

THE
PENNSYLVANIA
MAGAZINE
OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

VOLUME CXXXIV

October 2010

NO. 4

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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.

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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>.



*“That Charity which begins at
Home”: Ethnic Societies and
Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century
Philadelphia*

*To be good Citizens of the World and the Nation we live in, yet to have special Fellowship with the Descendants of our Ancestors, is perfectly consistent with true Patriotism and universal Philanthropy. That Charity which begins at Home diffuses its Influence to the remotest parts of the Earth.*¹

BRIDGET EDWARDS, AN IMMIGRANT FROM WALES, arrived in Philadelphia in 1800 along with her husband and their four young daughters. Like so many others, she hoped to find a better life in the New World. Tragically, Philadelphia would not live up to Bridget’s expectations but would, over the course of half a year, deprive her of her family. Her husband, the first to go, was a victim of the “seasoning” process experienced by so many immigrants whose immune systems were

I would like to thank the anonymous readers for their generous help in making this a better article. Special thanks to Tamara Gaskell for her suggestions, insights, and encouragement and to David Waldstreicher for his continuing advice and support.

¹The First Constitution and Rules Adopted by the Welsh Society, in Minutes, vol. 1, Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia, 1798–, Special Collections, Haverford College. The early documents and minutes of the society refer to it as the “Welch Society”; in keeping with library and archive records, this article uses the modern spelling of “Welsh” unless directly quoting a source.

THE PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY
Vol. CXXXIV, No. 4 (October 2010)

not prepared for the diseases endemic to their new home. Widowed and alone in a city of strangers, Bridget and her daughters fell quickly into poverty. Bereft of family support, they turned for help to public relief and entered the Philadelphia Almshouse. By 1800, the "Bettering House," as it was then called, had achieved a notorious reputation among the poor of the city. The Edwards's experience would not serve to brighten the institution's image. Two months after admitting the Edwards family, the managers of the Bettering House elected to indenture the two eldest girls, four-year-old twins Margaret and Martha, for twelve years as servants to farmers in Blockley Township. Less than a week later, Catherine Edwards, Bridget's next youngest child, became one of the many to perish of disease within the walls of the Almshouse. When summer came, Edwards, still clinging to her infant daughter, the last family member she had left, gained her freedom from the institution. After leaving the Bettering House, her prospects were little brighter than they had been half a year earlier, except that now the weather was warmer and, of course, she had fewer mouths to feed.²

Elizabeth Owens also came to Philadelphia in 1800, and her tale began in a similar fashion. She and her family, along with some two hundred fellow Welsh immigrants, were deposited at New Castle. John Owens, like Bridget Edwards's husband, died of sickness shortly after his arrival in America. Elizabeth was left to care for their five children and was pregnant with a sixth. Here the tales of Bridget and Elizabeth part, however, for Owens did not seek aid from the public relief institutions of Philadelphia, but had, instead, been sought out by an organization calling itself the Welsh Society. This private, benevolent society had been created two years before by a group of prosperous Welshmen living in and around Philadelphia. Its founding purpose was to advise and assist those who, like Edwards and Owens, had emigrated from Wales and encountered "distress" in America. The society had first encountered the Owens at New Castle, where it had sent its stewards upon learning that a ship carrying Welsh immigrants was soon to arrive. The society's funds brought the immigrants from New Castle to Philadelphia and provided support for as many as needed it while they adapted to life in their new home.

² Daily Occurrence Dockets for Nov. 11, 1800, Jan. 5 and 8, 1801, Records of the Guardians of the Poor, Philadelphia City Archives. The binding of the Edwards twins is recorded more fully in the Alms House Managers minutes for Jan. 5, 1801, Records of the Guardians of the Poor, Philadelphia City Archives. Billy G. Smith, *The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, NY, 1990), 171.

Because of the severity of her situation, Elizabeth Owens remained "under the care of the Stewards" for six months, who provided her with a rented house and "such other aid as appeared to be immediately necessary." Should she or her children grow ill, the society was prepared to bring professional medical assistance to her home; should she suffer exploitation, the society offered legal counsel from sympathetic Welsh lawyers. Perhaps most importantly, Elizabeth Owens established connections with a society of individuals who were her countrymen in two respects, Welsh and American, and who consequently considered it their duty to see that she and her children successfully established themselves in the City of Brotherly Love.³

As these poignant accounts show, it could matter a great deal from whom the poor received relief. By the end of the eighteenth century, Philadelphia boasted a high unparalleled number of organizations, public and private, dedicated to combating the spread and effects of poverty. This article seeks to further expand our understanding of eighteenth-century poor relief in Philadelphia by calling attention to a group of four private benevolent societies that, like the Welsh Society, were created to provide more expansive care for members of specific ethnic heritages. By examining the purpose behind the creation of these societies, we can better see where and how the existing system of public poor relief in Philadelphia fell short. By exploring the ways in which they went about addressing poverty, we can better understand the specific needs of the city's eighteenth-century immigrants. Finally, by placing these societies alongside other institutions that dealt with poverty in and around Philadelphia, we can suggest theories as to why they responded as they did to the plight of the poor.

