black rebel as a symbol of the devastation that awaited white Americans if they continued to support the slave system. Since their objective was to alarm white Americans rather than gain respect for African Americans, these authors portrayed violent black men as frightening savages rather than as manly black revolutionaries. The fiction that emerged during the mid-1830s thus served as a medium through which activists supporting different positions in the battle over slavery could blame their enemies for slave insurrections like Nat Turner's rebellion.

If Pennsylvania lawmakers and their white constituents had read any of the slavery-related novels that had been published during the previous two years, they would have encountered vivid renderings of the kind of black violence white authors believed would accompany a "war between the races" in the United States. Even if, for some, recollections of Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion had begun to fade, antiabolitionist and proslavery authors writing in the mid-1830s provided graphic reminders of the horrors slave aggression entailed for whites. White northern men, in particular, were exposed to scenes of black violence in the pages of some of the most widely sold adventure novels of the day. Harper and Brothers of New York City, the most prolific and commercially successful publishing house of its day, published the most popular of these novels.¹⁶ Several, including William Gilmore Simms's *The Yemassee* and John Holt Ingraham's *Lafitte*, were runaway commercial successes. Philadelphia newspapers noted most of these novels. The *Pennsylvania Inquirer* reviewed *The Yemassee*, declaring, despite the haste with which the critic

¹⁶ See Eugene Exman, *The Brothers Harper: A Unique Publishing Partnership and Its Impact upon the Cultural Life of America from 1817 to 1853* (New York, 1965).

believed the novel must have been written, that “many of its passages are fraught with true genius, and the whole work bears the impress of power.” A critic from the *National Gazette* was less impressed with Simms’s *Mellichampe* than he had been with *The Yemassee*. But the reviewer singled out Simms’s treatment of Scipio, the central black character in *Mellichampe*, as “a portrait that wears all the aspect of genuineness and vitality.” Robert Montgomery Bird’s *Sheppard Lee* was advertised in both the *Pennsylvania Inquirer* and the *Public Ledger*; *Lafitte*, by John Holt Ingraham, was noticed in the *Pennsylvania Inquirer*, and the *Public Ledger* reported in July 1836 that a dramatic production of the novel was being staged at the Bowery Theatre in New York. Three months later, the *Ledger* announced that the drama would be presented at the American Theatre on Walnut Street. It ran in October and November 1836, precisely six months before the constitutional convention that disfranchised black men was to convene in Harrisburg. The American Theatre revived the play at least once, in February 1838, three weeks after the final vote had been taken at the convention to strike down black suffrage.¹⁷ The types of savage black characters that consistently appeared in popular novels like *The Yemassee* or *Lafitte* would, therefore, likely have been familiar to many of the Pennsylvania lawmakers who debated the merits and dangers of African American suffrage during the 1837–38 convention.¹⁸

Not surprisingly, perhaps, proslavery and antiabolitionist novelists depicted African American bondsmen as anticitizens in every respect. The vengeful attacks by fictional black slaves that regularly occurred in these narratives helped to establish in the minds of white northerners that African Americans represented a threat to the safety and integrity of the republic. At the same time, most proslavery and antiabolitionist writers framed the vicious actions of their black male characters so as to express

¹⁷ *Pennsylvania Inquirer*, Apr. 22, 1835; *National Gazette*, Nov. 29, 1836. According to the *Public Ledger*, the play *La Fitte; or, The Pirate’s Home* was performed at the American Theatre on Walnut Street on October 29 and on November 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 in 1836. The constitutional convention opened on May 2, 1837. The play was again presented at the American Theatre on February 9, 10, and 11, 1838. The convention approved the disfranchisement provision on January 20, 1838.

¹⁸ The first edition of *The Yemassee* sold out in hours, and the publisher issued three printings of the novel within nine months of its initial publication in the spring of 1835. (Generally, in the 1830s, 2,500 copies of a novel were issued in each printing.) See William Gilmore Simms, *The Yemassee: A Romance of Carolina*, ed. Joseph V. Ridgely (1835; repr., New York, 1964), 16; Mary C. Sims Oliphant et al., eds., *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms* (Columbia, SC, 1954), 3:222–23. *Lafitte*, published in June 1836, had sold out the first 2,500 copies by September and quickly earned for Ingraham the impressive sum of \$1,250. See Exman, *Brothers Harper*, 73.

the loyalty of the slave to his master. Happily servile as well as savagely brutal, black men in these narratives were thus neither independent nor civilized enough to be considered a legitimate (or even a safe) part of the American electorate.

The figure of the black savage was meant to evoke for white readers visions of dark-skinned tribes in remote parts of the world that civilization, as Americans understood it, had not effectively reached. On the scale of mental and moral development, nineteenth-century whites classified these men as being closer to animals than to humans.¹⁹ The slave Cudjoe in Joseph Holt Ingraham's 1836 novel *Lafitte* provides an extreme example of the type of uncivilized, animalistic African character that argued against black men's inclusion in the electorate during the antebellum period. In a classic caricature of the dark-skinned savage, Ingraham fitted Cudjoe with a nose "of vast dimensions" and ears that "hung down in enormous lapels." Ingraham, a native of Maine who had taken up residence in Mississippi earlier in the 1830s, repeatedly described Cudjoe's physical form in explicitly animalistic terms. Cudjoe's "long arms," Ingraham noted, "hung down like those of the ourang-outant." In addition, the four-foot-tall slave possessed "glittering white teeth, two of which flanking his capacious jaws, projected outwards, with the dignity of the embryo tusks of a young elephant." Elsewhere in the novel, Ingraham likened his central black character to a tiger, an alligator, and a wild boar.²⁰

Cudjoe's personality matched his bestial appearance. "When roused to revenge," Ingraham alerted his readers, Cudjoe was "more terrible than the uncaged hyena." The violence Cudjoe ultimately committed in the novel offered final confirmation of the danger black men posed to those around them. In the novel's final scenes, Cudjoe took his revenge against Oula, an African priestess who had betrayed him. Ingraham described the killing in simple but graphic language: "Before Oula could comprehend his motives, the reeking blade passed through her withered bosom." Cudjoe shouted, "Take dis, hag ob hell!" and then "drew forth the knife from her breast." To assuage his fury, Cudjoe also murdered Oula's son and a Spanish sailor who had been in league with Oula against the deformed slave. While Ingraham's white readers might have been either

¹⁹ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1968), 28.

²⁰ [Joseph Holt Ingraham], *Lafitte: The Pirate of the Gulf*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1836), 2:32-33, 34.

amused or repulsed by Cudjoe's physical deformities alone, these brutal actions combined with his animal appearance to establish Cudjoe—and, by extension, black men in general—as a beast whose inclusion in the American electorate would have destabilized the republic.²¹

In other antiabolitionist literature of the 1830s, black characters revealed their savagery when they committed aggressive acts for no other purpose than the enjoyment they gained from tormenting helpless victims. In antebellum culture, civilized men might engage in violence, but they had a very specific purpose for doing so. Defending one's life or freedom, protecting one's family, or avenging a wrong perpetrated against oneself or a loved one justified violence or even murder as an honorable, righteous act. Antiabolitionist and proslavery authors alleged that once they had gotten a taste for blood, black men, on the other hand, would revel in killing for its own sake. The popular author William Gilmore Simms of South Carolina included several examples of this assumption in his 1835 novel *The Yemassee*. In one scene, Simms depicted a faceless mass of black slaves let loose by their white owners against a group of Indians the whites had already subdued in battle. Simms portrayed the slaves "scouring the field of battle with their huge clubs and hatchets, knocking upon the heads all of the Indians who yet exhibited any signs of life." They clearly enjoyed what they were doing, as Simms described them "inflicting the most unnecessary blows, even upon the dying and the dead." In fact, Simms reported that the slaves "luxuriated in a pursuit to them so very novel." This ruthless disregard for human life clearly identified the slaves in *The Yemassee*—men who, according to Simms, were "as wild almost as the savages"—as unfit for the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship, or even for civilized life.²²

Significantly, Simms emphasized that the slaves in *The Yemassee* were not allowed to participate in the honorable fighting of formal warfare, but only took action against the Indians once "there was no longer the form of a battle array among them." While manly warfare in the early nineteenth century demanded that combat take place between two equally matched foes, Simms presented these slaves as bloodthirsty cowards who struck down a force of noble Yemassee wholly unable to defend themselves. "The negroes cleared the woods with their clubs," Simms reported, "beating out the brains of those whom they overtook, almost without hav-

²¹ Ibid., 2:188–89.

²² Simms, *Yemassee*, 414.

ing any resistance offered them.” Thus, black men in the novel served not as admirable soldiers but more as a brutal clean-up crew that swept in once the official fighting had ended. In addition, these scenes demonstrated that black men lacked feeling for other human beings, a vital humanizing quality in northern antebellum culture. Unmoved by other people’s suffering, the black brutes in Simms’s narrative showed no mercy or compassion once they began their work of extermination. As Simms recounted, the slaves who attacked the Yemassee “spar[ed] none, whether they fought or pleaded.” Thus, by portraying African Americans as lacking courage, sympathy, and any regard for human life, Simms called into question not only the manhood of black men but also their humanity.²³

Antiabolitionist and proslavery authors of the 1830s also suggested that while black men might experience a savage glee in committing murder in general, they might take particular joy in killing white men. In *Lafitte*, Cudjoe’s perpetual bitterness against the whites who made fun of him suggests that Ingraham feared black men might harbor a hatred for whites and a desire to avenge the wrongs they had suffered as a result of slaveholders’ cruelty. As with Simms’s anonymous gang of black executioners, the violent deeds Cudjoe actually committed did not harm any white Americans. Nevertheless, all of the resentment the unsightly slave had accumulated over the years was directed specifically at white men. When asked at one point in the narrative who had harmed him, Cudjoe replied, “more buckras [whites] dan de fingers on dese two han!” When a white man poked fun at his deformities, Cudjoe’s private reaction revealed his intense abhorrence of whites (with the important exception of his beloved master) and the chilling potential for black men to unleash a primal form of violence against them. In one instance, after a white captain had laughed at Cudjoe, Ingraham reported that “the eye of the slave gleamed with rage, and a demoniac smile fearfully displayed the hideous features of his mouth.” What the man could not see, Ingraham noted, was that “deep and bitter was the hatred rankling in his dark bosom.” While the slave might smile or laugh on the outside, Ingraham warned that whites’ offensive treatment of Cudjoe was “sowing, unconsciously, seeds of revenge in the heart of the deformed negro, of which they were . . . destined to reap the bitter fruits.” Figures like Cudjoe symbolized for white Americans the unseen potential for black violence that was always lurk-

²³ Ibid., 383–84, 414.

ing below the surface of seemingly innocuous interactions between the races.²⁴

Proslavery authors like William Gilmore Simms suggested that even slaves who were devoted to their masters might glory in killing whites. In Simms's *Mellichampe*, published in 1836, the unlikely demonstrator of this notion was the stoutly loyal, seemingly simple-minded slave Scipio. The action in *Mellichampe* took place in South Carolina during the American Revolution. At a critical moment in Simms's story, Scipio's master was overpowered by a British soldier, and Scipio was the only person available to help him. Although the slave at first proved highly reluctant to strike a white man, once he had done so, and had killed the soldier, Scipio reacted in an oddly exuberant manner. Tellingly, the slave's giddiness did not arise from the fact that he had saved his master. Instead, it was the "new-born experience" of killing a white man, Simms related, that had an "intoxicating effect" on the black man. As the slave himself put it, "in tones like those of a maniac"—and with an unmistakable note of triumph in his voice—"T's a nigger, I kill buckrah!" Even though a male slave like Scipio might be a loyal, contented dependent, he, like all black men, Simms implied, was at his core still a savage who gloried in killing—and particularly in taking a white life. Twice, Scipio told white characters the story of how he had killed the Englishman, seeming to delight in recounting the gory details. "I take light-wood knot, I hammer um on he head tell you sees noting but de blood and de brain, and de white ob he eye. He dead—'tis Scip mash um," the slave reported proudly. "I knock him fur true!" he insisted. "I hit um on he head wid de pine-knot. De head mash flat like pancake. I no see um 'gen." Scipio's graphic narrative was supposed to be unsettling for Simms's white readers, as it was for his white characters. Simms concluded the chapter by detailing in a single-sentence paragraph the reaction of two young women who had listened to the tale: "The maidens," he wrote, "shuddered at the narration."²⁵

Thus, although black men might seem in all respects harmlessly servile and affectionately loyal, authors like Simms insinuated that whites could never entirely trust that they would be safe around a race of people that was but one step removed from the wilds of uncivilized Africa. A misunderstanding between Scipio and his master's fiancée pointed to unspoken

²⁴ Ingraham, *Lafitte*, 2:182, 54.

²⁵ William Gilmore Simms, *Mellichampe: A Legend of the Santee* (New York, 1836), 2:225, 226.

fears of black treachery and violence harbored by Simms's slaveholding characters. When Scipio returned alone from the skirmish with the British soldier, his master's fiancée pressed the slave for news about the man she loved. "Where is he?—tell me he is safe," she implored. In response, the still-distracted Scipio answered, thinking of the Englishman, "He dead!—I kill um!" Simms wrote that immediately upon hearing Scipio's words the young woman "shrieked and fell." Significantly, she did not think to question this bizarre and incongruous statement from a personal servant who had repeatedly professed his undying love for his master throughout the novel. Instead, the woman accepted at once the idea that the black man had taken the life of the white man who had owned him. Although, in this instance, white fears of mutinous black violence proved unfounded, Simms nevertheless had raised the possibility that a black man's fidelity might be a ruse and that even a seemingly devoted slave like Scipio might lash out against his beloved master. Whites, then, must be on their guard, lest they, rather than some foreign invader, become the enemy that black men delighted in killing.²⁶

The ease with which slaves' loyalty to their masters was destroyed in Robert Montgomery Bird's antiabolitionist novel *Sheppard Lee* provided even more alarming confirmation for white readers that black men were, at their core, untrustworthy, dangerous savages bent on white destruction. In Bird's initial description of the Virginia plantation where part of his narrative was set, he emphasized the deep love and devotion the slaves there felt for their master and the kindness with which they were treated. But an abolitionist pamphlet called "The Fate of the Slave" fell into the hands of these bondsmen, transforming their attitude overnight. "A week before," Bird's narrator reported, "there was not one of them who would not have risked his life to save his master's," but "the scene was now changed," as the slaves "began to talk of violence and dream of blood." Bird implied that the weak minds of these black men had enabled this sinister antislavery propaganda to have such a profound influence on them. One "little book," the narrator lamented, "had the effect to make a hundred men, who were previously content with their lot in life . . . the victims of dissatisfaction and rage, the enemies of those they had once loved, and, in fine, the contrivers and authors of their own destruction." While Bird's readers might have been impressed with the senseless

²⁶ Ibid., 2:225.

destruction an abolitionist tract had created, this scenario also cast doubt on the depth of the slaves' allegiance to their master in the first place. The haste with which they adopted the plan to "exterminate all the white men in Virginia, beginning with [their] master and his family," also indicated the zeal with which black men supposedly embraced violence against whites.²⁷

Unlike Simms and Ingraham, Bird—a resident not of the Deep South but of Pennsylvania—forced his readers to confront directly the terrible prospect of slave insurrection and race war. The narrator in *Sheppard Lee* described the slaves' firing at their master and the overseer with "six or seven guns" and then attacking them with spears. By noting the "savage yells of triumph" with which the insurgents chased down the master's children, Bird clearly stressed the uncivilized nature of the attackers. The innocence and youth of the victims as much as the designation "savage" signified the base nature of these black men.²⁸ The slaves' intention to violate sexually their master's oldest daughters, however, most conspicuously marked them as inhuman barbarians. As Winthrop Jordan pointed out in *White Over Black*, "Lecherousness . . . was what one expected of savages."²⁹ In anticipation of success in their rebellion, the slaves in *Sheppard Lee* "apportioned among themselves, in prospective, the wives and daughters of their intended victims." During the revolt itself, "ruffians maddened by rage and carnage" pursued seventeen-year-old Isabella and twelve-year-old Edith onto the roof of their house. As one "ferocious" slave tried "to lay an impure touch" on Isabella, the young woman escaped from his grasp by throwing her sister to her death and then jumping off the roof herself. Bird's white readers would likely have sympathized with the narrator, who was "seized with terror" at "the idea of seeing those innocent, helpless maidens made the prey of brutal murderers." Seen as a threat to the purity of white womanhood as well as to the integrity of the republic, whites would hardly have welcomed into the political community—particularly in states like Bird's Pennsylvania—the race that such "ruffians" represented.³⁰

On one level, antiabolitionist writers like Bird were expressing their own fears about black violence when they included in their novels such

²⁷ Robert Montgomery Bird, *Sheppard Lee. Written by Himself* (New York, 1836), 2:192, 199, 200, 196.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:204.

²⁹ Jordan, *White Over Black*, 33.

³⁰ Bird, *Sheppard Lee*, 2:206–7, 200, 199.

harrowing scenes as those found in *Sheppard Lee*. During Nat Turner's rebellion, Bird had recorded his personal anxieties about slave revolt in his diary: "Some day we shall have it," he mused darkly, "and future generations will perhaps remember the horrors of Haiti as a farce compared with the tragedies of our own happy land!" On another level, however, fictional portrayals of black male violence can also be read as metaphors for white fears that African Americans would gain power of any type in American society. In *Sheppard Lee*, the ultimate goal of the black insurgents was global political dominance over whites. The slaves, according to Bird, desired for their race to become "the masters of all the white men in the world." Bird described the leader of the rebels as "tyrannical" and, significantly, dubbed him "Governor," or "King Governor." In doing so, Bird implied that African Americans were by nature autocrats rather than democrats and that, as a result, they would leave the republic in tatters were they ever to gain political sway. The year after Bird's novel was published, one of the delegates to the Pennsylvania constitutional convention expressed a similar concern that if African Americans were given the vote, they might ultimately attain political domination over whites. Extending the suffrage to black men, William Meredith warned, might "enable them, at some future day, to wrest the government from the hands of the descendants of those who founded it." Another lawmaker maintained simply that "the elevation of the black" would mean "the degradation of the white man." Such rhetoric underscored the idea that political power must be kept out of the hands of African Americans, or white Americans would be forever subjugated to the morally bereft black race.³¹

While proslavery and antiabolitionist authors of the 1830s intentionally used the figure of the black savage to encourage white northerners' rejection of both emancipation and racial equality, abolitionist writers inadvertently contributed to these efforts with the fictional narratives they produced during the same period. Historians of abolitionism tend to identify the 1850s as the decade when the threatening black rebel burst onto the scene in antislavery literature. The repeated appearance of the savage slave in abolitionist literature during the 1830s, however, complicates the picture historians generally paint of early white immediatists as peaceful evangelizers determined to change the hearts of white

³¹ Robert Montgomery Bird diary, Aug. 27, 1831, quoted in, "A Young Dramatist's Diary: *The Secret Records of R. M. Bird*," ed. Richard Harris, *Library Chronicle* 25 (1959): 16, 17; Bird, *Sheppard Lee*, 2:196, 198; *Proceedings and Debates*, 9:349, 321.

Americans by evoking sympathy for the poor, downtrodden slave. Although white abolitionists did employ such tactics, scholars' emphasis on "moral suasion" as antislavery activists' primary rhetorical strategy in the 1830s has led them to miss the equally important use of scare tactics designed to turn white Americans against the slave system. Nor did the slave rebels depicted in early abolitionist literature always seem worthy of the privileges and the responsibilities of citizenship.³² More often than not, the purpose of the "savage slave" in antislavery texts was not to influence white readers to admire the black freedom fighter, but to alarm whites at the horrific prospect of white destruction effected at the hands of a menacing black aggressor. Thus, despite their commitment to equal legal and political rights for African Americans, with these narratives white abolitionists reinforced cultural images of black men that undermined their claims to civilization. Consequently, they unintentionally helped to justify white northerners' denial of the franchise to them.

Depictions of either slave violence or the threat of such violence in antislavery narratives emerged, in part, out of the frustration and righteous anger abolitionists felt in the face of the deplorable conditions African Americans experienced in the United States during the 1820s and 1830s.³³ David Walker, perhaps the most aggressive spokesperson for black rights in his day, provided an especially clear example of how such sentiments might translate into advocacy for black violence. Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, which went into three editions after its initial publication in 1829, expressed plainly the anger and resentment of a free black man who during his lifetime had lived among free and enslaved African Americans in the South as well as free blacks in the North. In his pamphlet, Walker railed against the hypocrisy of nominally "enlightened and Christian" Americans who tortured and

³² Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, NY, 2002), 186–89; James Brewer Stewart, "From Moral Suasion to Political Confrontation: American Abolitionists and the Problem of Resistance, 1831–1861," in *Passages to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in History and Memory*, ed. David W. Blight (Washington, DC, 2004), 68–71. The work of Stanley Harrold has proven an important exception to this tendency. Harrold has suggested that even in the 1830s, abolitionists admired black rebels and "warned that, unless masters freed their chattels, the slaves would attempt to liberate themselves violently." Stanley Harrold, *American Abolitionists* (Harlow, Eng., 2001), 75.

³³ For details of this discrimination, see Stewart, "Emergence of Racial Modernity." Earlier studies of the treatment of African Americans in the antebellum North include Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (Chicago, 1965) and Leonard L. Richards, "Gentlemen of Property and Standing": *Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York, 1970).

murdered their slaves, kept them in ignorance, and prevented them from practicing the Christian religion. "God will deliver us from under you," he assured white Americans. "And wo, wo, will be to you if we have to obtain our freedom by fighting."³⁴ Like the white abolitionists who would follow him in the coming decade, Walker discussed the possibility of black violence not solely as a means of venting his own frustrations with the racial situation in the United States, but also as a deliberate strategy for frightening white Americans into opposing slavery. In doing so, Walker appealed to whites' concerns for their own safety rather than to any possible sympathy they might have felt for their fellow human beings in bondage.

To instill the greatest amount of fear possible in his white readers, Walker employed the most harrowing image of black men available to him at the time—that of the murderous savage. "The blacks, once you get them started, they glory in death," he forewarned his white readers. "Get the blacks started, and if you do not have a gang of tigers and lions to deal with, I am a deceiver of the blacks and of the whites."³⁵ Walker reinforced the notion that black men were, at heart, unfeeling, bloodthirsty animals. White northerners, therefore, could not easily accept them as the "coloured *citizens*" that were identified in Walker's title, implying, as that term did, that they deserved to be granted all the political and legal rights that state governments were beginning to extend to white men in the early antebellum period.

The following year, in September 1830, the white author Lydia Maria Child published "The St. Domingo Orphans," a story that depicted the horrors of the Haitian revolution from the point of view of two young white girls, the Jameson sisters. As Walker had in his *Appeal*, Child used dark threats of slave violence in her story as a means of turning white readers against the slave system. "The St. Domingo Orphans," which appeared in Child's popular periodical *Juvenile Miscellany*, was a story meant explicitly for children. Nevertheless, Child did not shy away from recounting either the Haitian rebels' terrifying pursuit of the Jameson girls or the harrowing details involved in the slaughter of white slaveholders and their families. As a result, she encountered the same dilemma David Walker had faced in constructing his *Appeal*. The more frightening her depiction of slave rebels in "The St. Domingo Orphans," the more

³⁴ *David Walker's Appeal . . .*, ed. Sean Wilentz (New York, 1995), 3, 73.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

effective Child would be in convincing her readers of the dangers the slave system held for whites. But by making those rebels as terrifying as possible, Child endowed the majority of the black soldiers that appeared in her narrative with the qualities of the savage slave. These “unfeeling wretches” showed no sympathy for their victims, even when those victims were innocent children. Referring to the Jamesons’ former coachman, Child stressed that “the sobs and shrieks of the wretched widow and her children did not excite the least pity in his hardened heart.” The same rebel leader, in fact, possessed so little compassion that this “savage creature,” as Child described him, felt no compunction about threatening his own daughter with death when she refused to reveal to him where the Jameson girls were hiding. The soldiers “butchered” their victims, a term that suggested these men had no more regard for the people they killed than they would for an animal. Like their “blood-thirsty” leader Dessalines, they killed whites indiscriminately and even took “real pleasure” in committing these murderous acts. These characteristics revealed Child’s Haitian revolutionaries to be classic examples of uncivilized brutes of the type that would have made her white readers cringe with fear and, Child hoped, reject the system that had given rise to such barbarity. This representation of black men, however, more likely would have emphasized to northern white children and their parents that African Americans could never be considered trustworthy members of the polity.³⁶

Even after Garrisonian pacifism became popular within the antislavery movement during the early 1830s, the image of the dangerous black man continued to lurk in some of the most prominent abolitionist narratives of the decade. Richard Hildreth’s 1836 novel, *The Slave, or, Memoirs of Archy Moore*, introduced a male slave who exemplified a black masculinity intended to be both admirable and terrifying for whites. Archy Moore’s close friend Thomas, though originally a devout Christian and an obedient slave, underwent a profound transformation after an overseer beat his wife to death. At that point, distinct traces of the savage began to emerge in Thomas’s character, as he renounced Methodism and “secretly returned to the practice of certain wild rites” he had learned from his African mother. In addition, Thomas “suffered under occasional fits of partial insanity,” experiencing visions of his dead wife and even holding conversations with her. Mentally unstable and deeply connected with heathen practices that white Americans would have seen as darkly mys-

³⁶ Lydia Maria Child, “The St. Domingo Orphans,” *Juvenile Miscellany* (1830): 82, 81, 89.

terious, even sinister, Thomas began committing subversive acts and plotting revenge against the overseer. "Blood for blood; is it not so, Archy?" he inquired ominously of Hildreth's narrator.³⁷

The scene in which Thomas successfully avenged his wife's death made the powerful statement that black men might easily embrace violence as a means of gaining retribution for the injustices they and their loved ones had suffered in slavery. When Archy and Thomas took the overseer captive, Archy looked to Thomas to determine what they should do with him. After brief consideration, Thomas declared, "Archy, that man dies to-night." From this point on in the scene, Thomas and the gun he had taken from the overseer were inseparable; Hildreth continually mentioned this symbol of power and violence whenever he described Thomas's actions. As the overseer cried and pleaded for his life, Thomas "stood by, with his arms folded and resting on the gun." He then "stepped back a few paces, and raised the gun." The shot, Hildreth related, "penetrated [the overseer's] brain, and he fell dead without a struggle." At the end of the novel, the light-skinned Archy made his way to the North, but Hildreth chose to leave Thomas "traversing the woods of that neighborhood, and lurking about the plantations." In the end, Hildreth made sure this wronged black man with physical strength and savage impulses would always be ready to strike when white slaveholders least expected it.³⁸

The same year *The Slave* was published, a character that proved uncannily similar to Hildreth's Thomas appeared in Charles Ball's autobiographical narrative *Slavery in the United States*. Like Thomas, who Hildreth reported had become "morose and sullen" after his wife's death, Ball's father experienced a permanent separation from his wife and children. As a result, he became "gloomy and morose in his temper." As Hildreth had with Thomas, Ball associated his father with darker elements of his African heritage, reporting that his father began spending "nearly all his leisure time with my grandfather, who . . . had been a great warrior in his native country." Though Ball stopped short of suggesting his father had contemplated revenge against the master who had destroyed his family, he made clear that this descendant of an African

³⁷ Richard Hildreth, *Archie Moore, The White Slave; Or, Memoirs of a Fugitive* (1856; repr., New York, 1971), 189, 182. Published in 1836 as *The Slave, or, Memoirs of Archy Moore*; in 1852 it was republished with the title *The White Slave; Or, Memoirs of a Fugitive*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 202, 234.

warrior carried with him the promise of violence if the necessity for it arose. "It was deemed unsafe . . . to attempt to seize him, even with the aid of others," Ball explained, "as it was known he carried upon his person a large knife." Ball's father ultimately escaped to the North rather than remain a perpetual threat to whites in the South, as Thomas had. But the inclusion in Ball's narrative of a black man with the capacity for violence and a distinctly African identity nevertheless proffered a warning to whites that black men would not always be easily subdued.³⁹

The constitutional debates over whether Pennsylvania should formally disfranchise African American men were initiated in 1837, the year after Ball's narrative, *The Slave, Lafitte, Mellichampe, and Sheppard Lee* first reached American booksellers. As deliberations began in Harrisburg on the question of black suffrage, prominent newspapers in the state began publishing articles that worked to reinforce an image of black men as menacing aggressors unfit for citizenship.⁴⁰ Besides printing articles early in the year about armed black men in Philadelphia who incited riots or engaged in violent crimes against whites, the *Pennsylvania Inquirer* employed a sketch entitled "The Negro Queen" as a veiled account of the types of horrors that might ensue if African-descended people gained political power. The lengthy piece, which centered on the legendary seventeenth-century Angolan queen Nzingha, appeared on the newspaper's first page the day after the convention's summer session ended in July 1837. It graphically depicted cannibalistic acts that Nzingha and her father had allegedly committed during their respective reigns. The article detailed ceremonies held by Nzingha's father in which he "surrounded [himself] with the dead bodies of new-born babes" and "drank the warm blood of the human victim[s]." When the king died, the unnamed author noted, "two hundred innocent beings were put to death and eaten at the funeral banquet." On this occasion, "the glory of the deceased monarch was celebrated . . . by the songs of the slayers, mingled with the cries and screams of the women, children, and old men serving as victims, many of whom fell by the hand of [N]Zingha herself, who would sing praises to

³⁹ Charles Ball, *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, A Black Man . . .* (1836; repr., New York, 1837), 19. The 1836 edition was published in Lewiston, Pennsylvania.

⁴⁰ Although scholars have deemed black disfranchisement in Pennsylvania to have been a partisan Democratic measure to weaken their political opposition, the affiliation of the *Pennsylvania Inquirer* with the Whig Party during the presidential election of 1836 suggests that support for the measure went beyond just the Democratic Party. See Malone, *Between Freedom and Bondage*, 63, 72–82.

her gods as she pierced the bosom of a young girl and drank her blood.” Once she became queen, the *Inquirer* reported, Nzingha showed herself to be as “cruel and vindictive as the most savage of her nation.” In one of her most horrifying acts, the queen stabbed her infant nephew in the heart and threw him in a river to ensure that he would not get her crown. Without referencing the issue of black participation in the governance of Pennsylvania, this article subtly gave white readers an example of the kind of inhuman barbarity and egregious abuse of power that had resulted in the past when African-descended peoples rose to positions of political authority.⁴¹

A few weeks before delegates reconvened for the convention’s fall session, the *Inquirer* printed another historical vignette, this one emphasizing the volatility of black men who might, at the slightest pretext, become enraged and resort to violence. “Scenes in Havana, in 1822,” published in September 1837, outlined the problems Cuban officials had had with theft on ships docked in Havana during the summer of 1822. The central focus of the article, however, was a “big, surly athletic negro.” This intimidating man of African descent “armed himself with a carving knife” and killed one of the Spanish pirates trying to board the ship on which the black man served as cook. Like Cudjoe in J. H. Ingraham’s *Lafitte*, this physically intimidating slave was motivated less by courage or by loyalty to his masters than by a selfish and unjustified “grudge” he held against the Spaniards for “what he conceived to be ill-treatment” during an unspecified incident that had occurred on shore the preceding weekend. Black men, the unnamed author implied, could not be trusted to act in a reasonable manner, and when they lost control of themselves, as they had the tendency to do, they put the safety of the more rational whites around them in grave danger. Such qualities were not befitting of a virtuous citizen. In fact, the *Inquirer* hinted that if black men were allowed to participate in governing, the American republic would be doomed.⁴²

The years immediately preceding the debate over black suffrage in Pennsylvania represented a distinctive moment in the on-going discussion of slavery that took place within popular antebellum literature. At no other point did abolitionist, antiabolitionist, and proslavery authors all make the violent black savage a centerpiece of their narratives in the way

⁴¹ “The Negro Queen,” *Pennsylvania Inquirer*, July 15, 1837.

⁴² “Attempted Assassination,” *Pennsylvania Inquirer*, Jan. 10, 1837; “Riot,” *Pennsylvania Inquirer*, Mar. 14, 1837; “Scenes in Havana, in 1822,” *Pennsylvania Inquirer*, Sept. 11, 1837.

they had in the texts they published in 1835 and 1836. After 1836, supporters of slavery banished dangerous black men from their fictional narratives, crowding them out with characters less disturbing for white readers, like the musical plantation slave or the faithful old servant. Likewise, many abolitionist authors opted after 1836 to represent African American men as objects of pity rather than objects of fear in an attempt to appeal to a white readership squeamish about black violence. The staggering popularity of Theodore Dwight Weld's *American Slavery As It Is*, published in 1839, helped confirm the wisdom of that decision. The tract portrayed slaves strictly as victims of inhumane treatment by cruel slaveholders and sold over one hundred thousand copies in a single year.⁴³ When abolitionists writing after 1836 did depict black men who had committed violent acts, they stressed the nobility of these men and focused on the legitimacy of their cause. As a result, they portrayed men like Joseph Cinqué—the leader of the *Amistad* revolt in 1839—as manly revolutionaries fighting, as American patriots had, for the cause of freedom. Not until the 1850s, however, after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act had led more abolitionists to embrace violent self-defense as an acceptable strategy, did admirable black rebels become common figures within abolitionist literature. These characters appeared in novels and novellas like Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave" (1854), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred* (1856), and Martin Delany's *Blake* (serialized 1859–61), and their noble manliness made them fundamentally different from the inhuman savages that had populated abolitionist, antiabolitionist, and proslavery texts in the 1830s.⁴⁴

The disfranchisement of black voters in Pennsylvania constituted one of the most tragic watersheds in African American political history. In the 1830s, the population of free blacks in Pennsylvania exceeded that of every other state in the Northeast except New York, which, in 1822, had already excluded from the electorate all but the wealthiest of its black residents. After Pennsylvania, New Jersey had the next highest number of free people of color, with less than half of Pennsylvania's numbers, and its legislature had taken the vote away from African Americans in 1807. The

⁴³ Robert H. Abzug, *Passionate Liberator: Theodore Dwight Weld and the Dilemma of Reform* (New York, 1982), 213.

⁴⁴ See Frederick Douglass, "The Heroic Slave," in *Autographs for Freedom*, ed. Julia Griffiths (Cleveland, OH, 1853), 174–239; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, (Boston, 1856); and Martin R. Delany, *Blake; or, The Huts of America*, ed. Floyd J. Miller (Boston, 1970).

stripping away of black political power in Pennsylvania, then, effectively eliminated from the political process in the United States all but a few African Americans in Massachusetts and other states with very small black populations. Although both abolitionists and their opponents quickly abandoned the figure of the black savage after 1838, its damaging effects had already been wrought. It helped white northerners chip away even further at the freedoms that had previously separated African Americans in the nominally free states from their southern brothers in bondage.

Widener University

SARAH N. ROTH

Philadelphia's Ladies' Liberia School Association and the Rise and Decline of Northern Female Colonization Support

ON APRIL 26, 1864, the funeral pageant of Elizabeth Johnson Thomson slowly wound its way to St. Mark's Episcopal Church through the crowded streets of Cape Palmas, a town located on the extreme southeastern coast of Liberia. The sheer number of people present made it clear that an important leader had died. A coalition of former American slaves led the procession, and they now marched as ministers and representatives of various ladies' charitable and temperance societies. The deceased, Elizabeth Mars Johnson Thomson, a free black from Connecticut, had become a major figure in Liberian education and religion.¹ This extraordinary event was the result of the efforts of the Philadelphia's Ladies' Liberia School Association, an auxiliary to the American Colonization Society (ACS), which by late 1832 had supported Thomson, as well as another black woman named Elizabeth Caesar, as teachers for their newly established schools in Liberia.²

The Philadelphia Ladies' Liberia School Association formed in 1832, and within a few short years it had developed a national association with

¹ "Death of Mrs. Thomson," *Cavalla Messenger* 29 (1864): 215; Randall Burkett, "Elizabeth Mars Johnson Thomson (1807–1864): A Research Note," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 55 (1986): 21–30.

² Gustavus and Elizabeth Caesar left for Liberia in August 1831, sponsored by Lydia Sigourney's "The Charitable Society in the African Sunday School" at Hartford and Philadelphia philanthropist, Beulah Sansom. They were followed in November 1832 by William and Elizabeth Johnson and their infant son, William. Soon after their arrival, the Philadelphia's Ladies' Liberia School Association took over financial responsibility for the women. Gustavus served as a minister in Caldwell, Liberia, until his death in 1834. Elizabeth Caesar remarried A. W. Anderson, a Baptist minister and teacher in Caldwell. William Johnson went to Liberia as a catechist and schoolmaster but died, along with his infant son, within two weeks of arriving in Liberia. Elizabeth Johnson remarried James Thomson, an Episcopalian who had immigrated to Liberia in 1832 from Demerara (British Guyana). See Clifton Hartwell Brewer, *A History of Religious Education in the Episcopal Church to 1835* (New Haven, CT, 1924), 243–46; Burkett, "Elizabeth Mars Johnson Thomson," 23–24.

auxiliaries in cities and towns across the United States.³ Membership in the association increased throughout the 1830s. Between 1834 and 1839, the group averaged forty-one new members a year and took in approximately fifteen hundred dollars per year in donations and subscriptions. The group's success encouraged leaders to interpret their efforts as part of God's providential plan whereby "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God."⁴ In terms of numbers of northern female colonization participants, Philadelphia was in a category by itself. Operating separately from any denomination or mission organization, ecumenical in composition, and working in conjunction with free blacks, the Ladies' Liberia School Association, by establishing and supervising schools in Liberia, was the first American female organization to exert its benevolent powers internationally. Yet, despite its early success, by the mid-1840s the association was struggling and in 1848 it disbanded.⁵

The rise and decline of female colonization efforts in Philadelphia typified northern female colonization activity in antebellum America. Throughout the 1830s, thousands of northern white women rallied in support of colonization. By 1850, though, only a handful of female societies continued to operate, and group remittances by women became rare. Most women's organizations disappeared from the historical record in the 1850s.⁶ This essay reevaluates colonization in light of antebellum female participation in Philadelphia, and it explains the impetus for northern female support as well as the reasons for its decline.

³ During its thirteen-year existence, the association claimed alliances in Columbia, Northumberland, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Athens, Xenia, Columbus, Springfield, and Cincinnati, Ohio; Hartford, Connecticut; Washington, DC; Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts; Burlington, New Jersey; Wilmington, Delaware; and Fredericksburg, Virginia.

⁴ "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God" is part of Psalm 68:1 and was reinterpreted by early colonization supporters to indicate that God was exacting a providential plan to convert Africa and its inhabitants to Christianity through colonization. The phrase became the movement's rallying cry and was frequently repeated in sermons, essays, and orations.

⁵ *First Annual Report of the Ladies' Association, Auxiliary to the American Colonization Society* (Philadelphia, 1833), 1–8. The annual reports are located at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁶ After decades of debate among black and white intellectuals on the merits of colonization, the American Colonization Society was founded in 1816 by several prominent politicians, ministers, and philanthropists. In the nineteenth century, the society would help send over fifteen thousand African Americans to Liberia, resettle over five thousand Africans captured from slave ships engaged in the illegal slave trade, and raise close to three million dollars. P.J. Staudenraus's *The African Colonization Movement, 1816–1865* (New York, 1961) remains the most comprehensive, if dated, history of the movement.

* * *

Scholars have long viewed the American colonization movement as the marginal, hypocritical, and insincere racist opponent of the more radical abolitionist movement, a “sideshow” of “the nation’s more bizarre and racist concepts.” The study of the American colonization movement, however, has experienced a renaissance over the last several years.⁷ Historians more sympathetic to the cause have interpreted colonization’s activities as being central to nineteenth-century American debates on slavery and race.⁸ Yet, scholars have written surprisingly little on the role of women in the movement. The few historians who have studied women in the colonization movement have examined the rise and decline of female support in the South, particularly Virginia, which had a very active colonization movement. Elizabeth Varon’s examination of female colonizationists in the state reveals the significant impact these women had on the slavery debate in antebellum Virginia and dispels the notion that

⁷ This quote is from Marie Tyler-McGraw’s recent book, *An African Republic: Black and White Virginians in the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007), 1. Scholarship on slavery and anti-slavery from the 1970s and 1980s depicted colonization as being racist and in opposition to the more radical and egalitarian abolitionist movement. This scholarship views the ACS as a masculine endeavor, chameleon-like in character, and deceptive to its constituents. Some of the more important works include Douglas R. Egerton, “‘Its Origin Is Not a Little Curious’: A New Look at the American Colonization Society,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (1985): 465–80; Douglas R. Egerton, *Charles Fenton Mercer and the Trial of National Conservatism* (Jackson, MS, 1989); Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens, GA, 1986); Lawrence J. Friedman, “Purifying the White Man’s Country: The American Colonization Society Reconsidered, 1816–1840,” *Societas* 6 (1976): 1–24; Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley, CA, 1998).

⁸ Some historians have placed the ACS back in the antislavery circle. Eric Burin, in *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution* (Gainesville, FL, 2005), examines the national history of the ACS and argues that colonization tended to undermine slavery. Other studies focus on emigration by using regions as a window into the intentions and realities of African colonization. See, for example, Kenneth C. Barnes, *Journey of Hope: The Back-to-Africa Movement in Arkansas in the Late 1800s* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004); Claude A. Clegg III, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004); Richard Hall, *On Africa’s Shore: A History of Maryland in Liberia, 1834–1857* (Baltimore, 2003); and Alan Huffman, *Mississippi in Africa: The Saga of the Slaves of Prospect Hill Plantation and Their Legacy in Liberia* (New York, 2004). Others examine the role of religion and colonization. See James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); Eunjin Park, “White” Americans in “Black” Africa: *Black and White American Methodist Missionaries in Liberia, 1820–1875* (New York, 2001); John Saillant, “Missions in Liberia and Race Relations in the United States, 1822–1860,” in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History*, eds. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2003), 13–28. Still other works have shown how conceptions of manhood influenced colonization, such as John Saillant’s essay “Missions in Liberia” and Bruce Dorsey’s, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, NY, 2002).

southern women did not express their opinions about political issues. Marie Tyler-McGraw argues in *An African Republic: Black and White Virginians in the Making of Liberia* that Virginia women supported colonization for the same reasons they were prominent in other reform efforts. It gave them an opportunity to influence and remake not only American society at large, but also their worlds on a personal and local level. While there are significant continuities between southern and northern female support of colonization, there are also important differences that necessitate a focused study of northern women. Perhaps most obvious, as Eric Burin has shown, the majority of southern women colonizationists were slave owners and had the power to participate directly in the colonizing process by emancipating their own slaves. For northern women slavery was usually a distant abstraction.⁹

In one sense it is not surprising that historians have slighted northern female support for colonization. Initially, colonization leaders gave little thought as to how women might contribute to the cause. Despite its posture as a religious and benevolent organization, the colonization society promoted itself as a political movement.¹⁰ This was, in part, because the group emerged before the ascent of the powerful benevolent movement in America. It was also a practical move. Not only would colonization be very expensive, but it also would involve a high level of interaction among the group, state governments, and foreign countries. So the group headquartered in the nation's capital, held annual meetings in the Hall of the House of Representatives, and boasted of the political male elite who served as leaders. For two decades it aggressively sought federal support.

⁹ Elizabeth Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); Tyler-McGraw, *African Republic*.

¹⁰ The birth of the American missionary movement inspired both ACS founder Robert Finley and early promoter Samuel Mills. An unplanned event in rural Massachusetts, the famous "Haystack Prayer Meeting," had a profound effect on the African colonization movement. In 1806, Mills and several other Williams College students got caught in a thunderstorm one afternoon as they prayed together outside. They took shelter under a nearby haystack and pledged themselves to missionary service. This event marked the beginning of the American foreign missionary movement. By the time of his ordination in 1815, Mills had helped form the famous and long-lived American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Education Society, the American Bible Society, and the United Foreign Missionary Society. Mills had also come to believe that systematic colonization of African Americans would strengthen American society and benefit the emigrating African American. In 1816, Mills learned of a plan being promoted in New York and New Jersey by Robert Finley, a New Jersey Presbyterian minister, for government support of African colonization; he agreed to promote the idea as he traveled around the country raising money for benevolent societies. In 1818, Mills embarked for the shores of Africa as an agent for the newly formed American Colonization Society.