The evolution of poverty and poor relief in early Philadelphia has garnered considerable attention in the last half-century, particularly from scholars such as Billy G. Smith, Gary Nash, John Alexander, and Sharon Salinger, and several trends have become apparent. First, it is clear that poverty was a growing problem in Philadelphia during the eighteenth century and that by about midcentury it encompassed young and healthy men and women as well as the expected widows, orphans, and the sick and disabled. Second, historians have demonstrated that, as Smith writes, "only an extremely thin margin separated those who required assistance from those who were able to independently secure the necessities of life"; sickness, injury, childbirth, economic decline, and cold weather were all

³ Minutes, Sept. 1 and Dec. 1, 1800, Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia.

capable of pushing Philadelphia's lower sorts across this slippery threshold. Third, historians have emphasized a shift, beginning roughly in the mid-eighteenth century, toward a more institutionalized approach to poor relief and an inclination among the distributors of that relief to attribute the increasing poverty to deficiencies within the poor themselves. This change in perspective, in tandem with social and political insecurities, led the elite distributors of relief increasingly to focus on controlling and reforming the poor in addition to (or rather than) lifting them out of poverty.⁴

Most of the work on poor relief in Philadelphia has been primarily centered on the organizations and institutions of public, or semipublic, relief: the Overseers of the Poor, the Almshouse, Pennsylvania Hospital, etc. This focus on public relief, driven by the richness of the sources and the large number of recipients, risks obscuring the way in which smaller, private institutions complemented and expanded the poor relief provided at public expense. It also tends to focus historians on some of the lowest of the lower sort, those unable to find "respectable" sources of assistance such as family, churches, or private societies. As a rule, those who could obtain private relief did so; only those who could not submitted themselves to the "reforms" of the public system.

This article is not intended to challenge these earlier analyses of public relief in Philadelphia. Rather, it turns attention to the larger holistic system of poor relief in the city, which encompassed both public and private sources, by highlighting a set of private institutions, all of which first operated as unincorporated societies. These institutions served the needs of the "respectable poor," who turned to these societies instead of (or, at times, in addition to) public institutions, and provided a type of assistance meant to keep the poor above the line of complete dependency that I will call "preemptive poor relief." Consequently, we should not view the ethnic societies as being in competition with the city's public relief institutions, but as supplemental to them, going above and beyond publicly provided

⁴ Billy G. Smith, "Introduction: 'The Best Poor Man's Country,'" in *Down and Out in Early America*, ed. Billy G. Smith (University Park, PA, 2004), xviii. A partial selection of particularly noteworthy works on poverty and poor relief in Philadelphia might include Smith, "Lower Sort"; Gary B. Nash, "Poverty and Poor Relief in Pre-Revolutionary Philadelphia," *William and Mary Quarterly* 33 (1976): 3–30; Nash "Up from the Bottom in Franklin's Philadelphia," *Past and Present* 77 (1977): 57–83; John K. Alexander, *Render Them Submissive: Responses to Poverty in Philadelphia, 1760–1800* (Amherst, MA, 1980); Carla Gardina Pestana and Sharon V. Salinger, eds., *Inequality in Early America* (Hanover, NH, 1999); and Seth Rockman, *Welfare Reform in the Early Republic: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston, 2003).

assistance and, in many ways, filling in the gaps left by the tightening restrictions imposed by public policy "reformers."

* * *

Philadelphia saw an explosive growth in private societies and clubs in the latter half of the eighteenth century. These new organizations dedicated themselves to addressing all sorts of issues: social, political, intellectual, and benevolent. Even among those private societies dedicated to relieving the distress of the poor, considerable variety existed. Some formed in response to sudden disasters and disbanded afterwards, as the Committee to Alleviate the Miseries of the Poor did in the face of an unusually cruel winter in 1761/62. Others organized themselves on a more permanent basis to address the needs of particularly disadvantaged groups, such as widows, orphans, or prisoners. Still others were composed of members of particular crafts or occupations and acted as mutual assistance societies, providing security for their memberships in case of accident or economic downturn.⁵

The four benevolent societies examined here dedicated themselves to the immigrant poor of particular ethnicities. They are, in order of formal organization, the St. Andrew's Society (1749), the Society of the Sons of St. George (1772), the Hibernian Society (1790), and the aforementioned Welsh Society (1798). Respectively, they served the needs of Philadelphia's poor Scottish, English, Irish, and Welsh immigrants, their families, and (to some extent) their descendants. A number of similar contemporary societies existed for other ethnic groups, among them the Deutschen Gesellschaft von Pennsylvania and the French Benevolent Society of Philadelphia. In 1797 St. Thomas's African Church established a mutual assistance society for the benefit of those of African descent.⁶

The four societies considered here shared a common British heritage, spoke and wrote in English, and were in these ways less "foreign" to and separate from greater Philadelphia society than were some of the other ethnic societies. They were also remarkably similar to one another in their

⁵ For a discussion on how political-oriented associations formed in the late 1700s and early 1800s, see Albrecht Koschnik, *"Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together": Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775–1840* (Charlottesville, VA, 2007); Alexander, *Render Them Submissive*, 122–41; Nash, "Up from the Bottom," 58.