Intent on securing federal funding, the society made only weak attempts to build local organizations—male or female. It was not until the late 1820s, with only limited assistance from the federal government as well as inspiration from the burgeoning benevolent movement, that the ACS turned to the public. Leaders continued to press the federal and state legislatures for endorsements and money, but by the beginning of the 1830s, they had recast colonization as a national benevolent movement and appealed especially to ministers, churches, and women.

In another sense, however, it is surprising that historians have not delved into the subject with more energy, in part because it became a topic of great discussion among colonization supporters in the 1830s and beyond. Female involvement in colonization in the 1820s was confined to a few geographic areas, primarily in the Upper South, and limited to wealthy slave-owning women. But by the mid-1830s, women's colonization efforts had expanded into the North and West and had become more associational. Moreover, colonization attracted some of the nation's most recognized female leaders and writers. Lydia Sigourney, Sarah Hale, and Mary Griffith, as well as popular Sunday school tract writers Helen Cross Knight and Sarah Tuttle, campaigned for the cause. By 1840, white women across the North responded to the call, expressing their support through their churches, fundraising, writing books and poems, and forming auxiliary societies. They also promoted Liberian missions and education, and some even became missionaries to Liberia themselves.

* * *

Women's support for colonization was strong in Philadelphia in part because of the inspiring leadership of the movement's first president, Beulah Biddle Sansom, a Quaker minister who was highly regarded within her community. Originally from New Jersey, Sansom's marriage in 1798 to Joseph Sansom, a well-regarded artist, positioned her in one of the wealthiest and most prominent Quaker families in Philadelphia. With no children of her own, Sansom spent much of her time engaged in numerous benevolent activities. She was especially dedicated to reform efforts in Liberia, which she supported with such zeal that "if she had \$10,000 a year . . . [she] would devote it to the good cause."¹¹ In 1831, she founded

¹¹ Elliot Cresson, Washington, DC, to Mary Blackford, Fredericksburg, VA, Sept. 19, 1835. Blackford Papers, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

two female schools in Monrovia and Caldwell, Liberia, with her own funds and the resources of a few acquaintances. The next year she agreed to become the president of the “Ladies’ Association, Auxiliary to the Colonization Society,” later renamed the “Ladies’ Liberia School Association,” on the condition that the group take over the responsibility of her schools. The association attracted some of Philadelphia’s most well-respected women, including Rachel Blanding, the wife of renowned naturalist and doctor William Blanding, Anne Marie Tilghman, the wife of Benjamin Tilghman, one of Philadelphia’s most prominent lawyers and merchants, and Margaret Breckinridge, a woman “devoted to the work of Foreign Missions.”¹² Margaret was the wife of Rev. John Breckinridge, the president of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and the uncle to Democratic presidential candidate John C. Breckinridge. The group also appealed to some of Philadelphia’s leading Quaker families, such as the Coates, Morris, Cope, Ellis, Cresson, Yarnell, and Perot families.

Sansom was the typical reformer of the period who had an interest in multiple benevolent activities. When she died in 1837 she left the following sums to various institutions:

Distressed families and individuals—\$500
 Indigent Widows and Single Women’s Society of Philadelphia—\$200
 Friends’ Asylum for the Insane—\$200
 Friends’ Reading Room Association—\$200
 Colored Infant School—\$50
 Adelphia Colored Infant School—\$50
 Four coloured Individuals—\$100
 Abolition Society of Pennsylvania—\$200
 Several coloured individuals at Bassa Cove, Liberia—\$100
 Ladies’ Liberian Association—\$100
 Colonization Society of Pennsylvania—\$1,000

As her will indicated, Sansom, like many other colonizationists, did not view colonization and the abolition of slavery as contradictory. Her goal was “the emancipation of the slave and the preservation of the union.” In her will she acknowledged that she “always approved of colonizing the coloured people of the United States in Africa.” At the same time, she

¹² John Breckinridge, *A Memoir of Mrs. Margaret Breckinridge* (Philadelphia, 1839), 46.

believed in “promoting the abolition of slavery.”¹³ Yet the assertion that Sansom hoped for an end to slavery did not mean that she was an abolitionist. She believed the abolitionists’ efforts were “injuring rather than benefiting the coloured population,” and the country could only pray that good would eventually be brought “out of all the evil, the contention, wrangling, and excitement.”¹⁴ She, like the majority of northern colonizationists in the 1830s, believed that slavery would die a natural death, the result of voluntary action by slaveholders, speeded up through persuasion and peaceful accommodation. Colonizationists stressed that they differed from abolitionists because they refused to interfere with the legally entrenched institution other than by encouraging owners to manumit their slaves for the purpose of colonizing them in Africa. In the end, colonizationists may have deplored slavery but believed it a better option than threatening the political future of the United States and setting hundreds of thousands of African Americans free to take up residence across the nation.

Sansom’s leadership was not the only reason colonization support thrived in Philadelphia. The colonization movement also benefitted from the city’s close economic connections with the South. The city was the home of a multitude of manufacturers who depended on cotton textiles from the South, and they, in turn, supplied southerners with machines and manufactured goods. As Gary Nash has noted, few Philadelphia ministers after 1830 preached against slavery because their congregations were filled with southern-born parishioners and individuals whose economic well-being depended on slave labor. Instead, many ministers adopted the position of Albert Barnes, the pastor of Philadelphia’s First Presbyterian Church, who argued that slavery was just one of several evils plaguing America and that ministers should focus their sermons on issues “which are near and not those that are remote.”¹⁵

Furthermore, colonization support flourished in Philadelphia because, as the southernmost northern city, thousands of free African Americans lived there, and by 1830 it had become the most important urban center

¹³ Beulah Sansom, Germantown, PA, to Mary Blackford, Fredericksburg, VA, Sept. 1, 1835, Blackford Papers; Beulah Sansom, “Last Will and Testament,” Oct. 13, 1837, book 12, no. 182, microfilm, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. List compiled from Sansom’s will. Spelling is Sansom’s.

¹⁴ Beulah Sansom, Philadelphia, to Mary Blackford, Fredericksburg, Apr. 13, 1835, Blackford Papers.

¹⁵ Gary Nash, *First City: Philadelphia and the Forging of Historical Memory* (Philadelphia, 2001), 189; Barnes is quoted in Elizabeth M. Geffen, “Philadelphia Protestantism and Social Reform,” *Pennsylvania History* 30 (1963): 197.

for blacks in the country. As such, the city served as the base for anticolonization activism and the growing organizational efforts of abolitionists. Most of Philadelphia's black community was hostile to the colonization movement because it represented the possibility of forced removal.¹⁶ Distrustful of the ACS's slaveholding leadership, many suspected that the movement wanted to remove the free black population in order to strengthen slavery and that it was part of a larger strategy to strip the free black population of its political influence. The flood of negative reports about the conditions in Liberia only intensified their repudiations. Increasingly vigorous and articulate critiques of the ACS flooded newspapers such as the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, Philadelphia's leading abolitionist newspaper. The abolitionist press deemed the ACS a nefarious scheme whose real intention was to send free African Americans away from the United States in order to remove them as advocates for freeing slaves. White abolitionists, led by William Lloyd Garrison, joined in on the attack, decrying the movement as a slave owners' ruse that would encourage Liberia to absorb the South's free blacks in order to continue the slave system in America.¹⁷

Abolitionism and black activism, however, met with resistance and helped foster a climate of racial fear in northern cities like Philadelphia. The city witnessed recurring antiabolitionist and race riots during the 1830s and 1840s as fears of immediate abolition spread. There were at least nine race riots in Philadelphia between 1834 and 1838 alone. In August 1834, antiblack rioters invaded the black community, killed two African Americans, and destroyed two churches and twenty homes. The most notorious example of antiabolitionist violence occurred with the burning of Pennsylvania Hall in May 1838. The hall had been built to serve as a meeting place and a headquarters for abolitionists. On May 13, the building opened for four days of antislavery meetings with national

¹⁶ It is important to note that not all black activists agreed on the issue of colonization. There were blacks who encouraged voluntary emigration and who actually chose to emigrate themselves.

¹⁷ On black activism and patriotism among antebellum free blacks, see Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002); Leslie M. Alexander, *African or American? Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784–1861* (Chicago, 2008). On Philadelphia, see Emma Lapsansky-Werner, *Neighborhoods in Transition: William Penn's Dream and Urban Reality* (New York, 1994); Nash, *First City*; Bruce Dorsey, "Friends Becoming Enemies: Philadelphia Benevolence and the Neglected Era of American Quaker History," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (1998): 395–96; Jean R. Soderlund, "Priorities and Power: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca, NY, 1994), 69–70; Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women*, 425.

abolitionist leaders in attendance, but by the morning of May 18 all that remained of the building was the foundation; a white mob had destroyed it. The next evening rioters set fire to the Friends Home for Colored Orphans and nearly destroyed two black churches.¹⁸

Most white Philadelphians did not participate in such extreme behavior, and colonizationists were not known to have promoted or engaged in the rioting. Nevertheless, colonizationists did benefit from public perceptions of abolitionists as agitators and played on white racial fears. In the 1830s and early 1840s, most white Philadelphians were appalled by the militant antislavery agitation spreading across the north and the violence that had erupted in their own streets. Rev. John Breckinridge, president of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, argued that it was white Philadelphians' duty to "stave off the Goths and vandals of Garrisonism."¹⁹ The Presbyterian Synod of Philadelphia condemned abolitionists as "reckless of consequence, and desperate in spirit" and warned that the abolition of slavery would "rend the Church and the Union in twain." The synod urged pastors and churches to unite behind the "great redeeming cause of African colonization."²⁰ Not surprisingly, by the middle of the 1830s, Philadelphia was the headquarters of an energetic, independent state colonization society and the home to at least three separate women's colonization groups, including the most conspicuous one—the Ladies' Liberia School Association.

Ironically, Philadelphia was the home of the first abolitionist society, founded in 1775. The city's Quaker population instigated Philadelphia's early antislavery impulse. Nearly all American Quakers opposed slavery during the nation's early years, yet two different approaches to solving the problem of slavery emerged in the 1820s. Differences over how to treat slavery arose as a result of the accommodation some Quakers made with the emerging industrial world or the softened stance of Quakers who lived in slave states. Disparities also appeared in the context of an internal battle within the Society of Friends. In April 1827, American Quakers experienced a bitter schism, known as the Hicksite schism, after

¹⁸ On Philadelphia race riots, see Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 273–76; John Runcie, "Hunting the Nigs' in Philadelphia: The Race Riot of August 1834," *Pennsylvania History* 39 (1972): 187–218. For antiabolitionist riots, see Leonard L. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York, 1970).

¹⁹ Breckinridge was the uncle of 1860 Democratic presidential candidate John C. Breckinridge. Quote in Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 235.

²⁰ "Abolitionists," *Philanthropist*, Jan. 1, 1836.

a group of Quaker reformers separated themselves from the main body of Friends and formed their own independent meeting during the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The schism reverberated around the country. By the end of the decade there were two factions of Quakers with two distinct responses to slavery. The majority, known as the "Orthodox" party for its attachment to traditional Protestant doctrines, embraced colonization as a means of gradually ending slavery. The other faction acquired the label "Hicksite" for its sympathy with the ministry and teaching of New York Quaker Elias Hicks. Hicksite Quakers nearly universally opposed colonization and commonly served as the core of immediate abolition societies. In Philadelphia, Hicksite Quakers were prominent among those joining Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society, and they comprised between 60 and 70 percent of the known Quakers in Philadelphia's anti-slavery societies during the 1830s. Philadelphia's orthodox Quakers, on the other hand, were prominent in the Pennsylvania Colonization Society. Perhaps the best-known Quaker colonizationist was Elliot Cresson. Born in Philadelphia in 1796, he acquired a fortune as a merchant and then made colonization his life work. He was the leading figure of Philadelphia's Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania (YMCS), the state's independent and leading colonization society.²¹

Leaders of the YMCS believed the ACS's inept financial management and reluctance to broaden its constitutional objectives to include the gradual abolition of slavery had alienated many of its northern constituents. They hoped to attract, on the one hand, the support of those who were dissatisfied with the ACS's confusing position on slavery and financial mismanagement, and, on the other, those disturbed by the abolitionists' radical tactics and uncompromising attitude. Combining their efforts with the newly independent New York Colonization Society, the two societies established a settlement in Liberia called Bassa Cove in 1834.²²

Male leaders believed women were crucial to their success. Cresson argued that the YMCS should expend maximum effort to organize women for "the various features of our enterprise—some for missions—

²¹ See Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women* and "Friends Becoming Enemies," and Soderlund, "Priorities and Power"; On Quaker support of the Ladies' Liberia School Association, see the association's annual reports, 1833–41.

²² On the independent colonization movement in Pennsylvania, see Kurt Lee Kocher, "A Duty to America and Africa: A History of the Independent African Colonization Movement in Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 51 (1984): 118–53.

some for schools—some for erecting a particular Church.” The *Colonization Herald*, the YMCS’s newspaper, filled its pages with accounts of women’s work for colonization. The YMCS’s 1837 annual report noted that “wherever the voice of humanity calls, there is woman to respond like a ministering angel, to pity and relieve.” Rev. George Bethune compared women’s generosity to that of the woman who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume. “We may say of these ladies,” asserted Bethune, “what one said to a woman who had done him [Jesus] a sweet service—‘She has done what she could’ . . . these Christian ladies have rocked the cradle of a nation.” Rev. Alexander Proudfit, the agent and corresponding secretary of the New York Colonization Society, appealed to female church members to designate their pastors as either life members or directors of the society. “Will you not, madam, strengthen our hands, and aid the cause of Colonization,” asked Proudfit, “and thus you may bring on you and yours the blessing of many an African ‘who is ready to perish, without God, and without hope.’”²³

The Philadelphia Ladies’ Liberia School Association had ambitious colonization plans and expected those working for them to share their aspirations. The first annual report boasted of three schools under the care of the association, two prosperous female schools with over one hundred students, and a recently established school for Africans rescued from slave ships by American troops. Elizabeth Johnson Thomson and Elizabeth Caesar headed the female schools in Monrovia and Caldwell. The association had also recently employed James Eden, a freedman from Charleston, South Carolina, to operate the school for recaptured Africans in New Georgia, Liberia. Before leaving South Carolina, Eden was the chairman of a group of free African Americans in Charleston contemplating immigrating to Liberia. Eden was convinced that Africa held the most promise for African Americans. At a meeting on December 6, 1831, he told the group that “the sacrifices that will be made here [Africa] are not worth a thought, when compared with the advantages we will have in Africa. There we and our children will enjoy every privilege, as well as civil and religious liberty.”²⁴ The next year, 157 free men, women, and

²³ Elliot Cresson, Woodstock, VT, to Samuel Wilkeson, New York, Nov. 28, 1838, American Colonization Society Records, 1792–1964, Library of Congress. “Report of the Board of Managers,” *Colonization Herald*, Mar. 18, 1837; G. W. Bethune, “Speech at the New York City Colonization Society Annual Meeting,” *Colonization Herald*, May 21, 1836; Alexander Proudfit, “Circular,” *Colonization Herald*, Mar. 19, 1836.

²⁴ “Emigration to Liberia,” *Friend*, June 30, 1832.

children, including Eden, his wife, and 7 children, left Charleston for Liberia on the ship *Hercules*. They arrived at Monrovia on January 16, 1833.²⁵ Not long after, the colony's governor, Joseph Mechlin, appointed Eden a teacher at the school in New Georgia on the condition that the Ladies' Liberia School Association approved the governor's selection. The women confirmed the governor's choice, and by the spring of 1834, the school had over sixty male and female students, and construction had begun for a thatched schoolhouse. Eden would stay at the school until he moved to Monrovia, Liberia, in 1839.²⁶

Confident in their cause, the women began plans to build a high school on Factory Island, a fifty-acre island off the coast of Bassa Cove, Liberia. At the time, the country had numerous primary schools but no secondary institution. In February 1839, the association gave \$650 dollars to Thomas Buchanan, an agent of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, before he left for Bassa Cove to begin building the school.²⁷ In an effort to broaden support for the high school, the association issued a circular that encouraged women throughout the United States to form societies to help raise funds for the school. Issued in May 1839, the circular appealed to female benevolence and explained that all women could contribute regardless of their position on colonization because support of education in Liberia was an impartial benevolent cause. Whatever women's "difference of opinion . . . on the subject of African colonization," the circular asserted, "few would object to any intelligent plan for elevating the intellectual and moral condition of those already settled on the shores" of Africa.²⁸

The Philadelphia women echoed colonization writers, editors, and lecturers who also emphasized that female efforts were nonpartisan. When Rev. George Bethune addressed the New York City Colonization Society,

²⁵ Within ten years, at least 40 percent of the immigrants had died, including four of Eden's children and a brother. Tom W. Shick, Roll of the Emigrants to the Colony of Liberia Sent by the American Colonization Society from 1820–1843 [computer file] and Tom W. Shick, Liberian Census Data, 1843 [computer file] (Madison, WI: Tom W. Shick [producer], 1973, Data and Program Library Service [distributor], 1973 and 1996), both at <http://dpls.dacc.wisc.edu/Liberia/index.html> (accessed Nov. 15, 2005).

²⁶ *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Association, Auxiliary to the American Colonization Society* (Philadelphia, 1834), 14–16; *Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia, 1840), 10–12.

²⁷ *Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia, 1841), 7–11.

²⁸ "Circular," *Friend*, May 25, 1839; "Liberia High School," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16 (1840): 164–69.

he encouraged the women in his audience to feel a special and exalted status in colonization efforts. He compared them to the women of the Roman republic when the Romans and the Sabines went to war. The Roman women “threw themselves between the enraged parties, and by their success . . . placed the foundations of the Roman greatness beyond the possibility of being shaken.” Likewise, female colonizationists “throw themselves between the North and the South,” “pacify” the sectional tensions, and “allay those quarrels which threatened to shake our republic to its foundations.” Others pointed to the “disinterested benevolence” exhibited in the educational work of women in Liberia as evidence that colonization advocates were interested in the well-being of African Americans and were not simply seeking to “rid the United States of coloured men.” “It has been thundered against the friends of the colony, that their only object is to rid the United States of coloured men,” noted an editor of the *Colonization Herald*, most likely Quaker Elliot Cresson. But the advantage “the colony must reap from such disinterested benevolence” refutes such an assertion. The article ends with the proclamation that male leaders around the country should exclaim, “God bless you, ladies.”²⁹

Colonization leaders understood the power women exerted in benevolent causes and hoped to benefit from it. They encouraged women to focus their efforts on supporting Liberian schools, churches, and missions. They should act as peacemakers, using their influence to promote social consensus and conservative principles. ACS secretary Ralph Gurley argued, “The seal of their good opinion is the best and surest passport to general favour.” Other leaders shared Gurley’s conviction that the support of females indicated “a most propitious omen to the future hopes and prospects of the Society.” Henry Clay, speaking at the annual meeting in 1829, declared, “Our fair country women . . . have manifested a warm

²⁹ “N.Y. City Colonization Society,” and “Schools in Liberia,” *Colonization Herald*, May 21, 1836, and Oct. 24, 1835. The Rape of the Sabine Women is a mythological event that supposedly occurred shortly after the founding of Rome. In an effort to expand, the new city of Rome had granted citizenship to criminals and lawless persons. Though it was winning the wars against its neighbors, a lack of women resulted in a shortage of male offspring. The neighboring town refused Roman requests to marry its women, but it accepted an invitation to a huge religious celebration in honor of Neptune. In the middle of the party, the Romans rushed in and abducted the Sabine women, who were forced to marry their rapists. The Sabines, horrified at this violation of the rules of hospitality, went home to prepare for war. When they later returned in arms to take back their women by force, the Sabine women had reconciled with their new husbands; they stopped the battle before it started by placing themselves between the two groups. With war averted, the city of Rome prospered.

approbation of that of the Colonization Society. . . . Their co-operation was wanted to complete the circle of moral exertion." Benjamin Latrobe, an agent for the ACS in Maryland, believed that success depended upon the involvement of women because "by getting women enlisted for us we may move the men, who may ultimately move the government."³⁰

Ironically, the same male colonization leaders who claimed females were uninterested in political matters sought to prevent women from supporting abolition. There was a fear among many male colonization leaders that women were especially vulnerable to the immediatists' cause. Elliot Cresson argued, "The calls are so loud & frequent, that if the Ladies are not enlisted with us, we shall find very many of them carried away by their feelings & made very efficient foes."³¹ So while colonization leaders' rhetoric asserted that female colonizationists were disinterested in the politics of slavery, colonizationists understood that women could have an intense interest in race relations and the well-being of the country. Moreover, the very presence of female colonization supporters legitimized the assumption that women had a duty to bring their moral principles concerning race and slavery into the public sphere.

The Philadelphia Ladies' Liberia School Association leaders pointed with pride to their impartiality regarding slavery and how their efforts fit unequivocally within the "separate spheres" ideology that defined a woman's role as being domestic and private, separate from the public sphere. The group's purpose, they asserted, was to promote education in Liberia, a cause "every American" could support. They had "no concern" regarding the ACS's efforts. The next year's annual report repeated in bolder terms the society's claim to impartiality. "While it belongs to the male part of a population to determine the political institutions of a country," they hoped "to enlist the sympathies of all, as the importance of education is universally acknowledged."³²

Yet, while they alleged to be neither for nor against colonization, their work was clearly linked to the movement. In fact, they worked intimately

³⁰ "Colonization Society and the Ladies," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 4 (1829): 350; *Twelfth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (1818; repr., New York, 1969), x; Benjamin Latrobe, Baltimore, to Ralph Gurley, Washington, DC, Jan. 10, 1829, American Colonization Society Papers.

³¹ Elliot Cresson, Woodstock, VT, to Samuel Wilkeson, New York, Nov. 28, 1838, American Colonization Society Papers.

³² *First Annual Report of the Ladies' Association*, 3; *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Association*, 10.

with ACS leaders and Liberian leaders. Several of the women were the wives or daughters of leaders in the Pennsylvania Colonization Society and Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania. Male colonization leaders spoke at their annual meetings. Article 2 of their constitution stated that funds would be applied "with the consent of the American Colonization Society." The organization's name, even, revealed the close ties it had with the ACS: the Ladies' Association, Auxiliary to the American Colonization Society. When it changed its name in 1834 to the Ladies' Liberia School Association, it remained connected to the colonization movement, working closely with the Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania. For instance, Quakers Edward Y. Hankinson and his wife were among the first white settlers in Bassa Cove. The Philadelphia Ladies' Liberia School Association sent the couple to be teachers at a new manual labor school, but Edward Hankinson was also to assume the position of governor of the colony.³³ Another example of the close working relationship between the Ladies' Liberia School Association and the YMCS occurred in February 1839. The women employed Thomas Buchanan, the agent who was headed to Bassa Cove to serve as the colony's governor, to oversee the building of their high school.³⁴

The women of the Ladies' Liberia School Association most often justified their participation in the colonization movement as an extension of their natural capacity as educators. Female educational efforts received new and intense attention in the 1820s and 1830s and had a society-wide impact on women's roles. Some of the most vocal proponents, such as Emma Willard, Catharine Beecher, and Sarah Hale (who were also colonization supporters), argued that the fulfillment of women's proper roles as wives and mothers began with a proper education; they also believed that women had a duty to receive an education so that they could become

³³ "Formation of Auxiliary Societies," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 8 (1832): 190; *First Annual Report of the Ladies' Association*, 3; *Third Annual Report of the Ladies' Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia, 1835), 9–10.

³⁴ *Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia, 1839), 10; *Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association*, 7, 10–11; *Tenth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association*, 10–11; "Auxiliary Societies," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 11 (1835): 214–21; "A Leaf from 'Reminiscences of Liberia,'" *African Repository* 41 (1865): 244. The YMCS formed in 1834 as a result of a grievances with the ACS. In 1837 it united with the largely inactive PCS and adopted its name. See Eric Burin, "Rethinking Northern White Support for the African Colonization Movement: The Pennsylvania Colonization Society as an Agent of Emancipation," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 127 (2003): 210–11.

responsible teachers of the young. Many of these schools emphasized missionary work in the hopes that some graduates might carry the cultural and civilizing influences of the Gospel to “heathen lands” and into the West and South as missionary-educators. For female colonizationists, educational work in Liberia seemed an obvious venue for women’s great task of enlightening the world. The women agreed that their educational work in Africa meant that “our own sex can co-operate” without “infringing on the moral delicacy which her nature and her station in society alike impose on her.”³⁵

By the mid 1830s, the majority of women’s groups looked to societies like Philadelphia’s Ladies’ Liberia School Association as their model and focused their efforts on education in Liberia, a field considered “pure, peaceful and pious.” In an 1844 speech before a ladies’ colonization auxiliary organization in Wheeling, Virginia, Richard Henry Lee confirmed the direct association between women’s participation in colonization and education. “There are various forms in which you may apply any pecuniary aid you may be able to command. It may be applied to support common schools in the colonies, for children of colonists and natives; or schools for females alone . . . or to educate colored men for missions among the native tribes.” Lee’s speech simply echoed what had become the reality for women’s associations by the mid 1830s.³⁶

Colonizationists explained that educational efforts in Africa were peaceful and reflected disinterested benevolence in contradistinction to the divisive and combative tactics of abolitionists. Into the 1830s, it seemed to many that the power of benevolent suasion could bring a peaceable end to the slavery system, as it had done in Britain. Colonization would allow the country to avoid a civil war and keep fragile denominations united, and female colonization efforts would help foster accord and harmony. Beulah Sansom wrote to her southern, slave-owning

³⁵ On female education, see Anne Firor Scott, “The Ever-widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary, 1822–1872,” in *The Social History of American Education*, ed. B. Edward McClellan and William J. Reese (Urbana, IL, 1988), 137–64; Tiffany K. Wayne, *Women’s Roles in Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport, CT, 2007); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New York, 1976); Willystine Goodsell, *Pioneers of Women’s Education in the United States: Emma Willard, Catharine Beecher, Mary Lyon* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1970); Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (Oxford, 1997); “Education in Africa” (n.p., n.d.), 2, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

³⁶ “Address of Richard Henry Lee, Before the Ladies of Wheeling,” *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 20 (1844): 323; “The Boston Ladies’ Society,” *Colonization Herald*, Dec. 17, 1836; *Second Annual Report of the Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa* (New York, 1836), 12; “Education in Africa,” *American Ladies’ Magazine* 9 (1836): 655–56.

friend Mary Blackford that one reason she supported colonization was because it promoted “emancipation of the slave and the preservation of the union.” Catharine Beecher argued that, unlike abolitionist women, who stepped outside the bounds of propriety, colonizationists acted on “principles which furnish no matter for anger and strife, and fierce denunciation and hate; nor are they . . . susceptible of causing agitation and alarm among the fellow citizens in other parts of the union.” According to Beecher, female colonizationists did not aim to abolish slavery or establish colonies. Instead, their educational efforts in the colonies would make “those who by any means may receive the boon of freedom, wise and good.” No one, she concluded, could oppose this type of benevolent activity.³⁷

Colonization leaders believed that female participation proved the righteousness of their cause. “There is a delicacy in the perception of woman’s heart, which seizes, with the certainty of instinct, on that which is good, and shrinks from that which is wrong,” proclaimed George Bethune. “When I remember that the [Colonization] Society has been assailed by those who have done us cruel wrong, though they have not been able to destroy us, my heart goes up to heaven thanking God that he has given us the testimony of these faithful women, and they are not a few, that we are right, and that our opponents are wrong.” Thus, the participation of women helped justify colonization at the same time it condemned abolitionists.³⁸

For the Philadelphia women and other female colonization supporters, the obligation to act was a clear extension of religious faith. Often women turned to religious terminology to describe the nature of their cause. In its first annual report, the Ladies’ Association interpreted its efforts as part of God’s providential plan to Christianize Africa. It believed its work would result in a time when the children of emigrants, trained and nurtured in the “paths of religion and virtue,” would spread their faith to the surrounding country and help convert the continent to Christianity. The managers of the Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa informed their first two teachers that in “guiding so many immortal souls into the paths of righteousness, and instructing them in the things pertaining not only to this life, but that which is to

³⁷ Catharine Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism with Reference to the Duty of American Females* (Philadelphia, 1837), 46, 102; Beulah Sansom, Germantown, to Mary Blackford, Fredericksburg, Sept. 1, 1835, Blackford Papers.

³⁸ “N.Y. City Colonization Society,” *Colonization Herald*, May 21, 1836.

come . . . we send you forth as leaders to the blind, and a light to those who are ready to perish for lack of knowledge.” While they were anxious for the intellectual improvement of the students, the women were more concerned that “the great principles of evangelical truth be carefully and perseveringly instilled” so that all their instructions “should have reference . . . to moral and religious improvement.”³⁹

Their word choice revealed the magnitude of the change that they sought to produce and the sacred process in which they felt engaged. It also revealed that they perceived their efforts to have global implications. The Ladies’ Baptist Colonization Society in Philadelphia agreed. Shortly after forming in 1836, the group circulated an address to “The Females of the Baptist Churches.” It solicited the cooperation of Baptist women, noting that “there is a claim upon us—the vast Peninsula of Africa lies in thick darkness, it must be civilized, and evangelized.” Colonization, it asserted, was the best means to accomplish this work. “The dark-browed race treads our soil, but it is to them a stranger’s land and a home of degradation. Can we, who enjoy the blessings of liberty, the light of that gospel which alone places woman in her proper sphere . . . withhold our aid from Africa’s sons and daughters.”⁴⁰

Women who joined colonization societies believed that maternal responsibility had global implications. Indeed, American women first exerted their benevolent powers internationally through the colonization movement and the establishment and supervision of schools in Liberia. Female colonizationists felt that the United States was a specially blessed place and saw their own sex as being exceptionally privileged. This status encouraged them to act as the conscience, not just of the nation, but of the world. Just as benevolent women might extend their concerns to the poor, the widow, and the orphan in America, so too might women legitimately engage in moral and religious reform in locations outside America. Moreover, Liberia was the first place outside of the United States where white and black women worked together towards a common purpose. Ironically, the racial prejudice that encouraged white women to view black Americans as foreigners also fostered cooperation between northern white and black women. Several northern colonization groups, including Philadelphia’s Ladies’ Liberia School Association, interviewed

³⁹ *First Annual Report of the Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa* (New York, 1835), 6–7.

⁴⁰ “Circular,” *Colonization Herald*, Dec. 3, 1836.

and hired black men and women to teach in Liberia, paid their yearly salary, and supervised their work. Despite significant differences on a number of issues related to colonization, both black American teacher-missionaries and white female colonization supporters stressed the "otherness" of Africans and shared a belief in an expansionist Christian ideology.

In 1832, several years before the formation of racially integrated female antislavery societies, Philadelphia's Ladies' Association hired Elizabeth Caesar as a teacher at a salary of two hundred dollars a year. The same year, they hired Elizabeth Johnson Thomson, another African American who had recently arrived in Liberia.⁴¹ Caesar had begun a girls' school in Cadwell in December 1831, and Thomson had started a school in Monrovia after her arrival. Both schools were immediately popular among the inhabitants, and white observers praised the schools as "the soul and spirit of education in the Colony." Thomson complained that her school was too well attended. "The number continues quite large, entirely too large for one teacher. Justice is not done to either class." Thomson's school averaged seventy students, ages six to fifteen, and Caesar's school had around sixty. Although both teachers requested an assistant, the Ladies' Association did not have the funds to hire one.⁴²

Both women, committed Episcopalians whose husbands served as missionaries in the colony, understood their efforts as being primarily religious in nature. For almost four years, the women labored in overcrowded and undersupplied schools. Both experienced sickness and faced the death of loved ones yet remained committed to their schools and the colony. Thomson stated confidently, "You doubtless have heard of all my afflictions and misfortune that I have met with . . . [yet] I have never regretted one moment coming to this place." She believed God had made her "an instrument in his hands of doing good."⁴³

Caesar died on December 24, 1835, exactly four years after she opened her school in Caldwell; she was thirty-eight years old. In one of her last letters, she expressed gratitude to Beulah Sansom: "You have set a good

⁴¹ See Brewer, *History of Religious Education in the Episcopal Church*, 243–46; Burkett, "Elizabeth Mars Johnson Thomson," 23–24.

⁴² J. B. Pinney, "Extracts of a Letter Addressed to the President of the Ladies' Association Auxiliary to the American Colonization Society," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10 (1834): 89; *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Association*, 4–5.

⁴³ Elizabeth Thompson, "Liberia," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10 (1834): 188. Thomson's name is frequently misspelled Thompson, as it is in this article.

example in Liberia; I hope the rising generation will follow your good works. . . . I hope God will reward you a Hundred fold, for what you have done for our race."⁴⁴ Thomson would go on to become a major figure in Liberia, and she died in 1864 at the age of fifty-six. Like other educated settler women, she helped form and lead benevolent and charitable societies, encouraging American Christian values among settlers and the African population. Her unusually long tenure in Africa earned her the title "Mother of Missions."⁴⁵

The optimism that characterized the Ladies' Liberia School Association in the 1830s waned by the early 1840s. In 1840 only ten new members joined the group. The next year only eight joined, even as donations to the general fund dropped precipitously. In 1841, with memberships declining and funds falling off, the group transferred control of the two girls' schools and the school in New Georgia to the Methodist mission. This was done in part to allow the women to focus their efforts on the high school. Certainly financial deficiencies also contributed to the transfer. The high school on Factory Island was finally in operation in the spring of 1842, but the society had underestimated the difficulties of building a school thousands of miles away. The association hired Dr. Wesley Johnson, a white physician from New York who had first gone to Bassa Cove under the direction of the New York and Pennsylvania state colonization societies, as the principal of the school at a salary of one thousand dollars a year. Just one year later, in May 1843, Johnson returned to Hillside, New York, for health reasons; he died two months later.⁴⁶

The women encountered staffing problems as well. After Johnson returned to America, the association suspended the school and put the building under the care of George Seymour, who would later become a well-known African American explorer of Africa. Seymour lived in the building for nearly two years as the society searched for a teacher and raised funds. The society finally found its new teacher, Ishmael Locke, an African American originally from Salem, Massachusetts, who was educated at Cambridge University with support from the Society of Friends. Immediately upon his arrival at the school in 1845, however, he reported that he was "dissatisfied with every thing connected" with the school.

⁴⁴ Pinney, "Extracts of a Letter," 89.

⁴⁵ Harriette G. Brittan, *Scenes and Incidents of Every-Day Life in Africa* (New York, 1859), 79.

⁴⁶ *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia, 1844), 1–10.

Locke recommended spending two to three hundred dollars to repair the building.⁴⁷

After the poor report from Locke, the Ladies' Liberia School Association offered to transfer the high school on Factory Island to the Presbyterian mission. The Presbyterian foreign mission board declined the offer to buy the land and school, most likely because of strategic issues related to where the mission board wanted to locate mission stations in Liberia. Discouraged and disappointed, the association limped along for another three years, ultimately giving up its educational efforts in Africa in 1848 when it handed over the property and school to the Pennsylvania Colonization Society on condition that it be used for educational purposes. But by 1849 the schoolhouse was rapidly decaying. An Episcopal missionary reported that weather and, especially, ants had severely damaged the roofs and floors, and the formerly well-cultivated grounds were overgrown with bushes, weeds, and brambles.⁴⁸

The decline of northern female colonization support had several causes. First, overall support for colonization diminished in the 1840s in response to the successful denunciations by black activists and abolitionists. Scholars have rightly maintained that colonizationists ignored those most fundamentally concerned with the issue—the blacks themselves. From the outset, black Americans proved, on the whole, to be unwilling recruits to the resettlement plan. Three thousand free blacks rallied together in Philadelphia in 1817 to denounce the project. In the following years, prominent free black leaders vehemently condemned colonization

⁴⁷ Before leaving for Liberia, Locke taught school in Salem, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. While in Liberia he met and married Sarah Shorter Hawkins, who was from Kentucky. Locke and his wife returned to America around 1849, and he served as headmaster of a school in Providence, Rhode Island, and as principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. He died in 1854. Locke's grandson, Alain LeRoy Locke (1885–1954), was a distinguished philosopher who was the first African American Rhodes Scholar and an important figure in the "Harlem Renaissance." See Michael R. Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," in *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*, eds. Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston (New York, 1982), 398–403; "The Ladies' Liberia School Association, of Philadelphia," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16 (1840): 164; *Ninth Annual Report of the Ladies' Liberia School Association*, 3–8; *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association*, 1–10; Elizabeth Morris, Germantown, to Walter Lowerie, New York, Aug. 7, 1846, Mission Correspondence and Reports, Liberia Letters, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia; "High School at Factory Island," *Colonization Herald*, Feb. 26, 1845. On George Seymour, see James Fairhead, Tim Geysbeck, Svend E. Holsoe, and Melissa Leach, eds., *African American Explorations in West Africa: Four Nineteenth-Century Diaries* (Bloomington, IN, 2003).

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Morris, Germantown, to Walter Lowerie, New York, Aug. 7, 1846, Mission Correspondence and Reports, Liberia Letters; J. Rambo, "Late from Liberia," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 25 (1849): 279.

through the emerging black press, from pulpits, and at national Negro conventions. Black opponents stood alone for more than a decade before white abolitionists developed an ardent anticolonization stance. But following the publication of William Lloyd Garrison's *Thoughts on African Colonization* in 1832, black and white abolitionists stood together and vehemently protested colonization as a racist scheme. Scholars have also demonstrated that the abolitionist movement threw colonizationists into crisis. Their public statements and harsh criticism successfully discredited colonization as, at best, logistically impossible and, at worst, a slaveholder's scheme to perpetuate slavery. Abolitionist attacks and the defection of key colonization supporters, such as Arthur Tappan, Theodore Weld, Gerrit Smith, and James Birney, pushed northern colonizationists to insist that the ACS broaden its constitutional objectives to include the gradual abolition of slavery in order to attract the support of the thousands of northerners who were dissatisfied with the ACS's confusing position on slavery. But the ACS refused and instead attempted to position itself as a centrist friend of both slave owners and antislavery advocates.

As the slavery issue intensified in the 1840s, with proslavery and abolitionist forces growing more forceful and vocal, colonization's promise of friendship to both parties in the debate increasingly seemed unworkable and even subversive. Abolitionism and black activism negatively affected female support for colonization. Whatever hopes female colonizationists held out for Liberia dissipated with the growing hostility and tumultuous political environment. In the context of racial violence, and mounting hostility and polarization over slavery, they found it increasingly difficult to promote colonization as a cause that embraced female values such as peace, consensus, and unity.⁴⁹

Female colonizationists faced other obstacles, however, unique to the female northern colonization movement and which have gone largely unexamined by historians. The logistical difficulties associated with building and sustaining schools thousands of miles away contributed to the disintegration of the Ladies' Liberia School Association, as well as other northern female groups. As early as 1835, Beulah Sansom was experiencing the "disadvantages which we endure for want of regular offi-

⁴⁹ Recent examples that show the damage of abolitionism and black activism on colonization include Goodman, *Of One Blood*; John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, MA, 2002); Stanley Harrold, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C., 1828–1865* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2003).

cial information.”⁵⁰ More damaging to female efforts was the failure of the YMCS as an independent organization. The YMCS's colony at Bassa Cove never thrived, and in 1838, after just four years, the YMCS agreed to return to the ACS under a new constitution that allowed state organizations more autonomy. The YMCS's goals changed thereafter. Rather than establish a model colony full of moral, temperate, educated, and religious citizens, the state society reduced its efforts to sending African Americans from Pennsylvania to Bassa Cove and monetarily supporting the parent society. No longer did the YMCS look for assistance in building schools and promoting education. The reorientation of the YMCS stripped the Ladies' Liberia School Association of a primary source of cooperation, encouragement, and support.⁵¹

These complications were only compounded when the ACS recast itself once again in the late 1840s, this time privileging politics over benevolence. Financial difficulties plagued the ACS. As a private corporation it encountered considerable expense administering the colony and, especially, transporting blacks to Liberia. Organizing, promoting, transporting, and caring for thousands of emigrants was an expensive and demanding operation. When Liberian leaders expressed their desire for independence in 1846, the ACS readily acquiesced. Liberian independence in 1847 freed the ACS of its greatest financial liability and encouraged its leaders to refocus their attention. The organization adjusted its message to accommodate its new role as an emigration agency rather than a colonizing project. Leaders stressed the political and economic benefits rather than the missionary aspects of colonization and touted the remarkable progress of the new nation. Efforts to improve Liberian society were increasingly viewed as issues for the Liberian government or mission organizations. While the ACS continued to appeal to benevolence, after 1847 the emphasis shifted in a decidedly political direction. State governments showed renewed interest in the ACS plan and backed up their support with legislation and funds. In 1850, the Virginia legislature appropriated thirty thousand dollars annually for five years to support emigration. In 1852, several free-state legislatures made appropriations to aid colonizing efforts. New Jersey set aside one thousand dollars a year for

⁵⁰ Beulah Sansom, Philadelphia, to Mary Blackford, June 6, 1835, Blackford Papers.

⁵¹ Kocher, “Duty to America and Africa,” 131–35; P. R. Fendall, “Thursday, 10 O’Clock, A.M., Constitution,” *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 15 (1839): 24–25; Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 241.

two years and in 1855 increased the appropriation to four thousand dollars. Pennsylvania agreed to give two thousand dollars to emigration efforts. The General Assembly of Indiana passed a bill placing five thousand dollars at the disposal of the state authorities for the purpose of removing African Americans from the state. The Maryland legislature renewed its aid in 1852, reserving ten thousand dollars a year for six years to aid Maryland's colonization society. In 1855, Missouri passed an act appropriating three thousand dollars a year for ten years to help the state's society. In 1856, the Kentucky legislature pledged five thousand dollars annually, without limitation of time, to aid colonization.⁵²

Inspired by the state legislatures' actions, the ACS once again looked to the federal government for assistance. The society was jubilant when prominent politicians like Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, and Henry Clay publicly commended the society's work and called for federal appropriations for African colonization. The ACS appealed to Congress to make a mail contract with the society to support a steamship line that would carry both freight and emigrants to Liberia four times a year.⁵³ The society also pressed the United States to recognize the newly independent republic of Liberia. The ACS did not succeed in either of these efforts but did persuade Congress to continue to appropriate money to the navy to resettle recaptured Africans from seized slave ships. In 1855, Congress also agreed to establish a consulate at Monrovia.⁵⁴ Practically, this meant the ACS no longer tried to balance volunteerism and politics. Male leaders looked squarely to the government for support. They no longer praised or publicized the work of female auxiliaries. Women seem to "disappear" from the pages of the *African Repository*. Benevolent activity, volunteerism, and moral suasion—privileged activity in the 1830s and early 1840s—had become less compelling to the organization, and, consequently, the role of women in the organization became nonessential.

At the same time that the ACS looked toward government and away

⁵² *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (1854; repr., New York, 1969), 10–12; *Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (1857; repr., New York, 1969), 6; *Fortieth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (1858; repr., New York, 1969), 8.

⁵³ The ACS proposed two options. First, the government would pay the ACS to deliver the mail to Liberia four times a year; the ACS would use the money to build its own steamship. Second, the navy would make four voyages a year to Liberia carrying mail, allowing room for emigrants. *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (1855; repr., New York, 1969), 11.

⁵⁴ Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 246. The United States recognized Liberia as an independent republic in 1862. England recognized Liberia in 1848 and France in 1852.

from benevolence, Liberian missions developed and progressed. All the major missionary agencies exerted an intensive effort in Liberia beginning in the 1840s. Liberia was the first overseas mission location for the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal denominations. Liberia was also the first place where all the major denominational mission boards recruited and employed black American missionaries. After twenty-five years of hardship, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Baptists had established viable mission stations and were devoting tens of thousands of dollars each year to the cause. In 1851, the Methodist Church appropriated \$22,000 to Liberia, twice the amount given to their other foreign mission stations. That same year, the Episcopal Church devoted \$14,226, nearly half its total foreign mission income, to Liberian missions. Education was an important aspect of mission activity in Liberia, and supporters believed it critical for mission work to succeed. Male and female missionaries started schools immediately upon arriving in Liberia. The *Biblical Repository* reported "four times as much missionary money is laid out upon their [West Africa] schools . . . as upon any other people of the same size on the face of the earth." In 1852, Methodists reported fourteen day-schools with nearly 300 students; the Southern Baptists reported six schools with over 350 students. Joseph Tracy estimated that the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and northern Baptist missions in Liberia operated another nineteen schools, with approximately 600 students, as well as three high schools.⁵⁵

As religious organizations increased their educational efforts in Liberia and opened and operated their own schools, female colonization efforts appeared unnecessary. As early as 1835, Beulah Sansom recognized the challenge missionary societies posed to the efforts of the Ladies' Liberia School Association. In response to letters published in the *African Repository* by Methodist missionary John Seys extolling the denomination's educational efforts, she responded, "I do not know how to keep up with bodies that press forward at this rate."⁵⁶ In time, it became increasingly evident to Philadelphia's Ladies' Liberia School Association and other female societies that their efforts were poor imitations of bet-

⁵⁵ "Missionary Correspondence," *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, May 21, 1851; "Missions in West Africa," *Biblical Repository and Princeton Review* 30 (1858): 440; Joseph Tracy, "Education in Liberia," *African Repository* 28 (1852): 174–77; *Proceedings of the Board of Missions of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society* (Hartford, CT, 1851), 23, Episcopal Church Archives, Austin, TX.