⁶ *Constitution and Rules to Be Observed and Kept by the Friendly Society of St. Thomas's African Church, of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1797).

organization and operation. In the ways they elected their officers, scheduled their meetings, raised their funds, distributed their relief, and celebrated their fraternity, each society would have been quite familiar to members of the other three, and their memberships did at times overlap. Most importantly, the societies themselves recognized one another as belonging to a special group of benevolent organizations. The later societies instituted habits of electing the officers of the other British societies to honorary membership and inviting them to celebratory dinners.⁷

All of these societies evolved out of preexisting, but less formal, social connections. Their official organization and focus on relieving the poor seem to have been prompted by the evolutions in poverty and poor relief going on around them. The St. Andrew's Society was formally organized in 1749, though it seems likely that many of the founding members had been meeting periodically to discuss the poverty of Scottish immigrants for some time before that.⁸ By the 1740s, it was becoming increasingly apparent that Philadelphia was losing the fight against poverty; the poor tax had doubled over the previous three decades, as had the percentage-population of the poor. A population boom had begun, which, between 1740 and 1775, would triple the number of people in the city, bringing in thousands of immigrants, many of whom would prove to be ill-prepared for the labor demands of Philadelphia. As Gary Nash has shown, by the middle of the eighteenth century the existing system of public relief, the Almshouse and the Overseers of the Poor, could no longer keep up with the increasing demands of the impoverished. The immigrant poor, many of whom were technically excluded from public relief due to residency requirements, increasingly sought assistance from their fellow countrymen. Thus, the founders of the St. Andrew's Society wrote of "meeting frequently with our Country people here in distress who generally make application to some one or other of us for relief." Previously they had responded to these cries for help either out of pocket or through ad hoc collections, but such remedies were neither efficient nor sustainable. In

⁷The Welsh Society annually invited the officers of the other three societies to join their anniversary dinner. See Minutes, Dec. 2, 1799, Dec. 1, 1800, and Dec. 7, 1801, Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia. Additionally, the Hibernian Society was in the habit of electing officers from other societies to honorary membership. See John H. Campbell, *History of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland, March 17, 1771–March 17, 1892* (Philadelphia, 1892), 152.

⁸Edgar S. Gardner, ed., *The First Two Hundred Years, 1747–1947, of the St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1947), 20–23

creating the St. Andrew's Society, the founders hoped to "more easily more regularly and more bountifully" supply the needs of their fellow Scottish immigrants.⁹

Similar concerns drove the founders of the Society of the Sons of St. George, who were also "struck with the frequent instances of wretchedness which they found among their country-men who came to America." This benevolent society for Englishmen was formed in the early 1770s, during the height of a battle among city officials over the nature of public poor relief. In 1766, struggling under the weight of a postwar economic slump, the city had approved a plan by a group of wealthy Quaker merchants to replace the existing Almshouse with a new institution that would not only shelter and care for the dependent or "worthy" poor but also employ the able-bodied or "idle" poor in a workhouse. This transition brought new construction, new administration, and a new philosophy of poor relief to Philadelphia. The managers of the "Bettering House," as the new institution was called, embarked on a campaign to terminate the out-relief payments that the Overseers of the Poor had long been distributing and to drive anyone who would receive public support into the Bettering House where they could be "reformed" through profitable labor. The Overseers of the Poor argued that out-relief should be continued, especially for those who only needed temporary relief or were partially capable of supporting themselves and would be forced to abandon their homes and possessions if they went into the House. In 1769, the managers of the Bettering House won the battle over finances and all out-relief and pensions were stopped. Ending out-relief, however, would not ease the financial burdens of poor relief, and the city took other drastic steps. In 1771, it enacted new legislation to limit the number of poor eligible for relief; among other restrictions the new poor law doubled the time required for migrants to obtain the right of settlement from one year to two. These changes to the public system of poor relief, which immediately preceded the formation of the English society, struck new immigrants from overseas particularly hard. Unlike the itinerant poor who came to Philadelphia from other cities or colonies, they had no nearby place of residency to return to if their ventures failed. Even if they should

⁹ Nash, "Up from the Bottom," 65; "Advertisement," 1749, in *St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts, 1749–1843*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA. The residency requirements for public relief were at times ignored, as they were in the case of the Edwards family, either in response to extreme circumstances or through the generosity of a public official.

achieve the “right” to be confined within the Bettering House, such an arrangement offered them no opportunity to establish themselves as productive citizens or to build up a source of independent income. It was in the face of this increasingly severe situation that a number of immigrants from England, like the founders of the St. Andrew’s Society a quarter century earlier, met to establish an organized and efficient means of aiding their countrymen. In their own words, they meant “to reduce that charity which in their separate capacities they extended to their poor and unfortunate countrymen accidentally, into a regular system of relief.” The Sons of St. George would, on various occasions, offer the very sorts of aid the system of public relief had just eliminated.¹⁰