⁵⁶ Beulah Sansom, Philadelphia, to Mary Blackford, June 6, 1835, Blackford Papers.

ter funded and staffed mission schools. Moreover, the competition for funds made it increasingly difficult for the women to sustain their independent efforts. Denominations with large memberships, more money, and an established organization did with relative ease what it took a small group of women years to accomplish. For example, the Ladies' Liberia School Association worked for over three years to establish a high school. The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, on the other hand, completed a high school in little over a year. In 1848, the mission decided to begin a high school at Monrovia. One year later, an ironclad building was raised with a library filled with two thousand volumes of all kinds of historical, scientific, and Latin and Greek classics.⁵⁷

The mobilization of white women in the 1830s did not culminate in the formation of a widespread colonization movement among women. But what happened to these women? Despite the growing invisibility of women's groups and auxiliaries in the colonization movement, women's work for colonization did not end. Wealthy females continued to leave large legacies, and individual women continued to send financial donations to state societies and the ACS throughout the 1850s. On the other hand, like many of their male counterparts, the majority of women appear to have distanced themselves from the ACS. Perhaps these women poured their money and energy into denominational missions or aligned themselves with the emerging political antislavery movement that provided a moderate and conservative alternative to immediatism. It is essential to understand, however, the difference between support of the ACS and support of colonization in general. Even as the ACS declined as a dynamic movement, the idea of colonization of black Americans outside the United States as a solution to the race question remained popular. So while many rejected the feasibility of the ACS's project, they nevertheless embraced colonizationist discourse that painted Africa as the "promised land" for black Americans.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ "Alexander High School" *African Repository* 26 (1850): 284; H. W. Ellis, "Letter from the Rev. H. W. Ellis," *African Repository* 27 (1851): 3.

⁵⁸ Abraham Lincoln and many in Congress considered the possibility of a black exodus. In March 1862, Congress passed a resolution that established a Select Committee on Emancipation and Colonization and earmarked federal money for emancipation. The following month, federal legislators passed the District of Columbia Emancipation Act, a law that paid Washington slaveholders for their slaves and set aside one hundred thousand dollars for colonization. In December 1862, Lincoln devoted nearly two-fifths of his address to Congress to the subject of compensated emancipation and colonization. As part of his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln offered financial assistance to states that wanted to end slavery and colonize their black populations. Ultimately, Lincoln

So, in the 1850s prominent northern women continued to promote the ideals of colonization, namely that black Americans belonged in Africa, through their writing. Lydia Sigourney published poems like "Sympathy with the Lowly," which extolled colonization's missionary efforts in Africa, and "To Africa," which highlighted the gifts of democracy and Christianity brought by colonization efforts. Helen Cross Knight's children's history of Liberia, entitled *The New Republic* (1850), promoted Liberia as the "father-land" of African Americans where "none can molest or make them afraid." Sarah Josepha Hale, the secretary of Boston's female colonization group, asserted in the preface to her novel *Liberia* that her story would "show the advantages Liberia offers to the African, who among us has no home, no position, and no future." Even Harriett Beecher Stowe, a self-proclaimed opponent of colonization, portrayed Africa as the home to black Americans. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe's protagonist, George Harris returned to Africa, proclaiming, "I want a country, a nation, of my own. . . . As a Christian patriot, as a teacher of Christianity, I go to my country."⁵⁹ Perhaps this is the greatest legacy of northern female support for colonization. These women helped popularize and affirm the notion that, while black Americans did not deserve to be enslaved, neither did they belong in America.

Pennsylvania State University

KAREN FISHER YOUNGER

repudiated the idea that the liberation of black Americans required their subsequent removal. Congress, too, turned against colonization. Several bills that proposed setting aside western territory for black settlement were defeated in 1864.

⁵⁹ Lydia Sigourney, "Sympathy with the Lowly," and "To African," *African Repository* 32 (1856): 158, and 41 (1865): 206; Helen Cross Knight, *The New Republic* (Boston, 1850), 245; Sarah J. Hale, *Liberia; or, Mr. Peyton's Experiments* (New York, 1853), iv; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852; repr., New York, 1998), 467–70.

“With every accompaniment of ravage and agony”: Pittsburgh and the Influenza Epidemic of 1918–1919

THE INFLUENZA PANDEMIC THAT STRUCK Philadelphia, San Francisco, and other American cities during the autumn of 1918 and the winter of 1919 has received significant scholarly attention, but, surprisingly, the most severe and persistent outbreak, which occurred in Pittsburgh, has remained largely ignored. No one factor explained the high morbidity and mortality rates experienced in Pittsburgh. Four salient factors, however, contributed to the deadliness of the city's outbreak: the appalling state of Pittsburgh's environment and the health of its citizens before the influenza's arrival; the city government's refusal to enforce and strengthen state quarantine measures; the city's inability to manage relief efforts effectively; and the city's attempts to undermine and eventually terminate the state quarantine before Harrisburg ordered it lifted. Though the worst large urban outbreak in the country—one that lasted from September 1918 through April 1919—for a number of reasons, Pittsburgh's experience has been overshadowed by that of a city three hundred miles to its east that has garnered the lion's share of historical attention.

Philadelphia captured the imagination of scholars and others because, though Pittsburgh produced higher overall death rates, Philadelphia failed catastrophically in its handling of the crisis. Philadelphia also represents a rather straightforward case study. On September 28, the city held the Fourth Liberty Loan Drive, which was designed to encourage the purchase of bonds to fund the war effort. It was the largest parade in the city's history and contributed to a swift spreading of the virus. Within a week of the parade, sickness and death overwhelmed city services. In the first ten days after the parade, more than a thousand Philadelphians lay dead, and estimates suggest that over two hundred thousand people had

fallen ill.¹ Unable to cope, the city government turned to private agencies. The city did, however, strengthen a state gathering ban, offer unlimited funds for dealing with the epidemic, and secure volunteers and emergency hospital space. Philadelphia's public health director, a gynecologist, publicly pled for hospital rooms and trained personnel. On October 7, a Disaster Committee composed of charity workers and political and public health representatives, and chaired by future Senator George Wharton Pepper, met to discuss how best to combat the epidemic.²

In response to the growing epidemic throughout the state, on the morning of October 4, the state health department issued a statewide ban on the assembling of crowds.³ The enforcer of the ban order, commissioner of the state Department of Health, Dr. Benjamin Franklin Royer, hung his hopes on disrupting the spread of a disease that contemporary medicine could not treat. Not quite a quarantine, the state's order actually amounted to a series of gathering bans that closed saloons, theaters, motion picture houses, soda fountains, ice cream parlors, and other places of entertainment. Philadelphia acted immediately and closed its places of amusement while it strengthened the ban by also ordering the closure of all churches, synagogues, and schools. Even with the ban, the dead mounted, and the coroner used mass graves to clear out morgues, funeral homes, and apartments that contained the bodies of influenza victims. On October 8, Archbishop Dennis J. Dougherty released three thousand nuns and hundreds of seminary students for relief work.⁴ While the nuns manned emergency hospitals and went door to door to identify the ill and the dead, the seminarians buried nearly 5,000 people in mass graves; they tagged as many people as possible for future exhumation and reburial. The navy estimated that the city lost 15,566 citizens between September 14, 1918, and March 1, 1919, for a death rate of 8.8 per 1,000. According to the navy, only one city in the country, Pittsburgh, ranked higher.⁵ Census data supported the navy's figures and indicated that 7,024 influenza deaths and 9,238 pneumonia deaths occurred between October

¹ "Medical News," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 71 (1918): 1424.

² "Day's Influenza Death Toll 289," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 7, 1918.

³ "Theaters, Saloons in Pennsylvania Closed to Halt Influenza," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 4, 1918.

⁴ Francis Edward Tourscher, *Work of the Sisters during the Epidemic of Influenza, October 1918* (Philadelphia, 1919), 2.

⁵ Secretary of the Navy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1919* (Washington, DC, 1919), 2435.

1 and December 31, for a total of 16,262 fatalities.⁶ A St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank study based on the 1910 census, which put Philadelphia's population at 1.5 million, offered a mortality rate of 932 per 100,000, or at least 13,980 deaths.⁷ Such a high number of deaths created the perception that Philadelphia's outbreak was more severe than Pittsburgh's.

In 1918, Pittsburgh was only one-third the size of Philadelphia, but it was every bit as important as Philadelphia to the war effort. By the end of World War I, dozens of munitions plants and scores of mills and factories dotted suburban Allegheny County and Pittsburgh, while the military ran training camps in hospitals, universities, and parks. The University of Pittsburgh's School of Medicine established a field hospital fit for duty the day after the United States entered the war in April 1917, while the army built barracks, a mess hall, an administration building, and a YMCA Hospitality House.⁸ Each of the city's major universities created a Student Army Training Corps, and Liberty Bond drives raised money and fostered a sense of patriotism. Furthermore, as Pittsburgh's war-related industrial contracts increased, so too did the number of laborers entering the city. Pittsburgh's population grew from 564,878 people in 1915 to an estimated 586,000 in 1918, a 4 percent increase that strained the city's infrastructure at every level.⁹

The population increase merely provided more victims for the flu. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Pittsburgh had some of the nation's worst morbidity and mortality rates. Influenza exacerbated, sometimes fatally, preexisting conditions in people it infected. Pittsburgh's horrendous air quality, the result of coke production and the burning of bituminous coal, was an important environmental factor that contributed to the severity of the illness in Pittsburgh's residents. The business community thwarted attempts to pass or enforce smoke abatement in Pittsburgh because of the added expense such measures entailed and because, philosophically, they resented governmental encroachment on private-property prerogatives.¹⁰ Such conditions produced the highest

⁶ Bureau of the Census, *Mortality Statistics: 1918*, Bulletin 141 (Washington, DC, 1920), 74.

⁷ Thomas A. Garrett, "Pandemic Economics: The 1918 Influenza and Its Modern-Day Implications," *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review* 90 (2008): 81.

⁸ Robert C. Alberts, *Pitt: The Story of the University of Pittsburgh, 1787–1987* (Pittsburgh, 1986), 70.

⁹ Bureau of the Census, *Financial Statistics of Cities Having a Population of Over 30,000, 1918* (Washington, DC, 1919), 9.

¹⁰ Department of Public Health, City of Pittsburgh, *Annual Report, 1910* (Pittsburgh, 1911), 14; Department of Public Health, City of Pittsburgh, *Annual Report, 1916* (Pittsburgh, 1917), 52.

rates of pneumonia sickness and death in the nation. Between 1900 and 1902, Pittsburgh recorded 253 deaths per 100,000 from pneumonia, behind only New York, while the years 1912 through 1914 saw the death rate for pneumonia rise to 261 per 100,000, the worst rate in the nation.¹¹ A 1923 Mellon Foundation investigation concluded that between 1912 and 1923 most locations in Pittsburgh experienced an increase of soot and ash fall that caused or aggravated respiratory disorders.¹² *The Pittsburgh Survey* noted that toiling in the city's grinding, cutting, and stogie-rolling industries exposed laborers to fine dust and raised pneumonia and, presumably, seasonal influenza mortality rates.¹³ The city's inhabitants routinely suffered high rates of morbidity and mortality during any influenza outbreak.¹⁴

Besides the sooty air, Pittsburgh had the worst living conditions of any major city. Most workers and their families lived in two- or three-story buildings that were subdivided into apartments. With space at a premium, residents used every floor, including the attic and cellar, for housing. Such crowded conditions contributed to the transmission of infectious diseases. The city's boardinghouses provided cheap lodging for single laborers, but unattached men and women also could not rely upon family in the event of illness. Pittsburgh's poorest workers sought shelter on the city's hillsides and in hollows or ravines. Connected to the city by a maze of trails and hillside stairs, the houses in this no-man's land consisted of little more than sheds built of refuse lumber and bits of tin and other debris. No municipal hospital existed to aid Pittsburgh's poor when sickness struck, though about twenty private hospitals, half of them general hospitals and the rest a mixture of specialist, maternity, and psychiatric institutions, reserved roughly a hundred beds for charity cases in a city of nearly six

¹¹ G. E. Harmon, "A Comparison of the Relative Healthfulness of Certain Cities in the United States Based upon the Study of Their Vital Statistics," in *Publications of the American Statistical Association* 15 (1916): 171, table XII. Harmon also noted that every major city reduced its pneumonia death rate during the period 1900–14 except Pittsburgh, where the rate increased.

¹² "Mellon Pneumonia/Air Pollution Studies" (1923), University of Pittsburgh Archive Service Center (hereafter UPASC). In one instance, managers who discovered their coke plant's emissions were harming the shrubs planted around the facility asked Mellon Foundation researchers to recommend remedies, but they apparently showed no concern for human health.

¹³ Paul Underwood Kellogg, ed., *The Pittsburgh Survey: Findings in Six Volumes* (New York, 1909–14); Elizabeth Beardsley Butler, *Women and the Trades: Pittsburgh, 1907–1908* (New York, 1911), 359–60.

¹⁴ J. A. Lichty, "Grip—The Epidemic in Pittsburgh," *New York State Journal of Medicine* 8 (1908): 191.

hundred thousand people.¹⁵ A few hospitals funded limited community nursing programs, often with just one nurse on staff, while the city supported no community nursing programs.¹⁶

Pittsburgh's Board of Health was a hollow municipal organ composed of political appointees. The board failed to publish a single annual report between 1912 and 1919, even though the municipal study group contracted to audit the Board of Health informed the city in 1913 that publicity was "an effective aid to health control."¹⁷ As in Philadelphia, the mayor appointed Pittsburgh's health director, who was liable to removal at the mayor's pleasure. But unlike Philadelphia's health director, who was at least a doctor, Pittsburgh's director, William H. Davis, was a party stalwart with no medical background. Davis served with the Pennsylvania National Guard during the Spanish-American War, acted as Pittsburgh's postmaster in 1906, was an active Freemason, and was a high-ranking member of the chamber of commerce.¹⁸ The mayor who appointed Davis, a millionaire timber-company owner named Edward Vose Babcock, promised a fiscally restrained administration and viewed supporting the war effort as his primary mission.¹⁹ Babcock did not include a proper Board of Health in his list of desired improvements.

War labor migrants began to crowd into Pittsburgh as early as 1915, with job-seeking southern blacks joining white migrants and European immigrants arriving from other cities. To cope with housing needs, buildings condemned by the city only a few years before re-opened, minus any utilities, while boardinghouses ran two shifts for boarders—those who worked by day and slept at night and men and women who worked at night and then climbed into the still-warm, dank bunks vacated by their diurnal housemates.²⁰ According to the city Board of Health, at least fifty

¹⁵ Letter from William Flinn, Nov. 16, 1909, submitted to Pittsburgh Department of Public Health, *Annual Report, 1910*, 41.

¹⁶ Yssabella Waters, *Visiting Nurses in the United States: Containing a Directory of the Organizations Employing Trained Visiting Nurses, with Chapters on the Principles, Organization, and Methods of Administration of Such Work* (New York, 1909), is an excellent overview of all Pennsylvania visiting-nurses programs.

¹⁷ Bureau of Municipal Research, *The City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Report on a Survey of the Department of Health* (New York, 1913), 46.

¹⁸ Allegheny County was fortunate in having Adolph Koenig, a competent medical man who was knowledgeable in public health, as county health officer. During the epidemic, Koenig concentrated his efforts on the dozens of mill cities in the county.

¹⁹ Allen Humphreys Kerr, *The Mayors and Records of Pittsburgh, 1816–1951: Their Lives and Somewhat Their Time* (Pittsburgh, 1952), 270.

²⁰ Abraham Epstein, *The Negro Migrant in Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, 1918), 13.

thousand men and women lived in such rooms by 1918.²¹ Others found shelter in outbuildings and sheds, while the Hill District's Jews, African Americans, and Italians competed for space in subterranean apartments of the sort New York City and Philadelphia banned. Some companies converted railroad boxcars into barracks through the simple expedient of equipping them with bunk beds, waste buckets, and cut-outs for windows.

The result of such dense and dilapidated housing was a public health mess. Open sewers ran with excrement along the sides, and sometimes across, downtown streets. Contemporary researchers from the University of Pittsburgh noted a 200 percent rise in respiratory deaths among Pittsburgh's African American population, from 64 between January and July 1915, to 183 deaths during the same six-month period in 1917. Indeed, the health of the city's black migrants was so poor, and hospital beds were so difficult to find and nearly impossible to purchase, that 50 percent more African Americans died during 1917 than were born.²² More ominous was a rise in Pittsburgh's already-high pneumonia death rate. One study of major cities' pneumonia deaths indicated that between 1916 and the first four months of 1918, Pittsburgh's pneumonia deaths per 100,000 rose from 339 to 757. Detroit had the next highest death rate, at 452 per 100,000—40 percent lower than Pittsburgh—while Philadelphia suffered from a death rate of only 363 per 100,000 during the first four months of 1918.²³ In the decades following the epidemic, historians believed the elevated death rates in American cities indicated that the influenza spread through the human population and mutated to overwhelm its victims' immune systems. An alternative view suggests that Pittsburgh, and other cities populated with war workers, saw a rise in deaths from respiratory ailments because of increased crowding, an influx of rural migrants, inadequate housing, and scant medical care, not because of an especially deadly influenza virus.

Though three hundred miles separated Pittsburgh from the nearest eastern ports, and Boston, where the virus first appeared in its final pandemic form in Boston during the last week of August 1918 was nearly twice as far away, the disease quickly made its way to the Smoky City. Individuals in Pittsburgh, however, did not become infected at

²¹ "Full Force of Epidemic Yet to Come," *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 15, 1918.

²² Epstein, *Negro Migrant in Pittsburgh*, 13, 8.

²³ John Dill Robertson, *A Report on the Epidemic of Influenza in Chicago Occurring during the Fall of 1918* (Chicago, 1919), 48, table IV.

Philadelphia's rate. Though Pittsburgh did not mandate that doctors report influenza until October 4, when the state intervened, morbidity and mortality records reflected the virus's presence in the city by mid-September, when deaths from respiratory ailments spiked. Deaths, though, were scattered, and the numbers reported ill did not cause alarm. Yet, affidavits from the coroner's reports indicated that people in Pittsburgh were dying rapidly of fulminate infections. For instance, a forty-five-year-old Russian man fell ill on September 6 and died on the eleventh from what the coroner declared to be cardiac failure with contributory lobar pneumonia.²⁴ His sister-in-law and landlord both testified, however, that his illness lasted for only a week and that he did not ordinarily feel sick. Affidavits also revealed that a forty-nine-year-old Russian immigrant, who died of a pulmonary hemorrhage, at least according to the coroner, was ill for a week with a "severe cold" and cough, during which time he hemorrhaged from the nose and mouth.²⁵ Epistaxis, or nosebleeds that could produce bloody vomiting if too much blood were swallowed, was a common symptom during the epidemic. Other deaths followed, and some victims died within just a few days of showing symptoms. One forty-year-old machinist awoke in his boardinghouse September 20 without any symptoms and died of pneumonia two days later.²⁶ A thirty-nine-year-old laborer grew feverish and prostrate about the seventeenth and became worse until he died of empyema on the twenty-first.²⁷ One of the first deaths among Pittsburgh's African American community occurred on Wylie Avenue, when, on September 25, a thirty-year-old man was found dead in his apartment after a sickness of forty-eight hours.²⁸

As flu-like deaths mounted, the Board of Health announced on September 14 that the virus would make its appearance on the seventeenth, though it did not explain how it determined that date.²⁹ Pittsburgh's health authorities reassured their city that the type of flu would be the "less" serious Boston type, not Philadelphia's "strain," which had already begun to spread rapidly in that city. In reality, the virus was stable, and different strains did not exist; rather, it appears that this state-

²⁴ Allegheny County Coroner's Case Files, UPASC reference code 191810–431.

²⁵ Allegheny County Coroner's Case Files, UPASC reference code 191810–390.

²⁶ Allegheny County Coroner's Case Files, UPASC reference code 191810–387.

²⁷ Allegheny County Coroner's Case Files, UPASC, Sept. 21, 1918.

²⁸ Allegheny County Coroner's Case Files, UPASC, Sept. 25, 1918.

²⁹ "Spanish Influenza Due in City Tuesday," *Pittsburgh Post*, Sept. 15, 1918.

ment was a public-relations ploy on behalf of the Board of Health to allay public fears. Three days later, on September 17, twenty-one-year-old Stewart Eckstein became sick with what appeared to be a virulent case of influenza.³⁰ In a reversal of its position, the board announced that Pittsburgh was not in the midst of the epidemic because the man actually suffered from pneumonia. Davis added that even if Eckstein were ill with influenza, it was likely because he visited the coast near military barracks and contracted it outside the city. Rather than a spur to action, the case served only to reinforce the notion that the city was safe. One man, Sumner B. Ely, recorded in his journal the progress of the virus among his family. His daughter, Mary, fell ill with a “cold” that developed into a fever of 101 degrees on the twenty-third. With his daughter “not any better” on the twenty-fifth, Ely sent for a physician. Luckily, Mary began to improve forty-eight hours later, even as her brother grew sicker; he, too, recovered.³¹

The outbreak in Pittsburgh built slowly, but it is difficult to ascertain the rate at which it spread because of the city’s inefficient Board of Health. On September 29, Mayor Babcock led a celebration of about forty thousand people in Forbes Field to encourage the purchase of war bonds during the loan drive. But the large gathering did not fuel an explosive increase in the epidemic’s numbers, as did Philadelphia’s parade the day before.³² The military, however, diagnosed increasing numbers of victims in camps within the city. Cases in the camps doubled almost every twenty-four hours until the army commandeered the 150-bed Magee Women’s Hospital on October 4.³³ The city, in contrast, did not move to secure or increase hospital space, nor did it address the public, even though the Red Cross official history of the epidemic insists that throughout September, “harrowing stories that had come from other sections of the country of multitudes of dead” and lack of trained personnel and equipment reached the city.³⁴

³⁰ “Spanish Influenza Expected Today,” *Pittsburgh Post*, Sept. 17, 1918.

³¹ Journal of Sumner B. Ely, Sept. 21, 1918, UPASC.

³² M. Hoke Gottschall, *Constructive Pittsburgh: A Review of the Babcock Administration* (Pittsburgh, 1922), 7.

³³ Oskar Klotz, introduction to *Studies on Epidemic Influenza: Comprising Clinical and Laboratory Investigations* (Pittsburgh, 1919), 6. The *Pittsburgh Dispatch* announced on September 21 that Surgeon General William Gorgas ordered the hospital commandeered, though this apparently did not happen until October 4.

³⁴ Chapter History Committee, *The Pittsburgh Chapter American Red Cross* (Pittsburgh, 1922), 188.

At this juncture, the city government made a crucial mistake that only aggravated the situation—it decided not to bolster the state gathering ban. The state telegraphed the closing order to Pittsburgh on October 2, with restrictions to begin at five o'clock on the morning of the fourth. Along with the ban, the state urged the city to gather supplies and personnel and identify possible sites for emergency hospitals. When, on October 4, reporters asked Babcock what the ban meant for the city, the mayor professed awareness of the order, but he believed “the whole thing seemed wrong” in light of the fact that the city’s Board of Health assured him that the epidemic posed no danger.³⁵ As the mayor publicly cast doubt upon the necessity of the order, the city’s public health leader, Davis, held an all-day meeting to draw up plans to enforce the state’s policy. The Red Cross informed Davis that it stood ready to assist in any way necessary, and Katherine Dempster, local Red Cross director of nursing services, reported that eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware did not have enough hospital space to provide adequate care for all the sick.³⁶ Davis, however, refused all offers of aid with the explanation that “the disease was not affecting Pittsburgh to any great extent.” He declared this as the army’s contingent in Pittsburgh accepted the Red Cross’s assistance in the first week of October and requested tens of thousands of items, from paper napkins and paper spit cups to blankets and pneumonia jackets.³⁷ Within three days of taking over Magee Hospital, the army occupied much of Mercy Hospital and immediately admitted 302 patients.³⁸ The mayor capped the city’s intransigence by issuing an exemption from the gathering ban to loan-drive workers, though state law did not allow for such exemptions.

In addition to its refusal to accept aid, the city initially implemented the state ban with no additional closings. While schools throughout Allegheny County closed, and the city’s parochial school system shut down, Pittsburgh’s public schools remained open. Davis predicated the continued operation of the school system upon his misguided belief that monitoring the rates of sickness and death in schoolchildren allowed him

³⁵ “Edict Unnecessary, City Health Believes,” *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, Oct. 4, 1918; “More Nurses Are Called,” *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, Oct. 5, 1918.

³⁶ “Edict Unnecessary, City Health Believes.”

³⁷ Chapter History Committee, *Pittsburgh Chapter American Red Cross*, 190.

³⁸ *Pillar of Pittsburgh: The History of Mercy Hospital and the City It Serves* (Pittsburgh, n.d.), 88.

to evaluate conditions throughout the city.³⁹ Pittsburgh schools did not close until October 24, when Davis's plan for "medical supervision" of school students fell apart as absentee rates reached between one-third and one-half.⁴⁰ The city also permitted places of worship to offer services. While many Protestant churches stayed open, their Catholic and Jewish counterparts closed by the second week of the outbreak. Meanwhile, the city neither husbanded supplies nor called for volunteers, even though Pittsburgh was home to a medical school, a school of dentistry, and hundreds of retired and private-practice doctors and nurses. Davis summed up officials' reluctance to deal with the epidemic when he answered a reporter's question about whether there was an influenza epidemic in Pittsburgh by stating, "You must draw your own conclusion. What constitutes an epidemic is a matter of opinion."⁴¹ Such a reserved stance by the city's director of health toward the state ban did not bode well for coordinating relief efforts.

Though the city did not handle the initial response to the epidemic well, and there was little it could do about its long-term environmental deficiencies, it might have mustered a creditable management of the epidemic throughout October and November. To be sure, no city in the nation was fully prepared to handle an epidemic in the days following its debut in Boston. When this most contagious of viruses—and pandemic strains are even more contagious than their seasonal cousins—began to circulate in a city, an epidemic could seemingly explode. As such, the scope of the epidemic was entirely unprecedented. The first concerted effort in Pittsburgh to combat the flu was a series of gatherings of city health, charity, and political leaders between October 8 and 12. By this time, more than six hundred citizens *officially* reported ill every twenty-four hours, with hundreds more sickened but unreported. At the meetings, hospital heads complained that they lacked municipal support, whether in the form of money, equipment, coordination, or personnel. Further, they warned, the hospitals were nearing their capacity and emergency hospitals appeared necessary. The subject of an emergency hospital—and the city appeared content to think in terms of creating only one—provoked a "difference of opinion" among the attendees. One group urged the immediate establishment of a hospital while others insisted,

³⁹ "The Old 'Flu' May Stop Scholastic Workouts," *Daily Dispatch*, Oct. 6, 1918.

⁴⁰ "City Schools Are Closed by Grip Fighters," *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 24, 1918.

⁴¹ "Rapid Spread of Influenza in Pittsburgh," *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 10, 1918.

incredibly, that all existing hospital space be utilized before taking any action. The group decided by the tenth to at least “make ready” the hospital, and it set about to locate a suitable building and personnel. The city council also chose the tenth to begin its fight against influenza; it called on Health Director Davis to explain “what was being done or contemplated that would cost the city money.”⁴²

By mid October, Pittsburgh also suffered from a severe lack of nurses. Unlike most major cities, Pittsburgh neglected to establish a visiting or community nursing program in the years before the epidemic. Worse yet, contingents of medical students, doctors, and nurses had already left Pittsburgh when the state asked them to provide aid in Philadelphia and stricken mining communities.⁴³ Pittsburgh’s leaders’ underestimation of their own plight may have led the state to believe that the city had personnel to spare. Whatever the case, city hall did not protest when Harrisburg culled the ranks of Pittsburgh’s healthcare workers and sent them east. By the ninth, the military reported that it could no longer find nurses for its soldiers at Magee Hospital. Davis made a public appeal the next day for all nurses, regardless of training or retirement, to step forward. Only days later, however, the local Red Cross chapter noted that of its 250 nurses, only 51 came forward for duty, while the 2,000 strong Mothers of Democracy yielded only 16 volunteers. One charity leader wrote that good work done in some neighborhoods by settlement house nurses “served only to throw in dark relief the work [to be done] in other sections of the city where people literally died by scores because we could not organize a nursing service to save them.”⁴⁴ The city’s Red Cross director of nursing offered a reason for the shortage of nurses: the city’s women were thoroughly frightened by influenza.⁴⁵ Moreover, Davis’s attempts to raise nurses came only after many women were ill or tending to their families and neighbors.

While officials dickered over spending and the establishment of emergency hospitals, tens of thousands of people staggered to or were dumped on the steps of hospitals, police stations, fire halls, and settlement houses. Influenza frightened University of Pittsburgh doctors at Mercy Hospital

⁴² “Larger Death Toll Is Taken by Pneumonia,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 11, 1918.

⁴³ “Appeals to Nurses,” *Daily Dispatch*, Oct. 11, 1918.

⁴⁴ Sherman Conrad to Chairman of Visiting Nurse Association, Mar. 1919, Visiting Nurse Association Collection, UPASC.

⁴⁵ “Red Cross Needs 300 Nurses to Fight Spanish Influenza,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 19, 1918.

as the disease's fulminate pneumonia produced a mortality rate that they reported "was excessive, much higher than we have been accustomed to experience in Pittsburgh, where, as a rule, our hospital ward infection is a very severe infection."⁴⁶ While no city possessed the hospital space required to cope with the epidemic's flood of casualties, Pittsburgh's concomitant lack of emergency hospitals during the entire first half of October forced hospitals to release influenza and pneumonia patients who were not yet recovered but judged to be treatable at home. Such patients must have spread the virulent pneumonia they acquired in the hospital and thereby only aggravated the epidemic. Doctors who watched the release of patients from one hospital noted that "some of the patients discharged before November 30 as recovered may have later developed sequelae which might have proved fatal. No follow up system has been pursued." Moreover, the doctors at Mercy Hospital reported that the civilian death rate was two and a half times higher than the military rate, though soldiers throughout the nation usually experienced mortality rates far above nearby civilian populations. The physicians at Mercy Hospital believed the military quickly admitted sick soldiers, while civilians too often languished until brought in with "already developed serious complications."⁴⁷ The doctors never explicitly linked the impact on Pittsburgh's citizens of breathing the city's polluted air for years and decades—as opposed to the short-term exposure to such air in the case of soldiers—as a factor in the disparity of mortality rates between soldiers and civilians.

In this nightmare of sickness and confusion, the emergency committee's search for an emergency hospital finally bore fruit. The city requested that Kingsley House, a settlement house in the Hill District, donate its space and staff for such a purpose. It agreed and opened its doors on October 15, though with only 130 beds it could make little difference; even the addition of a 200-bed hospital forty-eight hours later did not accomplish much.⁴⁸ Though Davis acknowledged that thousands of people needed care, the pace of organizing emergency hospitals remained sluggish. Besides Kingsley House, the Irene Kaufmann Settlement, erected in the Hill District to Americanize European Jews, was designated an emergency hospital. The Kaufmann Settlement operated a modest visiting

⁴⁶ W. W. G. MacLachlan, "The Treatment of Influenza," in *Studies on Epidemic Influenza*, 88.

⁴⁷ J. A. Lichty, "A Clinical Description of Influenza as It Appears in the Epidemic of 1918–19," in *Studies on Epidemic Influenza*, 63.

⁴⁸ "Red Cross Busy in Checking Influenza," *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 15, 1918.

nurse service before the epidemic, but during the outbreak the nurses did most of their work in the settlement's buildings. Sick and dying immigrants overwhelmed the nurses and volunteers while family and friends begged for help for victims who were too sick to leave their homes. The settlement treated 1,047 cases of influenza and pneumonia in forty-two days, an increase of 560 percent above the normal caseload.⁴⁹ The influx of sick and dead at the Kaufmann Settlement was not unique, as settlement houses were often the only place of refuge in immigrant neighborhoods. By the middle of October, with hospitals unable to provide care for most people, settlements overflowed with people so ill that they could not stand. One newspaper noted that thousands of sick "strangers" remained in the mills and rail yards.⁵⁰

An outstanding element of Pittsburgh's relative lack of coordinated, timely action was that the city had information concerning the disease and its potential. Pittsburgh newspapers followed some of Philadelphia's horrors and, though reporters spared the public the worst details, they enumerated Philadelphia's death toll and described the mass graves and the corpses found in private homes. Newspapers also printed small columns about other major American cities, as well as about the plight of small towns and coal patches in Pennsylvania that found themselves bereft of doctors, nurses, or hospitals. Pittsburgh also received official descriptions of the epidemic's ferocity when state health commissioner Royer ordered a state Health Department doctor who treated cases during Boston's epidemic to lecture Pittsburgh's public and private health officials about the spread of the disease and possible countermeasures.⁵¹ Furthermore, since the end of September, both Washington, DC, and Harrisburg sent suggestions, orders, and warnings, though Pittsburgh's authorities did not act on the information.

Pittsburgh, however, was spared from having corpses piled in morgues and funeral homes. Pittsburgh relied on private groups, especially the Red Cross, to organize body removal and burials. Though the death rate in Pittsburgh was greater than Philadelphia, it occurred over the course of months rather than a few weeks. Consequently, the burden placed on morgues, funeral homes, coffin builders, and cemeteries never grew so

⁴⁹ Irene Kaufmann Settlement House to Nan Dorsy, Mar. 30, 1921, Visiting Nurse Association Collection.

⁵⁰ "Doctors Confer," *Pittsburgh Sun*, Oct. 15, 1918.

⁵¹ "Kingsley House Ready," *Pittsburgh Post*, Oct. 14, 1918.

great that bodies lay in homes or stacked in city and hospital morgues. When the odor of decay indicated the presence of a deceased victim, it was not a result of the city's inability to keep up with burials but merely an oversight. Pittsburgh's Red Cross chapter allied itself with one of the biggest city undertakers to study the city's cemeteries. The one-day study requested that the city provide equipment and personnel for burial details. The Red Cross specified that it hoped to avoid using trench graves like those found in a "large neighboring city" where "bodies were piled like cord wood" and "wrapped only in cloth."⁵² Though never specified, "the large neighboring city" was clearly Philadelphia. Pittsburgh quickly complied with all demands concerning burials. For instance, when the city learned that funeral homes required more laborers, the city offered the Red Cross the services of street-cleaning crews for grave digging.⁵³ Businesses throughout the city helped a coffin company provide each body with at least a simple box. Pittsburgh also forbade the export of caskets, and the Red Cross boasted that "not a single incident was reported in this county where the burial of a body was delayed owing to lack of casket, cemetery facilities, or labor," even though hearses queued outside cemetery gates.⁵⁴

As officials surveyed burial requirements, the war effort ground on, and patriotic fervor still influenced the actions of many citizens regardless of the epidemic or the crowd ban. The October 19 deadline for subscriptions to the Fourth Liberty Loan loomed, and Pittsburgh was behind its goal by millions of dollars. Newspapers in both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh ran page-long ads exhorting citizens to pinch every possible penny to buy bonds. In a coordinated effort to meet their goal, volunteers canvassed every neighborhood, ferreting buyers from homes, businesses, and factories. At stake were patriotism and civic pride. On the nineteenth, a crowd of more than fifty thousand gathered downtown for the telegraphed results. When the outcome was wired, Pittsburgh stood far ahead of its goal and the throng screamed and danced with joy. Newspapers explained to readers the next day that the whistles heard throughout the city all night were train whistles tied down by their celebrating conductors, all this as "impromptu parades," led by Boy Scout

⁵² Chapter History Committee, *Pittsburgh Chapter American Red Cross*, 191.

⁵³ "Liquor Men to Urge Saloons' Opening," *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 11, 1918.

⁵⁴ Chapter History Committee, *Pittsburgh Chapter American Red Cross*, 191; Mary Wilson Sage, "Pittsburgh Plague—1918: An Oral History," *Home Healthcare Nurse* 13 (1995): 51.

troops and musicians, snaked through the city.⁵⁵ City officials did not attempt to quell the festivities and likely could not have quieted the crowd. But it bears mention that neither health board nor mayor commented on the outburst.

As euphoria from the Liberty Loan success quieted, the city council called meetings to decide how best to fund, and at what level, the fight against the flu. The council expressed concern that the board of health had “been obliged to contract extraordinary indebtedness and [faced] still more expenses.” When a bill was introduced proposing that the city appropriate one hundred thousand dollars to underwrite the fight against influenza, the majority of the council and Mayor Babcock believed that a reduction of the sum was in order. Anonymous officials told newspapers that the fight against influenza required only twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand dollars. The council voted half the original sum, fifty thousand dollars, and forbade Davis from buying cots for use in firehouses that also doubled as emergency hospitals because the firemen went home at night and victims could use their beds.⁵⁶ As damaging as these developments may have been, the situation worsened when political and business elements in the city campaigned to undermine the quarantine.

The final major problem in Pittsburgh’s response was the effort on the part of entertainment-industry representatives and the mayor to weaken, and finally end, the gathering ban before the state lifted it or the situation warranted its termination. Whether served in elite downtown hotels or swilled at neighborhood speakeasies, alcohol was an important cog in the local economy and political structure. Thousands of saloons catered to all classes and ethnic groups, and watering holes of every description lined the streets of working-class neighborhoods and industrial sections of the city. Immigrants found temporary friends and a few hours of happiness in the company of people who shared their own culture and hardships. Paid companions, gambling, and blood sports might also be found in such establishments. State public health leaders, however, saw the packed crowds as a menace to health. Unfortunately for quarantine efforts, for decades illicit saloons and other centers of vice had paid the Pittsburgh Republican machine for permission to operate. Lincoln Steffens, an admittedly colorful journalist, reported in 1903 that saloonkeepers might

⁵⁵ “Great Crowds Cheer Loan Success,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 20, 1918.

⁵⁶ “Medical Men Join in Fight against Grip,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 22, 1918.

pay hundreds of dollars a week to ward bagmen.⁵⁷ In return, saloon, theater, and dive operators expected to remain unmolested by police and politicians. The crowd ban denied both small businesses and the city's political establishment access to easy money.

From the first days of the ban, city officials openly expressed ambivalence or hostility. As early as October 10, the Liquor Dealers' Association of Pittsburgh sent two representatives to Harrisburg to convince Commissioner Royer to drop the prohibition of alcohol sales.⁵⁸ Further, the Wholesale Malt and Liquor Dealers Protective Association of Western Pennsylvania sought the allowance of wholesale alcohol sales only tens days after the ban commenced.⁵⁹ The state reaffirmed the ban's guidelines, and the city continued to turn a blind eye to all but the most flagrant violators. City dailies reported hotel and restaurant bars openly selling liquor to crowds of people with no police or health department intervention, and when authorities did get involved, they issued only verbal warnings.⁶⁰ Liquor wholesalers in Pittsburgh shipped train-car loads of liquor to the bituminous district north of the city. Mines reported minimum absentee rates of 50 percent, with some mines missing 80 percent of their workers, much of it, operators complained, from "drunken Sundays and Monday idleness." On October 17, federal officials intercepted a boxcar of booze and returned it to Pittsburgh accompanied by the threat that the Pittsburgh district might be declared a military zone, with all saloons closed indefinitely. The day before, Davis sent letters to ten of the most egregious ban violators and warned them of permanent closure of their establishments while a judge affirmed that he stood ready to revoke the license of anyone Davis recommended. Though Davis took a tough public stance against ban violators, city hall sought an end to the gathering ban.⁶¹

That agitation for an end to the ban was proceeding in private was confirmed on October 26, when Royer published a letter in several Pittsburgh newspapers in which he preempted the mayor's office and wrote: "A few Pennsylvanians have been small enough to attribute the

⁵⁷ Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (New York, 1904), 160–64. Steffens's articles were first published in 1902 and 1903 in *McClure's*.

⁵⁸ "Liquor Men to Urge Saloons' Opening," *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 11, 1918.

⁵⁹ "No Modification of Closing Order by State Health Department," *Allentown Morning Call*, Oct. 15, 1918.

⁶⁰ "Full Force of Flu," *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 15, 1918.

⁶¹ "Dry State, Threat of Fuel Men," and also Davis's letter, *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, Oct. 17, 1918.

drastic actions taken by this office . . . as having been taken for political effect.” Royer asserted that the state Health Department had “no thought other than that of saving life, health, and man-power in this period of America’s great need.” The commissioner then explicitly linked his office’s efforts with the greater war effort, in effect making the struggle against the epidemic an issue of patriotism. He also addressed voter disapproval of the ban in Pittsburgh by writing that those who threatened to switch their vote in the upcoming elections were “not worthy of the franchise which is the pride of all American citizens.”⁶² As if to underscore the still-dangerous situation in Pittsburgh, Bishop Regis Canevin of Pittsburgh mobilized the Conference of Catholic Charities and the diocese’s nuns and directed parish priests to open as many diocesan buildings as needed. The bishop also informed the city that it had already established and staffed headquarters in all twenty-seven wards, a plan Davis believed would help identify people in the early stages of the illness.⁶³

On the morning of October 29, Mayor Babcock traveled to Harrisburg to speak with Health Commissioner Royer about an immediate end to the ban. Concomitantly, Allegheny County coroner Samuel C. Jamison, whose office missed cases of influenza in September, published a letter in which he claimed to know “officially” that the epidemic was slowing in the city and that the ban was no longer required. Royer, too, released a letter in which he suggested that “the Mayor of Pittsburgh is apparently getting very restless.” The commissioner pled with citizens to persevere, demanded that the heads of major industries fight to uphold the ban, and castigated the entertainment industry for putting lives at risk in its quest for profits during this time of war and epidemic. Royer labeled as “misguided” those members of the clergy, mostly Protestant ministers, who demanded an end to the ban on Sunday worship that the city had initiated during the middle of October.⁶⁴ Royer, of course, was pleading for obedience from citizens who had a vested interest in ignoring the ban. To guarantee compliance, local authorities needed to pursue ban slackers actively.

The mayor’s return to Pittsburgh on October 20 was followed by his announcement on November 2 that he intended to end the ban at five o’clock the next morning. He neutralized the city Board of Health by

⁶² “Flu Gaining in Many Parts of State,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 26, 1918.

⁶³ “Catholic Aid in Epidemic Accepted,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 27, 1918.

⁶⁴ “Mayor Babcock Favors Lifting Epidemic Ban,” *Pittsburgh Sun*, Oct. 29, 1918.

informing businesses that Davis would not interfere with operations.⁶⁵ Newspapers published a letter Babcock sent to Harrisburg wherein he explained his reasons for lifting the ban, chief among them his belief that his local administration alone was the duly-elected government of the city and was responsible for public health. Therefore, the state had no lawful basis to subordinate the mayor during an epidemic. Babcock described a “pall” cast over the city by the closure of entertainment venues and saloons, while the epidemic continued to rage seemingly unabated by the state’s ban. Many of the city’s ministers backed Babcock and explained that during epidemics churches ought never to close, as people doubly sought refuge in God’s houses. Both churchmen and the entertainment industry announced immediate openings, with the mayor’s pronouncement more important than Harrisburg’s.⁶⁶

Critics responded forcefully to Babcock’s actions and his assertions about the conditions in the city. The Allegheny County Medical Society believed the state’s efforts effective and considered the argument between city and state an “unfortunate controversy.”⁶⁷ The Citizen’s Political Union of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County telegraphed a message to Royer in which it expressed its “great indignation here at the mayor’s order,” which it believed to be tied to the coming elections.⁶⁸ Further, the union asked the state to keep the city’s saloons closed on Monday, November 4, as it expected Babcock’s administration to use the saloons to garner votes, a normal machine tactic.⁶⁹ According to the union, “the mayor speaks of the production of war supplies, [but] everyone knows the closing ban prevented the epidemic reaching the terrible stage that it reached in Philadelphia,” and “the depression in our city caused by deserted assembly places by reason of the ban is not to be compared with the terror in the city caused by the spread of the disease.”⁷⁰ The upcoming gubernatorial election might have influenced Babcock as well.