The two later organizations, the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland and the Welsh Society of Pennsylvania, for the Advice and Assistance of Emigrants from Wales, were both formed in the 1790s in response to hardships faced by new immigrants. The Hibernian Society was in many respects the offspring of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, a fraternal society of wealthy Irishmen begun in 1771. The Friendly Sons were, without question, more dedicated to sociability, politics, and, during the Revolution, patriotism, than to charity. Nonetheless, they did devote some of their funds to assist their less affluent countrymen, and it seems that, in the years after the Revolution, several of their number grew increasingly concerned about the state of Irish immigrants. Transporting poor Irish men and women to America became a profitable business in the late eighteenth century, and profit-seeking shipowners pursued ever greater returns by increasing the number of passengers they carried and decreasing the quality of life aboard ship. As a result, conditions for Irish immigrants were often atrocious, as overcrowding was combined with unsanitary conditions and insufficient provision of food and water. On at least three occasions in the eighteenth century Pennsylvania passed legislation regulating the passenger trade, but these laws were not adequately enforced and often ignored since the newly arrived immigrants were generally unaware of them and were ill prepared or equipped to carry on a prosecution against the shipmasters. Furthermore, the Irish could face additional discrimination on the basis of their political, religious, and ethnic heritage.¹¹ The Hibernian Society

¹⁰ Constitution and Minutes, Oct. 23, 1773, Society of the Sons of St. George Records, 1772–1949, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Nash, “Poverty and Poor Relief,” 26n66; Alexander, *Render Them Submissive*, 86–121.

¹¹ Samuel Hood, *A Brief Account of the Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick*, with

formed to combat this problem and to provide general assistance to newly arrived immigrants from Ireland. In this the founding members were inspired by the work of Philadelphia's other ethnic and national benevolent societies. The 1790 constitution of the Hibernian Society praised "the national societies, established in this country" and recognized that:

By these societies, emigrants have been rendered happy in their situations and useful citizens; oppression has been punished; migration hither encouraged; misery alleviated; and consequently, the temptations to wander from the paths of rectitude diminished.¹²

Though the constitution does not specify, it seems likely that "the national societies" referred to were, among others, the St. Andrew's Society and the Society of the Sons of St. George, both of which the members of the Hibernian Society would toast on numerous occasions, and the German Society, Deutschen Gesellschaft von Pennsylvania, which was known for its valiant efforts on the part of German immigrants. Though its initial membership came in large part from the Friendly Sons, which continued to operate as a sociable club for some time, the new society opened its doors to any man who was willing and able to contribute to its cause.¹³

Like the Hibernian Society, the Welsh Society was preceded by earlier ethnic associations, possibly dating back to the Society of the Sons of Ancient Britons, founded in 1729. This heritage was well remembered by the founders of the Welsh Society, who believed that "Friendship and Fraternization" had "usually existed between the ancient Britons and this Country" owing to a steady in-migration. In 1798, a group of Welsh Philadelphians became concerned that this connection with the land of their birth and its people had become "less fervent than at former periods." They consequently feared that a newly arrived Welsh immigrant would no longer be able to successfully integrate into the city's society or "form favourable Ideas of its Inhabitants, and be attached to his situa-

Biographical Notices of Some of the Members, also Extracts from the Minutes (Philadelphia, 1844), 20–21; Campbell, *History of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick*, 49–52; Thomas Wilson, *Picture of Philadelphia, for 1824: Containing the "Picture of Philadelphia, for 1811, by James Mease, M.D." with All Its Improvements since That Period* (Philadelphia, 1823), 281–83.

¹² "Constitution of the Hibernian Society," *Pennsylvania Mercury*, Mar. 30, 1790.

¹³ Campbell, *History of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick*, 62–64; "Hibernian Society," *Independent Gazetteer*, Apr. 9, 1791; "St. Andrew's Society," *Independent Gazetteer*, Dec. 8, 1792. The August 3, 1785, issue of the *Pennsylvania Evening Herald* includes a call for an Irish immigrant aid society along the lines of German societies operating in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

tion." Furthermore, the Welsh migrants, like the Irish, were vulnerable to avaricious shipmasters and often arrived in America in desperate need of support. In order to remedy this situation and to encourage their countrymen's attachment to their new home, the members of the Welsh Society dedicated themselves to "taking our Emigrant brother by the Hand, instructing him in what he is ignorant of and providing for his Immediate necessities."¹⁴

Though all of these societies were preceded by earlier fraternal and sociable clubs, it is important to recognize these four organizations as being primarily and essentially devoted to charity. Their dedication to benevolence took precedence over other motivations for formally assembling, including politics and fraternity. This is not to say that the societies did not serve sociable functions; ethnic fraternity retained an importance for several of the societies. Formal meetings were generally preceded by dinner and followed by drinking, transitions made easier by the fact that some of the societies first met in taverns. Furthermore, every year each society held an anniversary banquet on the day of its patron saint. These dinners were purely social occasions, involving late nights, many celebratory toasts, and considerably more people than the quarterly meetings. Nonetheless, there are several indications that this sort of socialization remained secondary to the societies' purposes. First, as mentioned above, most of the societies were preceded by some earlier form of more purely social gathering, the most obvious example being the existence of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick before and alongside the Hibernian Society. Fraternal, ethnically based social clubs were already available. Second, the structures and rules of the societies did not lend themselves to jovial social exchanges. Disorderly behavior in the meetings could be punished by fines or even expulsion, as could interrupting official business with trivial matters. The St. Andrew's Society required that all remarks be directed to the chairman once its meetings officially commenced. Third, members who were not directly involved in running the charitable aspects of the societies often avoided the meetings. Most of the administrative powers over the societies' benevolence were invested in the officers while the larger membership was responsible for contributing funds, making recommendations, and steering any needy countrymen they encountered to the societies' stewards. That a relatively small proportion of the nonofficer mem-