The gubernatorial race between Republican senator William C. Sproul and Democratic judge Eugene C. Bonniwell was in its final month

⁶⁵ “Text of Mayor’s Proclamation Authorizing ‘Flu’ Ban Lifting,” *Pittsburgh Sun*, Nov. 2, 1918.

⁶⁶ “Mayor Tells City Health Head to Ignore Flu Ban,” *Pittsburgh Post*, Nov. 2, 1918.

⁶⁷ “Royer Prepared to Prevent Grip Ban Lifting Here,” *Pittsburgh Post*, Nov. 3, 1918.

⁶⁸ “Union Urges Royer to Enforce ‘Flu’ Ban,” *Pittsburgh Post*, Nov. 3, 1918.

⁶⁹ In *The Plague of the Spanish Lady: The Influenza Pandemic of 1918–1919* (New York, 1974), Richard Collier maintains that Tom Pendergast’s Kansas City machine stymied all efforts by the Board of Health to close saloons and theaters because of the revenue such establishments generated for the machine and city (p. 144).

⁷⁰ “Union Urges Royer to Enforce ‘Flu’ Ban.”

when the state banned crowds. The Republican-leaning *Gazette Times* told readers that between the epidemic and the crowd ban, the “speaking campaign” was impossible to wage, with “Republican headquarters . . . giving out cards showing how to vote a straight Republican ticket.”⁷¹ Republican editors and speakers informed voters that Senator Sproul never supported the ban, or even agreed with its implementation, but rather that the Democrats and liquor men stoked such rumors to garner votes. Republican organizations also alleged that Democrats, allied with the liquor industry, not only falsely blamed the entire ban on Republicans, but further charged that liquor men told laborers they might avoid the flu by drinking whiskey.⁷² These and other statements were Republican attempts to distance Sproul from not only the ban, but from the Republican governor, Martin Grove Brumbaugh, under whom it was maintained. Governor Brumbaugh entered the fray by assuring voters that his administration, independent of Sproul, enacted the ban and that “a certain candidate for the office of governor” incorrectly connected Sproul with it. Brumbaugh thought the political controversy was unseemly during such a “frightful” epidemic. He also found it curious that only the liquor interests, not churches, waged political attacks against the ban.⁷³ Regardless of the political fighting, saloons and theaters opened on November 3, and Babcock left for a visit to a friend’s farm sixty miles outside the city.

Health Commissioner Royer took speedy action on the fourth when he dispatched agents from the state’s Attorney General’s office to prosecute businesses that violated the ban; penalties ranged from fines to imprisonment. Royer issued a constant stream of pronouncements, some in flowery language, in which he asked women to “demand” that their husbands uphold the ban while he pled that men not pull “political chestnuts out of the alcoholic flame.”⁷⁴ On November 5, the state filed notices in court against seventeen theaters and three saloons.⁷⁵ The breakdown in relations between city and state, and the consequences for the city’s residents, prompted Surgeon General Rupert Blue to write a detailed letter to Pittsburgh newspapers in which he implored everyone to follow the

⁷¹ “Influenza Is Hushing Voice of Candidate,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 20, 1918.

⁷² “Liquor Men Using False Penrose Tale,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 23, 1918.

⁷³ “Sproul Had No Part in Order to Close Bars,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Oct. 25, 1918.

⁷⁴ “Royer’s Agents Here to Begin Prosecutions,” *Pittsburgh Sun*, Nov. 4, 1918.

⁷⁵ “State Will File 20 Suits Today to Enforce Ban,” *Pittsburgh Post*, Nov. 5, 1918.

state's orders in defiance of the mayor.⁷⁶ The next day, the city's saloons shuttered their doors as twenty-five more reports were filed in court. Theater owners persisted until November 7, by which time the state cited thirty more theaters while Babcock accused Royer of being "drunk with power." Meanwhile, the flu and pneumonia killed 129 more citizens.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, an erroneous report of an armistice largely nullified the state's efforts when it led to street celebrations with tens of thousands of participants. The dancing, group singing, and emotions were so intense that it led one observer to believe that people were "out Hallow'ening any Hallowe'en Pittsburgh had seen in years."⁷⁸

The state lifted the ban on November 9, though more than two hundred Pittsburghers died during the previous forty-eight hours. On November 11, with the armistice signed, Mayor Babcock led a parade that "threaded its way through walls of humanity in the downtown districts" and drove even "staid citizens" to such "rollicking abandon" that "it seemed as if the celebration would never cease."⁷⁹ For the next twenty-four hours, with the mayor's sanction, revelers packed streets and bars. By the thirteenth, Babcock was on the New Jersey coast for a political meeting with state Republicans. In the mayor's absence, cases of influenza increased quickly, the result of cold weather, the absence of the ban, and, most importantly, the celebrations of November 7 and 11–12. Cries for nurses continued through November, while the State Council of Defense cared for 728 orphans.⁸⁰ For months, Pittsburgh continued to exhibit much higher than normal morbidity and mortality rates. While other major cities experienced distinct waves of illness during the fall and winter of 1918–19, Pittsburgh suffered a severe fall wave followed by a period of stable but high infection rates, with flare-ups in February and March. The Red Cross noted that "calls for nurses continued in great numbers" through February, with a decrease in late March. The epidemic finally ended in May.⁸¹

As with all large cities, accurate estimates of the dead in Pittsburgh are difficult to determine. Beyond the sheer number of fatalities, which led

⁷⁶ "Dr. Royer Gets Support of U.S. Surgeon General," *Pittsburgh Post*, Nov. 5, 1918.

⁷⁷ "New Prosecutions," *Pittsburgh Post*, Nov. 7, 1918.

⁷⁸ "Pittsburgh Celebrates Jubilantly," *Pittsburgh Post*, Nov. 8, 1918.

⁷⁹ Gottschall, *Constructive Pittsburgh*, 9.

⁸⁰ *Report of the Council of National Defense and Committee of Public Safety: Allegheny County Division* (Pittsburgh, 1919), 51.

⁸¹ Chapter History Committee, *Pittsburgh Chapter American Red Cross*, 197.

to recording errors throughout the country, it was nearly impossible to determine whether the flu, or other contributing factors like heart disease and tuberculosis, had resulted in death. Furthermore, because Pittsburgh sustained a prolonged outbreak, officials may not have recorded all influenza deaths as such. Contemporary Red Cross records indicated that at least 17,037 cases and 2,540 deaths occurred in October alone.⁸² The navy estimated the city's death rate at 9.6 per 1,000, or about 5,600 deaths.⁸³ More recent studies have estimated even higher mortality totals. For instance, a 2005 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate placed the deaths at 10.3 per 1,000, or roughly 6,000.⁸⁴ A 2007 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and based upon the 1920 census calculated that Pittsburgh suffered 806 pneumonia and influenza deaths per 100,000 people, for a total of roughly 4,836 deaths.⁸⁵ Finally, based upon the 1910 census of 534,000 residents, a federal study at the turn of the twenty-first century pegged Pittsburgh's mortality rate at an awesome 12.4 per 1,000, or roughly 6,600 deaths.⁸⁶ With a population of about six hundred thousand in 1918–19, the flu killed fully 1 percent of Pittsburgh's population. Viewed through a slightly different lens, had New York experienced Pittsburgh's death rate, it would have suffered roughly 60,000 deaths, double the actual toll. One person who lived through the epidemic in Pittsburgh felt "it was as if the very deep with every accompaniment of ravage and agony had poured out of its appointed bounds to overwhelm a people already heavily laden with the anxious burdens of war," and "only another DeFoe could do justice to that terrible winter."⁸⁷

* * *

Pittsburgh's total mortality numbers were shaped by four major factors. The first was its refusal to enforce the state's gathering ban quickly. Like Philadelphia, Pittsburgh was infected in early September, though

⁸² Ibid, 194.

⁸³ Secretary of the Navy, *Annual Report . . . 1919*, 2434.

⁸⁴ David K. Shay, "Influenza Pandemics of the 20th Century," [online power point], Apr. 20, 2005, Influenza Branch of the National Center for Infectious Diseases and CDCP, <http://www.hhs.gov/nvpo/meetings/PowerPoints/ShayNVACpanflu4-20-05.ppt>

⁸⁵ Howard Markel et al., "Nonpharmaceutical Interventions Implemented by US Cities during the 1918–1919 Influenza Pandemic," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 298 (2007): 647.

⁸⁶ Garrett, "Pandemic Economics," 81.

⁸⁷ Chapter History Committee, *Pittsburgh Chapter American Red Cross*, 189.

not to the same extent. Unlike Philadelphia, however, Pittsburgh did not host a parade that wound through the city and, therefore, did not experience a sudden spike in cases. Instead, influenza spread slowly, the pace increasing every day. Because Pittsburgh did not see an explosion in cases, the state gathering ban had a better chance of decreasing the severity of its outbreak than it did in Philadelphia. When the ban began, Pittsburgh refused to order churches, synagogues, or schools to close, though such closures carried no financial burden for the cost-conscious city.

Concomitant with the loose ban was the city's inability to manage relief efforts efficiently. Health Director Davis, who was not a public health expert, was not prepared to undertake a task as large and sophisticated as fighting a major epidemic. Positive public pronouncements aside, Pittsburgh possessed no experienced Board of Health upon which to base a credible response. Newspaper accounts indicated that saloons openly flouted the crowd ban. Only in the middle of October did Davis move against such establishments. Even then, the city did not seek to quell the celebrations surrounding the Fourth Liberty Loan returns and the false armistice rumor, events perhaps propelled by a general disregard for the crowd ban. The city experienced only small triumphs, the provision of sufficient numbers of coffins and single graves among them. Calls for volunteers first came only well into October, long after many potential volunteers were already involved with sick family members and neighbors. Indeed, a private, citywide nursing organization was founded in 1919 as a response to the epidemic, which highlighted "the stupendous problem of providing nursing care."⁸⁸ Worse still, the sluggishness with which the city created emergency hospitals resulted in only one hospital being opened by October 15, more than ten days after the ban began. The city followed the opening of the Kaufmann Settlement emergency hospital by utilizing other small buildings for emergency purposes. Davis also had to struggle with a city council preoccupied with trimming the amount of money the Health Department spent to combat the epidemic.

In addition to an ineffective crowd ban and poor management of relief efforts, Pittsburgh officials, principally the mayor, wished to lift the ban before the state believed it advisable. The weeks-long fight that resulted undermined the already-weak epidemic-fighting measures. By tradition, Pittsburgh managed both the city's public health apparatus and its retail

⁸⁸ Lucia M. Sweaton, "A Sketch of the History of the Public Health Nurse Association of Pittsburgh" (undated pamphlet), Visiting Nurse Association Collection.

liquor industry. While control of the city Board of Health was straightforward, the relationship between city hall and saloons, through a system of formal liquor licenses and informal graft, was more complicated. Saloons, by providing a gathering place, also generated revenue for local politicians and served as rally points. The ban complicated machine efforts to “get out the vote,” in the words of an Allegheny County Republican leader, for the November 5 election.⁸⁹ State health leaders, principally Royer, possessed neither political experience nor the willingness to compromise what they viewed as the sound, scientific reasoning behind the ban. It is also reasonable to assume that, in light of Babcock’s insistence upon the legitimacy of his administration, tension existed between Babcock and state officials. Certainly some of the friction was the result of long-standing political feuds between Pittsburgh’s Republican leaders and their Harrisburg counterparts. Moreover, local officials were forced, beginning in 1917, to make unprecedented concessions to state and federal agencies charged with prosecution of the war and management of domestic affairs. City leaders like Babcock saw their power undermined when the state not only imposed the first statewide emergency public health measure in Pennsylvania’s history, but also linked it to the war effort. For Pittsburgh politicians, the state’s orders interfered in patently local affairs and upset a balance the Pittsburgh and state political machines forged decades earlier.

Finally, Pittsburgh’s sooty air and generally poor living conditions made its residents particularly susceptible to influenza. This was especially true in the case of people whose respiratory systems were damaged by years of inhaling the city’s industrial byproducts. Studies of Pennsylvania’s mining communities have revealed the impact of inhaling particulates in the air. For instance, a 1920 report posited a 5 to 10 percent mortality rate for coalminers if the epidemic had lasted one year.⁹⁰ Similarly, novelist John O’Hara’s short story, “The Doctor’s Son,” highlighted conditions in Pennsylvania’s coal patches, where “men who already wheezed with miner’s asthma in their twenties stood no chance against the flu.”⁹¹ But one need not mine coal, or even work in steel mills, to compromise one’s health in Pittsburgh. University of Pittsburgh doctors at Mercy Hospital

⁸⁹ “Sproul Had No Part in Order to Close Bars.”

⁹⁰ Louis I. Dublin, “The Mortality of Bituminous Coal Miners from Influenza-Pneumonia, October to December, 1918,” *Journal of Industrial Hygiene* 1 (1920): 483.

⁹¹ John O’Hara, “The Doctor’s Son,” in *The Great Short Stories by John O’Hara: Stories from The Doctor’s Son and Other Stories and Files on Parade* (New York, 1956), 2.

may have glimpsed the damage wrought by Pittsburgh air when they noted that the death rate was not highest among those aged twenty to forty (the group for whom, generally, influenza proved most fatal in 1918). Rather, mortality rates increased with age, perhaps the result of longer exposure to the city's particulate pollution.⁹² Another result of the gloomy atmosphere was the duration—months longer than in any other major American city—of influenza and pneumonia outbreaks.

In some sense, the progress of the outbreak in Pittsburgh between September and mid-November mirrored most other large urban areas: a period of several weeks in which influenza sickened and killed increasing numbers of citizens, but not enough to rouse alarm, followed by steeply increased rates of sickness and death in the third or fourth weeks, and, finally, recognition by authorities of an epidemic in progress. Pittsburgh's response, however, offers compelling insight into the interplay of politics, large industry, small business, the war effort, and the science of public health. Pittsburgh, trapped by its own historical constraints of poor environmental conditions, insufficient housing for tens of thousands, and inefficient city government, also failed to ameliorate those deficiencies through acquiescing to state orders and suggestions. The political fights that followed, whether purely local, as in the case of the paltry sums of money the city offered to fund the fight or the decision to delay opening emergency hospitals, or between Babcock's administration and the state, highlighted fault lines in the conception of the rights and responsibilities of local and state governments. The disagreements also revealed the heightened role the federal government began to play in the lives of communities and individuals during the World War I-era, including its ability to manage the economy during wartime and, in the years that followed, to impose Prohibition. In any event, both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh faced longstanding barriers to efficient epidemic management, but Philadelphia's failure unfolded over the course of days during the most explosive outbreak in any major city in the Western world. Across the state, Pittsburgh's leadership made decisions over the course of months that pushed the epidemic beyond even Philadelphia's mortality rate and contributed to the longest outbreak during America's influenza epidemic.

Lehigh University

JAMES HIGGINS

⁹² Lichty, "Clinical Descriptions of Influenza," 63.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters among the Delaware Indians. By GUNLÖG FUR. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009. 280 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$39.95.)

In *A Nation of Women*, Gunlög Fur examines the origins of the “Delawares-as-Women” metaphor (160) within the context of the meanings of gender in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Native American and Euro-American societies and beliefs. She identifies three perspectives on the Onondaga speaker Canasatego’s post-Walking Purchase charge that the Delawares had lost their rights to land because “We conquer’d You, we made Women of you, you know you are Women, and can no more sell Land than Women” (163). The Iroquois and Pennsylvania government adopted the “Delawares-as-Women” metaphor to emasculate the Delaware men by denying their right to own land and wage war. While this perspective coincided with European patriarchal ideologies of women’s subservience, for the Iroquois the trope departed from traditional views of women and served their desire to ally with the English government. Fur explains that Delawares like Teedyuscung, who had assimilated to many European ways, adopted a second perspective, which accepted the negative connotation of the metaphor in order to accommodate the English; this was a strategy to retain a land base in eastern Pennsylvania.

For many Delawares, however, the metaphor reflected their culture and history. They embraced the image of a nation of women who negotiated peace among their native and European neighbors. Women were not subservient to men in Lenape society; their roles and status were complementary, not hierarchical. Men conducted war and hunted, while women established peaceful relations and raised crops. In this matrilineal society, women held responsibility for raising children born and adopted into their families and made key decisions for their communities. Fur provides interesting examples of diplomacy during the Seven Years’ War and its aftermath in which Delaware men seeking peace addressed one another as “sister.” Many Delawares embraced this identification as a nation of women who negotiated peace among warring neighbors. In diplomacy, use of the greeting “sister” marked an approach to peace while use of the appellation “brother” suggested readiness for war (185).

Fur grounds this discussion of the “Delawares-as-Women” metaphor in earlier chapters that look at gender ways among seventeenth-century Lenapes (as discussed in European contact narratives) and mid-eighteenth-century Delawares in the Pennsylvania town of Meniolagomekah (as discussed in the diaries of Moravian missionaries). Fur demonstrates how male Moravian missionaries,

even during the period when European women held considerable authority within the Moravian community, showed relatively little interest in the work and lives of Lenape women. Perhaps this underscores scholars' dependence on the available sources. Female missionaries' diaries might have told a more nuanced tale. Interestingly, while the Moravian missionaries come across as unsympathetic toward Lenape women, David Zeisberger provided the best evidence of why Delawares used "sister" in peacemaking.

Fur offers a convincing explanation of many Lenapes' understanding of their status as women. But not all Delawares accepted a role as peacemakers, as some men fought in the mid to late eighteenth century to preserve native lands. The "Delawares-as-Women" metaphor retains the aura of an identity imposed from outside by Iroquois, English, and modern scholars. The role of Delaware women was similar to that of other native women in the eastern woodlands of North America. What apparently distinguished some Delaware men was their willingness to accept the role of peacemaker and to adopt the metaphor of women as peacemakers as part of their identity.

Lehigh University

JEAN R. SODERLUND

Scotch-Irish Merchants in Colonial America. By RICHARD K. MACMASTER. (Belfast: The Ulster Historical Foundation, 2009. xii, 324 pp. Bibliography, index. \$25.)

In 1718 and 1719, seven thousand people left Ulster for America, marking, according to Richard K. MacMaster, the "beginning of large-scale emigration . . . that would in time have significant impact on the societies of both Ireland and the American Colonies" (1). The mid-Atlantic was the favored destination, but some emigrants chose South Carolina, where the government offered inducements for settling the backcountry. MacMaster argues convincingly that this exodus, prompted by high rents demanded by landlords and periodic crop failures, was aided by an extensive trade in American flaxseed that made regular Atlantic crossings possible and contributed to the rise of Scots-Irish merchants in America.

In order to produce the best quality linen, Irish weavers pulled flax plants before they set seed; they relied on imported flaxseed for the next year's crop. In the 1700s, Britain enacted laws allowing Irish merchants to export linen directly to the colonies and the colonies to export flaxseed to Ireland. Trade was informal at first. "Scowbankers" and peddlers brought linen with them to sell in America, and some dealt in flaxseed. Soon Scots-Irish merchants established themselves in American port cities. They created networks within Ireland, across the Atlantic, and extending into the backcountry, and they began regular shipments of flour,

bread, and, most significantly, flaxseed from Philadelphia, the center of the trade, to Ireland. On the return trip, their ships brought, along with linen and butter, paying passengers, redemptioners, and indentured servants wishing to try their luck in the colonies.

After 1763, when the Paxton Boys brought criticism down upon all Scots-Irish, merchants formed groups such as the Presbyterian Committee to represent their ethnic interests, even as they simultaneously enjoyed a dual identity as British and American subjects. They became involved in politics and made common cause with Scots-Irish and German farmers in the backcountry against Pennsylvania's Quaker bloc. Scots-Irish merchants were also instrumental in Baltimore's rising status as a seaport that rivaled Philadelphia. During the imperial crisis, some merchants even led Baltimore's Sons of Liberty. As tensions with Britain increased, flaxseed was initially excluded from nonexportation, but the flaxseed-emigrant shipments ended when the Continental Congress suspended all exports to Britain on the eve of war.

MacMaster's research on both sides of the Atlantic is truly impressive. However, this extensive research contributes to both the strength and weakness of the book. Those with interests in particular merchants will revel in the wealth of detail, which, at times, may overwhelm other readers. Maps would have been a welcome addition, and tables could have illustrated succinctly the rising immigration and flaxseed trade and compared flaxseed with other exports such as tobacco and rice. While MacMaster expertly taps into a rich trove of primary sources, sometimes I wanted more background—about the Irish weavers and linen drapers, for example, and bleaching meadows and brown linen markets. The book closes somewhat abruptly by claiming that the flaxseed trade came to an end “at least for the present” in 1775 (298). I was left longing for a conclusion that explained what happened after the war. Perhaps, though, that is the mark of a good book—it made me want to learn more.

Wilkes University

DIANE WENGER

The Correspondence of Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg, Volume 3, 1753–1756.

Translated and edited by WOLFGANG SPLITTER and TIMOTHY J. WENGERT.
(Rockland, ME: Picton Press, 2009. 416 pp. Index. \$64.50.)

It has been well over a dozen years since the first volume of the *The Correspondence of Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg* was published by Picton Press. Publication of the third translated and edited volume is a welcome step toward making the letters of the German Mühlenberg edition accessible to scholars and students whose familiarity with eighteenth-century German is limited but who are interested in learning more about a significant group of

Lutheran immigrants and settlers and their German as well as English-speaking neighbors in the middle colonies.

The *Correspondence of Mühlenberg* is an essential tool and resource. The period covered in volume 3 is one of growth, uncertainty, upheaval, and war as viewed through the observational lens of a man who had come to colonial Pennsylvania as a young man with the mission to tend to three Lutheran congregations. By 1753 Mühlenberg's mission had stretched into more than a decade and the energy and enthusiasm of the young minister had given way to an acute realization of the extraordinary weight his responsibilities represented. As he labored in his ministry to a very large, widely dispersed, diverse, unruly, and mostly poor flock, he was often frustrated with the sporadic and limited support from European colleagues, mentors, and sponsors. The *Correspondence of Mühlenberg* allows insight into the thinking and actions of the man and his time to a degree seldom matched for an eighteenth-century German-speaking and educated immigrant.

The *Correspondence of Mühlenberg* is a source of information that is thoroughly researched and fully reliable and is best used in conjunction with the German edition (even by scholars whose knowledge of German is limited) since the structure of the English-language edition reflects the original, especially in the numbering of the documents, which is critical for cross-referencing. At times, the casual researcher may be overwhelmed by the annotation, but the specialist will welcome the care with which the editors have added value to the correspondence through their explanatory notes that provide data on people, places, events, and allusions to biblical texts and Protestant hymns. The extent and detail of the research reflected in the notes and referenced in the indices is most useful, and the quality of the translations is impressive. It reflects a labor demanding of intellectual rigor and linguistic sensitivity and subtlety that English readers will not comprehend but upon which they are fully dependent as they make good use of this source.

I hope that in subsequent volumes the editors will provide relevant maps of the American colonies and of Europe (Germany), a bibliography of the works cited, and a more economical layout of the indices that may allow for slightly more generous margins of the text. I also hope that the press advertises this volume well and that libraries add it to their collections so that internet search engines bring this research and reference tool to the notice of the scholars and students who will want to use it.

The *Correspondence of Mühlenberg* is undertaken by a multinational staff of experts and supported by several American and German foundations and institutions, all of whom can be pleased with this publication, which serves as the best possible rationale for continuing support of this project.

Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis MARIANNE S. WOKECK

The Journal of Elias Hicks. Edited by PAUL BUCKLEY. (San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2009. xxiv, 509 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, online resources, index. Cloth, \$50; paper, \$30.)

Pursuant to writing this review, I was sitting in a public place reading Paul Buckley's edited version of Elias Hicks's journal. A woman leaned and asked me "who was Elias Hicks?"

Who was he, indeed? I tried to explain, as succinctly and yet clearly as I could: "he was a nineteenth-century American religious figure for whom a schism in the Religious Society of Friends was named." I was careful not to actually *attribute* the schism to him, because anyone who has read his journal—and anyone who reads Buckley's wonderfully illuminating editing of his journal, may come to believe (as I believe) that if there had been no Elias Hicks, someone else would have assumed his catalytic role in Quakers' iteration of the early nineteenth-century religious turmoil that historians of early America term the Second Great Awakening. Buckley refers to Hicks as a "lightning rod."

It could be argued that Hicks did not set out to fracture the Friends. He was simply on a mission that might surprise many descendants of what has come to be known as the "Hicksite" tradition—the eschewing of evangelicalism, the downplaying of Biblical scripture, and the soft-pedaling of the importance of Christ and traditional Christian vocabulary. But far from a relaxed-about-doctrine "silent" worshiper, Hicks was out to actively convert "those not in profession with us," i.e., those whom he described as having been "under the power of great darkness . . . propagated by an antichristian ministry" (122). A "recorded" minister (Quaker-speak for a person whose spoken messages and daily demeanor indicate a firm grasp of things religious), Hicks preached on street corners and in various public meetings, and he worried about those who hoped to achieve "justification" without "sanctification"—two concepts that are central to the long tradition of Protestant (and Puritan) theology. What he wanted to do was call his listeners to a higher, more pure form of Christian devotion, and he was in-your-face about his mission.

Through careful and erudite, but highly accessible, footnotes, Buckley helps his readers see how effortlessly Hicks—who is best known for his insistence that the "Inward Light" should take priority over rote following of the scriptures—peppered his own conversation with passages from the Bible as he sought to "open to the people the superior excellency of the gospel . . . as set forth by the precepts, doctrines, example, and commands of our gracious lawgiver, Jesus Christ" (171).

Students of Quakerism—scholars and practitioners alike—generally "know" who Elias Hicks was. He was the troublemaker whose public antics help split asunder Quaker families, helped spark what H. Larry Ingle has brilliantly described as *Quakers in Conflict* (1986), and initiated bitterness that has yet to be fully healed almost two centuries later. But Hicks was also vehemently aboli-

tionist, and the list of his associates, which reads like a who's who of the dynasties of American abolitionists (Coffin, Mott, Lundy), helps us to understand how the Hicksites came to make "the Quakers" synonymous with antislavery activism. This conflation of Quakerism and abolitionism is, however, somewhat of a distortion, and so is the exceptionalism that leads many scholars to examine Hicks and the Hicksite schism outside of the context of similar religious unrest among Methodist, Baptists, and Presbyterians (to name a few). The question asked of me by the woman mentioned above and Buckley's very brief bibliography are indicative of the narrowness of the track on which Quaker history has been traveling for way too long. I highly recommend that scholars read this volume in which Buckley illuminates Hicks's life, travels, and theology. Then I recommend that someone (Buckley and Ingle together?) write a follow-up volume that places Hicks in the wider context of nineteenth-century religious and social and perfection seeking.

Haverford College

EMMA J. LAPSANSKY-WERNER

Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815. By GORDON S. WOOD. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 800 pp. Maps, bibliographical essay, index. \$35.)

Gordon Wood's magnificent *Empire of Liberty* should be read as a prologue to Alexis de Tocqueville's masterpiece, *Democracy in America* (1835–40). The French visitor was astonished at the new world he discovered in his travels, and Wood helps us see how that world came into being. In 1805, Massachusetts conservative Fisher Ames warned that "we are sliding down into the mire of a democracy," a monstrous form of misrule "which pollutes the morals of the citizens before it swallows up their liberties" (303). Yet the new idea of equality did not lead to the licentiousness and disorder that Ames feared but rather to an extraordinarily dynamic, but surprisingly stable, new social order. Wood's *Empire of Liberty* shows us how "middling people" began to come together, popularizing American culture and developing a "sense of nationhood" (732). The genius for association that amazed Tocqueville in the 1830s grew out of the democratic "passions of ordinary people," a cacophony of libertarian, antiauthoritarian, self-interested impulses that so frightened the self-proclaimed better sort (602).

Wood defines democracy in broad cultural and ideological terms as the ascendancy of a radically new egalitarian conception of political society, not as a radical restructuring of the social order—and certainly not of the racial order. Slavery survived and prospered, and "most Americans, both Northerners and Southerners, were coming to think of the United States as 'a white man's country'" (542). But Wood, like Tocqueville, is less interested in the limits of

democracy than in why it works within those limits. Both writers focus on the stabilizing roles of religion and the rule of law. One of Wood's most impressive achievements is to show how advocates of democratic self-rule came to terms with that putative bastion of "aristocratic" power, an independent judiciary. By protecting "minorities of all sorts," the Supreme Court "has become a major instrument for both curbing . . . democracy and maintaining it" (468). If lawyers and jurists preached the autonomy of law, thus sustaining the precarious balance between democracy and liberty, preachers in a dizzying array of "sects and movements" Christianized "American popular culture." Disestablished, democratized religion showed how centrifugal tendencies could serve homogenizing purposes, preparing Americans "for nineteenth-century middle-class respectability," legitimizing "freedom and individualism," and moralizing market participation (613).

There are, of course, conspicuous differences between Tocqueville and Wood, most notably on the "radicalism" of the American Revolution. For Tocqueville, Anglo-Americans' colonial experience was all-important: "aristocratic" institutions and practices—municipal institutions, courts, and churches—were already effectively democratized *before* the Revolution. Focusing instead on how independent Americans understood their world, Wood argues persuasively that the Revolution was critical for the emergence of a democratic culture. In the wake of their constitutional settlement, partisans divided bitterly over the meaning of the Revolution and the future of the federal republic. Seeking to perpetuate British-style mixed government under an "energetic" central government, Federalists evoked images of recrudescing "monarchy" and "aristocracy." Republican oppositionists, inspired by the French Revolution, conjured up an American "old regime"-in-the-making, rallying "all good republicans and liberal reformers" to destroy this cancerous, alien growth (216). Anathematizing "aristocracy," Thomas Jefferson and his followers enabled Americans to overcome "the traditional culture's aversion to the term 'democracy'" (718). That conceptual transformation made all the difference, valorizing a republican revolution and its democratizing consequences and giving shape to the way of life that Tocqueville found so extraordinary.

University of Virginia

PETER S. ONUF

A Faithful Account of the Race: African American Historical Writing in Nineteenth-Century America. By STEPHEN G. HALL. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. 352 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$22.95.)

A Faithful Account of the Race charts the emergence of a genre that Stephen Hall identifies as African American historical writing. Importantly, though,

Hall's book goes beyond merely offering a genealogy of "race histories." Instead, he links this literary form to the professionalization of black historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In doing this, Hall presents a way of reading historical writing from African-descended peoples in America across time, place, and region. This kind of approach encourages the reclassification of Mariah Stewart as an African American historian, along with the more formal "father" of black history, Carter G. Woodson.

Hall, to his credit, is not interested in searching for exemplars. Rather, he chronicles a repository of black historical writing that is encyclopedic in scope and oriented around five eras: 1817–36; 1837–50; 1850–63; 1863–82; and 1883–1915. Some of these dates correspond to significant events, such as the Compromise of 1850, while others designate the publication date of key texts in African American historical writing, such as William Wells Brown's *The Black Man* (1863).

The book's chapters are organized around the above five eras with one exception: a subsequent sixth chapter that places the "race histories" alongside the evolving history curricula at late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century normal schools and colleges. Although focused on charting African American historical writing from America's founding to the early twentieth-century professionalization of the discipline of history, Hall's text makes additional contributions to the field of African American historiography.

Throughout his book, Hall situates late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century people of color as—to borrow David Walker's terminology—"citizens of the world." According to Hall, these worldly African Americans occupied a black public sphere that was informed by cultural practices from African American, American, and European traditions. Significantly, though, the author reads the creative output of these individuals as more than just sentimental Afrocentrism or metahistorical reinterpretations of white nationalist histories. Hall provides a more nuanced perspective by crafting a narrative that exists outside of what he identifies as the binary-fueled tradition of African American historiography that has tended to offer modernist approaches (as in the work of Wilson Jeremiah Moses) and postmodernist approaches (as in the work of John Ernest). Although his text rests on the intellectual shoulders of Ernest's and Moses's scholarship, Hall proposes a "third way" of analyzing African American historical writing by "situating discussions squarely on the terrain of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historical practice" (10).

The book's immense strength lies in its breadth and expansiveness. In conducting a chronological examination, as opposed to a "great works" narrative, Hall is able to present a wide range of understudied texts. This strength, though, is also the book's greatest challenge, as he must choose which texts within the genre deserve only a cursory reading and which ones merit additional analysis.

Regardless of this small concern, the book is critically important to the development and evolution of African American historiography.

Purdue University

KAREN N. SALT

The Glass House Boys of Pittsburgh: Law, Technology, and Child Labor. By JAMES L. FLANNERY. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. 248 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.)

Progressive Era social reformers made abolishing child labor a holy cause. For several decades, however, the glass bottle industry of western Pennsylvania proved to be one the most impregnable bastions they faced. James Flannery's monograph focuses on Progressive reformers and the interplay among politics, culture, and technological change.

In the first chapter, Flannery describes key organizations committed to abolition of child labor—the National Consumers League (NCL), the American Association for Labor Legislation (AALL), and the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC)—and the most important activists, especially Florence Kelley. These organizations approached the issue differently, reflecting a gender divide among Progressive reformers. Male reformers, Flannery suggests, viewed social problems as inefficiencies that needed to be rationalized, and they portrayed themselves as disinterested experts above the political fray. The overwhelmingly male AALL approached child labor in this way. Female reformers like Kelley, Flannery argues, considered child labor a moral issue and tended to be more activist and radical. Both approaches proved useful as reformers tried to push child labor reform through state governments.

Child labor reformers pursued a multipronged legislative strategy. They supported laws that prohibited industrial labor below a certain age, restricted children's night work, made education compulsory so as to keep children out of the labor force, and mandated factory inspections to enforce these regulations. On paper, the Pennsylvania legislature appeared to commit itself to all of these programs. But to the frustration of child labor reformers, child labor persisted in the Pennsylvania glass bottle industry because of weak factory inspection policies and because the legislature repeatedly authorized a glass house exception to statutes that limited child labor in other industries.

Flannery argues that four mutually reinforcing factors enabled child labor to persist in the glass bottle industry. First, the glass manufacturers organized as a potent lobbying group. Second, the glass boys came from poor, immigrant families who opposed child labor reform because they needed multiple income streams. Third, the industry's powerful union collaborated with the glass compa-

nies' lobbying efforts. It did so in response to the fourth factor: technological change. Like most craft unions, the Glass Bottle Blowers Association had opposed child labor both for humanitarian reasons and to prevent cheap child labor from undercutting adult union wage scales. It changed its position, however, after the union's president, Denis Hayes, saw a demonstration of newly patented automatic bottle-making machinery in 1905. Hayes immediately recognized that the new machinery threatened his members' craft with technological obsolescence. When the patent owners decided to introduce the machinery slowly, Hayes realized that union member jobs in firms that did not adopt the new machinery could only be maintained by supporting managerial efforts to cut labor costs. Simply stated, child labor was cheap.

The author closes the volume with a detailed legislative history of the abandonment of the glass house exception, but the book's sudden ending is mildly disappointing. Flannery does not offer a concluding section that places the story into a larger historical context that demonstrates how this case study casts light on larger historical questions. Readers would benefit from a summary and conclusion that reiterate the study's overarching goals.

University of Pittsburgh

RICHARD OESTREICHER

The Age of Smoke: Environmental Policy in Germany and the United States, 1880–1970. By FRANK UEKOETTER. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. 360 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$26.95.)

The Age of Smoke, an English translation of Uekoetter's 2003 German work, fits into recent historiographical trends that have come to understand the history of environmental reform to be more complex than commonly perceived. Reform, in this evaluation, has rarely been the product of upright moral crusaders protecting nature against the wiles of industrial polluters; instead, Uekoetter notes that the history of air-pollution regulation reveals that "while it is clear in some cases who was wearing the white hat and who the black, most look pretty grayish in retrospect" (11). In *The Age of Smoke*, Uekoetter argues that, in both nations, cooperation between public and private interests produced effective air cleanup well before the era of federal legislation.

The Progressive Era saw remarkable success in controlling the coal-smoke "nuisance" in the United States, largely through widespread municipal campaigns that led to local regulation. More significantly, Uekoetter maintains that this success was the result of a process that involved citizen activists, municipal government, and private industry. Industry was not universally opposed to smoke controls, and indeed some business leaders were on the vanguard of city clean-air campaigns. In Germany, the same period saw much more limited air reform, in

part because the state bureaucracy, while powerful, was the victim of numerous internal dysfunctions and lacked a uniform policy.

In the post–World War II period, however, both nations saw rapid shifts in air-pollution regulation. First, public concerns shifted from coal smoke to a broader set of relatively invisible pollutants such as automobile exhaust and toxic industrial emissions. Coinciding with this was the emergence—in both nations—of an “ecological perspective” in which the public increasingly understood air quality in terms of health and environmental degradation, a more holistic evaluation than prewar complaints about smoke “dirt.” In postwar Germany, regulation advanced rapidly, driven by sharp public outcry and government leaders eager to wield the powerful bureaucracy to satisfy it. In the United States, however, the emerging environmental revolution created new dissonance. Activists increasingly viewed cooperation with industrial interests as unacceptable, while industry and government officials, blinded by an “insider perspective,” failed to perceive reformers’ new urgency and were slow to respond in equal measure.

While industry played a role in shaping German air regulation, political leaders were quicker to adapt and lead reform, while open and extensive dialogue within the German political sphere gave priority to the expertise of politically independent engineers over industry lobbyists. In his conclusion, Uekoetter argues that, for all the celebratory attention given the legislative achievements of the environmental movement of the 1960s–70s (such as 1970 Clean Air Act), the recent history of environmental regulation in the United States has been characterized by unproductive distrust and antagonism. The inability to establish cooperative dialogue has limited the progress of reform in more recent decades.

Uekoetter draws upon an impressive array of records from local, state, and federal agencies, as well as newspapers, periodicals, and industry trade journals. While the arguments here are clearly and often gracefully expressed, at points the monograph threatens to embody the bureaucratic inertia it chronicles so well. Readers may find some of the finer distinctions between various regulatory bodies’ methodologies superfluous to the main arguments. The narrative might also have benefited from more focus on individual personalities.

Still, these are relatively minor shortcomings. Uekoetter has made an important contribution to historians’ understanding of the development of environmental policy. In a time when political belligerence abounds on environmental issues, *The Age of Smoke* may provide lessons for a way forward.

Slippery Rock University

AARON COWAN

For the Love of Murphy's: The Behind-the-Counter Story of a Great American Retailer. By JASON TOGYER. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008. 292 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$34.95.)

G. C. Murphy Company was one of the great retailers headquartered in Pennsylvania. Its first store opened in 1906 in McKeesport, just outside of Pittsburgh, and like its competitors F. W. Woolworth and S. S. Kresge companies, Murphy's operated a chain of "Five and Tens" in cities and towns. Murphy's particular strategy was to locate many of its stores in small towns where it could be the leading retailer. At one time, Murphy's stores blanketed rural Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia and eventually extended to small towns throughout the South and Midwest. It was an innovative retailer as well. During the 1950s, it was the first "Five and Ten" to advertise on television; it eventually used computers to track its inventory and sales, and by 1970 it was opening massive Murphy Mart stores. By then the company operated over five hundred units. Ironically, the chain's demise was a result of its success. In 1985, Ames Department Stores acquired the highly profitable Murphy Company during the merger and acquisition boom. Ames, however, declined under deep debt and increased competition and, after two bankruptcies, closed its remaining units in 2002.

Jason Togyer, a magazine editor based in Pittsburgh, used the resources of the McKeesport-based G. C. Murphy Company Foundation to produce a well-illustrated and interesting chronicle of the rise and fall of this once seemingly ubiquitous Pennsylvania retailer. The foundation partially funded the project and helped coordinate the collection of the employees' and customers' stories that Togyer uses to bring life to his narrative. It is these reminiscences that make this book special, and they come from retired executives and shop assistants and from customers in small towns in the mining region and in large cities like Pittsburgh and Baltimore. They effectively turn this book into an invaluable oral history project.

Using the foundation's records and photographs, newspaper articles, and the stories of workers and customers, Togyer tells the tale of G. C. Murphy from its founding in 1906 to its demise in the 1980s. Other than a few problems in the first five years, Togyer finds a series of uninterrupted successes; it even remained profitable during the Great Depression. After World War II, Murphy's enlarged its stores, built branches in suburbs and malls, and used technology to remain competitive. As detailed in this work, missteps were few and successes many.

This rosy view of G. C. Murphy Company is one of the book's two weaknesses. Likely because of the sources used, there is little unbiased perspective on the store. To a large degree, this is an insider tale crafted twenty years after the fact by people who truly miss the world of "Five and Tens." The book lacks the scholarly distance of a work like Susan Porter Benson's *Counter Cultures* (1988),

which notes the warts and all of department stores.

The other weakness is Togger's lack of engagement with the scholarly literature. Like a good journalist, he tells his story well, but there is no broader contextualization. This is a shame because there are many scholarly works on department stores and very few on "Five and Tens." *For the Love of Murphy's* missed an opportunity to bridge that gap. As it stands, the book is a nicely written, if overly glowing, account of a plucky little retailer. Someone else, however, will have to ponder what role stores like Murphy's played in the twentieth century.

Despite these two criticisms, this is a very good and imaginative book. The story it tells is an important one, and its extensive use of employee and customer reminiscences make it a valuable work for scholars of retailing and both urban and rural culture. It is also a fun look back on an era now passed.

Wilkes University

JOHN H. HEPP IV

Pivotal Pennsylvania: Presidential Politics from FDR to the Twenty-First Century. By G. TERRY MADONNA. (Mansfield, PA: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 2008. 125 pp. Illustrations, table, notes, suggested further reading, bibliography. \$14.95.)

Political junkies know Professor G. Terry Madonna, director of the Center for Politics and Public Affairs at Franklin & Marshall College and director of the Franklin & Marshall Poll. Madonna's media appearances, revealing polls, and astute political observations have enlightened and guided Pennsylvanians over the past several decades. He is splendidly qualified, therefore, to evaluate political trends, shifts in the balance of political power, and the vital contributions by the Pennsylvania electorate to determining who, since 1932, occupied the Oval Office.

This compact, fact-filled study traces realignments within Pennsylvania's electorate. It begins in 1932 by examining a slight inconclusive shift toward the Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt and then looks at a seismic pro-New Deal movement in 1936 that ended the Republicans' post-Civil War dominance and converted Pennsylvania, thereafter, from a one-party state to a swing state or "battleground state." Madonna systematically analyzes Pennsylvania's vote in each presidential election from 1932 to 2004, adroitly assaying the salient issues, dominant personalities, and political cleavages across the state. Many factors contributed to the creation of a "genuinely competitive two-party state" that kept elections close (36). The switch of Pittsburgh (during the New Deal) and Philadelphia (after 1951) into Democratic strongholds and the continued Republican dominance of two-thirds of the rural and the non-Philadelphia suburban counties set the stage for competitive presidential elections into the twenty-

first century. Pennsylvania went for the Republicans Hoover, Dewey, Eisenhower (twice), Nixon, Reagan (twice), and George H. W. Bush and the Democrats FDR (three times), Kennedy, Johnson, Humphrey, Carter, Clinton (twice), Gore, Kerry, and Obama. Concurrently, the governorship routinely changed party hands every eight years, the congressional delegation often closely divided, and the U.S. Senate seats were frequently shared, one by each party. Accustomed to close attention, Pennsylvania voters became more discriminating in recent elections as ticket splitting increased.

During the last eighty years, several Pennsylvania politicians—David Lawrence (D), John S. Fine (R), Hugh Scott (R), Tom Ridge (R), and Edward G. Rendell (D), to name a few—played prominent roles at the national nominating conventions, occasionally edging into a corner of the presidential spotlight. Governors William W. Scranton (R), Milton J. Shapp (D), and Robert Casey (D) made futile runs, but no Pennsylvanian has been a serious contender for the nomination. Moreover, Pennsylvania voters, as Madonna explains, “became largely a non-factor in the presidential nomination process” because of the late date (April) set for presidential primary elections (114). Only in the 1984 (Walter Mondale, Gary Hart, Jesse Jackson) and 2008 (Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton) primary campaigns did Pennsylvania’s Democratic voters have any substantial say in the selection of their party’s nominees.

Pivotal Pennsylvania is a valuable reference work, a useful resource for college courses on Pennsylvania history, and an essential companion for students of recent political history.

Temple University

JAMES W. HILTY