¹⁴ Horatio Gates Jones, *The Charter and By-Laws of the Welsh Society: With an Historical Sketch* (Harrisburg, PA, 1915), 12; First Constitution and Rules Adopted by the Welsh Society, Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia.

bership appeared at the quarterly meetings implies that these gatherings were primarily focused on the operation of the societies' charity. Finally, the founding documents and rules of the societies are overwhelmingly focused on the need for assisting the immigrant poor rather than on furthering social intercourse among the membership. The St. Andrew's Society, to cite one example, proclaimed itself "Solely Instituted" with the intent of "giving Relief to the poor and distressed." While it was certainly in the interest of the members to promote themselves as solely dedicated to benevolence, the society's structure and function seems to confirm that charity was, indeed, its primary, if not its only, purpose.¹⁵

If the societies privileged benevolence over sociability, they also exalted it over politics. In a time when private political associations in Philadelphia were taking on ever greater significance, these benevolent ethnic societies remained remarkably apolitical. This stance is all the more surprising when one considers the political battles raging at the time some of them were formed. One might suspect that a society of Englishmen formed in the American colonies in 1772 would have been soon overwhelmed by political turmoil. Yet the tensions between Britain and her colonies are almost entirely absent from the society minutes, appearing only twice: first, in a meeting on July 24, 1775, when the society determined that "the general Distress of this unhappy Country" was preventing the membership "from extending their wonted Charity" and that it would cease meeting regularly for the foreseeable future, and again in a special meeting called by the vice president on March 4, 1776, to expel one member of the society for "having shown himself inimical to the liberties of this country." The latter is the only instance in which the society took any position on the colonial dispute, and it seems likely that it did so primarily to save face. The expelled member, one John Kearsley, was at the time of his expulsion in prison for writing abusive letters, well on his way to insanity, and would soon be attainted of treason.¹⁶ The Welsh Society also arose at a time of unusually turbulent politics. Established in 1798, it came into being alongside the Alien and Sedition Acts and just in time for the vicious political struggles that led up to the

¹⁵ The anniversary dinner appears among the rules of all four societies. The requirement that speakers address the chairman appears in Rule 22 of the St. Andrew's Society and the declaration to be "Solely Instituted" along lines of relief appears in the society's 1749 "Advertisement," St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts.

¹⁶ Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution, with an Historical Essay* (Boston, 1864), 1:597.

election of 1800. Yet throughout the period the society remained politically uninvolved.

This avoidance of partisanship and political disruption was not merely fortuitous. The Welsh Society was particularly careful to avoid divisive distractions, ruling in its initial constitution that “The Religious or Political opinions of a Candidate shall not Influence his election [to an office within the society]; nor shall controversies on those subjects be introduced whilst the President is in the Chair.” But most of the societies forbade their members to introduce any subject that might distract from “the business of the Society” once the meetings began. In a city as politically and religiously diverse as Philadelphia, it seems likely that these were the same distracting subjects the authors of such rules had in mind.¹⁷

Charity, then, was the core function of the benevolent ethnic societies, but it was charity subject to particular limitations. The constitutions and charters of these societies emphasized their devotion to charity and benevolence, but they also displayed an intriguing tension between an inclusive moral obligation to aid all those in distress and an exclusive responsibility to those from their own home countries. Reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of Philadelphia, the founders of the Society of the Sons of St. George wrote in their constitution that “National attachments and prejudices are for the most part idle and unnecessary” and that such “invidious national distinctions . . . ought particularly to be avoided between the different nations composing the British state in America, where all freemen (from wheresoever they originally migrated) are brethren, friends, and countrymen.” Regarding relief to the distressed, they declared that “Pity, social love, and charity, are citizens of the world, and extend their benign influences to the whole human race.” The St. Andrew’s Society declared that its design was “undoubtedly universal Good.” The creators of the Welsh Society would later concur that “the wretched of no clime nor condition should be excluded from our aid and commiseration.”¹⁸

Yet the benevolence of these institutions was restricted along as many as three lines: ethnic heritage, generational distance from immigration,

¹⁷ Article 4 of the First Constitution, Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia; Rule 21 of the First Constitution, St. Andrew’s Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts; Article 12 in the 1772 Constitution, Society of the Sons of St. George Records.

¹⁸ 1772 Constitution, Society of the Sons of St. George Records; “Advertisement,” 1749, St. Andrew’s Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts; Introduction to the charter of the Welsh Society, in Jones, *Charter and By-Laws of the Welsh Society*, 20.

and moral character. The first restriction is the most obvious; each society limited its assistance to those who came, or descended from those who came, from specific parts of Great Britain. Intriguingly, this restriction appears to have been a source of peculiar discomfort for several of the societies, and they went to great lengths to justify their exclusivity in light of the universal and inclusive remarks quoted above. The Scottish and English societies, in particular, felt the need to defend themselves against accusations of unjust bias, and both devoted considerable space in their constitutions to making an "Apology" for the "somewhat confin'd" nature of their charity. The apologies proffered by these societies took the same form and were founded on two key propositions. First, they asserted that truly universal benevolence, however laudable and desirable, was beyond the realm of possibility. As the founders of the English society declared:

Man, however boundless are the desires excited in him by benevolence and social affection, is still limited in his abilities and capacity; and though his wishes may incline him to be serviceable to all his fellow-creatures, he soon discovers that he has it in his power to be of use but to very few.¹⁹

Faced with the impossibility of relieving all those who are distressed, the benevolent soul must be selective. The moral basis for such selectiveness lies in the second part of the societies' apology, that a man's "countrymen are his peculiar care." The members of the Welsh Society would effectively capture the sentiments of all British societies when they declared in 1802 that it was "both just and natural that those of the country and people of our ancestors have claims of greater sensibility and of stronger obligation than others." This preeminence of duty to one's countrymen, over and above responsibility for all of humanity, combined with the charitable nature of their institutions, helped soothe the societies' fears that they might have fallen into "invidious national distinctions." Rather, in fulfilling their duties to their own countrymen, these benefactors were doing *their* part to relieve the poor of the world. Ethnic exclusivity and universal inclusion were not, in their minds, opposites.²⁰

The second set of restrictions focused the societies' benevolence on newly arrived immigrant families rather than on those long established in the Americas. The effects of this immigrant focus varied over time. The

¹⁹ 1772 Constitution, Society of the Sons of St. George Records.

²⁰ Introduction to the charter of the Welsh Society, in Jones, *Charter and By-Laws of the Welsh Society*, 20.

St. Andrew's Society first limited its benevolence to those born in Scotland and the sons of those born in Scotland, as well as their widows and small children. Thus, they offered relief to first- and second-generation families. This restriction was linked to a similar limit on the society's membership: only natives of Scotland or their sons were eligible. A new constitution, adopted in 1769, extended membership eligibility to another generation, allowing the society to absorb still more members as the city aged. The Society of the Sons of St. George would adopt restrictions like those of the St. Andrew's Society's initial constitution, limiting both membership and relief to the first and second generation of immigrants from England. Two reasons for these restrictions suggest themselves. First, it was the newly arrived immigrant who was more likely to need advice and assistance. The records of these societies demonstrate that numerous Britons came to Philadelphia with ill-conceived plans for establishing a business there, often having misjudged either the cost of supplies or the demand for their wares. Those born in the city would naturally be more familiar with its markets and, of course, would likely have family to fall back on if their enterprises failed. Second, it may be that generational distance from the native country was seen as diluting the "special Fellowship" and "peculiar care" that underlay the societies' benevolence. These restrictions may represent quiet acknowledgment of a prerevolutionary British American identity that could slowly replace one's Scottish or English heritage.²¹

The later societies, formed in the 1790s, did not explicitly limit the generational distance to which their benevolence extended, but it seems unlikely that such a restriction would have been necessary. Where the Scottish and English societies generally expected their needy countrymen to approach them with petitions for assistance, the Welsh Society and the Hibernian Society actively sought out incoming immigrants in need of help. Both societies met passenger ships at the docks and busied themselves meeting the new arrivals' immediate needs of housing, health, and sustenance. This care for immigrants "just off the boat" seems to have been their overriding purpose, though they at times also received petitions from within the city. Furthermore, both societies were less restrictive as to the ethnicity of their membership. The Welsh Society required that all members be "of known Welch descent," but placed no restrictions on how

²¹ Though the language of the St. Andrew's Society's and the Society of the Sons of St. George's founding documents use a masculine generic in describing who is eligible for aid, the early minutes show that, from the beginning, women born in Scotland or England were also granted relief.

many generations might separate an applicant from Wales. The Hibernian Society, for its part, placed no ethnic restrictions on its membership, but welcomed any man who was willing and able to provide relief to immigrants from Ireland.

Several historians, most notably Gary B. Nash and John K. Alexander, have noted that as the eighteenth century wore on the elites of Philadelphia increasingly blamed poverty on the poor, looked upon the indigent with suspicion, and came to see poor relief as a means of social control. Nash has suggested that the experience and social position of Philadelphia's leaders left them "ideologically handicapped" in their search for the causes of poverty, and Alexander argues that many aspects of the public relief system were intended to reform the manners, rather than relieve the suffering, of the poor. Such concerns were not entirely alien to benevolent ethnic societies. Although they served, in many ways, to supplement an increasingly institutional and restricted public relief system, the St. Andrew's Society and the Society of the Sons of St. George openly incorporated a third, moral, restriction on who could receive their assistance. The key term they almost invariably invoked was "character." Thus, when Alex Irvin petitioned the Scottish society for aid, the society first determined that he was "of good character" before giving him three pounds. The Sons of St. George would use precisely the same phrase to describe John Parker, an unemployed bricklayer, when they granted him a small weekly subsidy to see him through the winter. They likewise tasked their stewards to "enquire into the Petitioner's Case and Character" before determining whether they would act to relieve Joseph Bull, a poor weaver. The petitioners of these societies were doubtless aware that their respectability was subject to evaluation and tried to sway the balance in their favor; when Robert Shepard approached the St. Andrew's Society for help, he brought with him letters of recommendation from people "of credit & character," hoping that their good repute would help bolster his own. The meaning of "good character" in this context comes across in those occasional instances where the secretaries of the societies record a more elaborate judgment. Calico printer John Hewson was described as "an industrious Sober man," Francis Gray, a poor elderly woman, was "honest" and "of good reputation"; both received funds from the society.²²

²² Nash, "Poverty and Poor Relief in Pre-Revolutionary Philadelphia," 28–29; Alexander, *Render Them Submissive*, 6–7, 95, 120–21; Minutes, Sept. 2, 1752, and Aug. 31, 1752, St. Andrew's Society

Again, the Hibernian Society and Welsh Society differed from the two earlier organizations; neither appears to have been greatly concerned with the character of those to whom they brought relief. The difference stems mainly from the status of their primary recipients: immigrants who just arrived in Philadelphia from across the Atlantic. It is unlikely that anyone in Philadelphia could have vouched for the moral rectitude of these individuals since they were often complete strangers to the city. Similarly, they tended to be poorer than the more established petitioners who approached the English and Scottish societies, more often in need of food or medical attention than a loan to start up a business. When faced with equally necessitous circumstances, even the older societies appear to have loosened their moral regulations; Mary Agnew approached the St. Andrew's Society "in the greatest distress and in danger of perishing," and it granted her ten shillings of emergency relief, despite the fact that she was "of an undeserving Character."²³

The societies extended their concern over moral character and propriety toward their membership rolls as well as to their relief recipients. Though theoretically membership was open to anyone of the proper heritage (or, in the case of the Hibernian Society, anyone at all) able and willing to help provide benevolence, in practice the societies looked for certain kinds of men respectable enough to join their ranks. Each society defined these requirements of respectability in similar, yet subtle ways. The St. Andrew's Society sought members of "honor and integrity"; the Hibernian Society preferred to welcome "characters of respectability and influence"; the Society of the Sons of St. George described itself as composed "of several of the principal and most respectable Englishmen in the city." The rules they established allowed the societies to dictate a certain level of gentlemanly decorum in their membership; rude or "unmannerly" behavior, as well as a lack of deference toward a society's officers, was grounds for a monetary fine or expulsion. Furthermore, each society required that prospective members win the approval of a majority of the existing membership and so was free to be as socially exclusive or open as it desired.²⁴

of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts; Minutes, Jan. 1, 1774, Jan. 23, 1773, July 23, 1774, and Jan. 23, 1775, Society of the Sons of St. George Records.

²³ Minutes, Dec. 18, 1751, St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts.

²⁴ Rule 4 of the 1749 Constitution, St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts; Article 10, "Constitution of the Hibernian Society"; Minutes, Oct. 23, 1773, Society of the Sons of St. George Records.

Nonetheless, membership was not entirely limited to the elite. An examination of the members of the Sons of St. George provides some insights into the breakdown of membership in the early societies. The Society of the Sons of St. George was established in 1772; slightly more than half of its initial membership of eighty-five can be found in the provincial tax lists for either 1774 or 1769. That information, combined with references in the society's minutes, shows that approximately one-third of all the members engaged in occupations associated with the "better sort" (doctors, merchants, clergy, governors, and military officers). If we add to these those with no profession listed but who were taxed more than fifty pounds, we find that at least 40 percent of all the founding members and at least 60 percent of those for whom some sort of information is readily available belonged to the upper tiers of the social strata. Unsurprisingly, almost all of the society's officers came from this group.²⁵

The remaining members came from various positions of lower rank, including at least a few shopkeepers and artisans who might be classified as belonging to the "middling sort." Of the members included in the tax records, approximately one in five were assessed as owing no taxes and, thus, might have come from further down the social ladder. In addition to an English heritage and the approval of the society's membership, joining the Sons of St. George required an initial payment of thirty shillings and yearly dues amounting to ten shillings as long as one retained membership. Thus, becoming a member required at least two pounds for the first year, plus additional money for either social expenditures on dinner and drinks with the other members before and after the quarterly meetings or the fines levied for nonattendance at those meetings. In all it might amount to 5 percent or more of a Philadelphia laborer's yearly income, a nontrivial burden for a cash-strapped family. The monetary burden of joining the St. Andrew's Society was roughly equivalent. It seems likely, then, that the membership of these early societies was dominated by the social elite but, nonetheless, stretched down into the ranks of those shopkeepers and artisans who had the wherewithal to make social and charitable contributions. Philadelphians of the "lower sort" were much more

²⁵ "Proprietary Tax, City of Philadelphia, 1769," and "Provincial Tax, City of Philadelphia, 1774," in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 9 ser., 120 vols. (Philadelphia and Harrisburg, PA, 1852–1935), 3rd ser., 14:150–220, 223–303. Both the Scottish and the English societies counted an active governor of Pennsylvania among their earliest members (the St. Andrew's Society in 1750, the Society of the Sons of St. George in 1772).

likely to be petitioners of the societies than members.²⁶

Just as they were less strict in regards to their members' ethnic heritage, the later societies imposed a lighter financial burden on their members. The Hibernian Society required an initial payment of \$2 and annual dues amounting to \$1.50; joining their ranks would have required between 1 and 2 percent of an average laborer's yearly wages in 1795. The Welsh Society initially imposed comparable fees. Neither of these societies imposed fines for nonattendance at the quarterly meetings; the minutes of the Welsh Society show that a considerable majority of the members only took part in the formal meetings once a year, if at all. Unsurprisingly, these later societies had substantially larger memberships. From the 12 men present at its inception, the Hibernian Society ballooned to include more than 200 members before its first anniversary; the Welsh Society would reach 110 members, almost double its initial size, in its first year. However, while these societies may have included a broader swath of the populace in their membership, they were unquestionably managed by the elite who ran the meetings and made the majority of the decisions regarding benevolence.²⁷

Finally, with regard to restrictions on membership, it almost goes without saying, and certainly went without explicit written declaration, that whether the society was composed of Englishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen, or Irishmen, all were composed of *men*. If any women petitioned for membership in the early years of these societies, it was not recorded.²⁸

The top-heavy nature of these societies' social make-up and organization is in large part a product of their intended function. Unlike other friendly societies formed around artisan guilds or by associations of craftsmen, these organizations were not intended to serve as safety nets for their members. Benevolence, not insurance, was the objective, and the

²⁶ The fees and fines imposed by the societies may be found in their rules and constitutions. Estimates of a laborer's wages for 1772 and 1795 come from the appendix of Billy G. Smith, ed., *Life in Early Philadelphia: Documents from the Revolutionary and Early National Periods* (University Park, PA, 1995), 279. My breakdown of the "sorts" into lower, middling, and better follows Smith in "Philadelphia: The Athens of America," in *Life in Early Philadelphia*, 7–9.

²⁷ Unfortunately, the minutes of the Hibernian Society between 1790 and 1813 cannot be found, making it difficult to track the membership of the society beyond its earliest records. Campbell, *History of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick*, 149–79.

²⁸ For a gendered view of public and semipublic poor relief in colonial Philadelphia, see Karin Wulf, "Gender and the Political Economy of Poor Relief in Colonial Philadelphia," in *Down and Out in Early America*, 163–89.

members generally did not anticipate ever becoming petitioners themselves.

* * *

Having examined the origin, purpose, and composition of these societies, we can now explore how they functioned in fulfilling their stated goals of relieving the immigrant poor and, in particular, where they placed themselves in relation to the increasingly institutionalized system of public poor relief in Philadelphia. In no sense were these benevolent societies providing alternatives to public assistance; they were very clear on this point in defining to whom and how they intended to provide relief. The St. Andrew's Society, in justifying its existence, explained that private societies like itself were meant to serve purposes "which either had not been, or could not be so well provided for by the publick Acts of a Community" and that the membership had frequently encountered "People here in distress, more especially Travelers and transient Persons who are not entitled to the Publick Charity of the Place." The societies existed to aid those people whom the public institutions either would not or could not assist; they did not intend to set up an entire substitute system of poor relief limited to their countrymen. The rules of the Society of the Sons of St. George explicitly limited its charity to those "not entitled to received Relief from the Overseers of the Poor of this city," though in time the inadequacies of public relief would lead the membership to violate this restriction.²⁹

Nevertheless, the aid of these benevolent societies seems to have been greatly preferred to that offered by the institutions of public relief. The societies may well have been the first place turned to by newly arrived immigrants who had yet to establish any networks of friendship or family in Philadelphia. The Almshouse, several scholars have noted, was generally the last resort. Unsurprisingly, then, it was not unusual for the societies to find themselves trying to steer reluctant petitioners toward public assistance. Jane Shepard, a poor women of Scottish descent, managed to receive small sums twice from the St. Andrew's Society before it finally demanded that in the future she seek help from the Almshouse. Barbara Grant, an elderly woman in "necessitous circumstances" was granted

²⁹ Minutes, Nov. 30, 1751, St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts; Rule 7 of the First Constitution, Society of the Sons of St. George Records.

steadily decreasing sums of money in response to four separate petitions made over the course of more than a year. Upon her fifth request, the society gave her a token amount and informed her that she had become “a great Burthen” and “that she ought apply to the Overseers of the Poor for publick Charity of the City.” Six months later she returned to the society, which once again told her to go to the Overseers of the Poor.³⁰

Though the societies did not intend to replace the Almshouse, they were at times willing to work with the system of public relief in order to achieve a better outcome for one of their countrymen. One of the earliest petitioners of the Sons of St. George was Mary Ball, who sought assistance for herself and her family. Though she had been born in England, the society determined that she was eligible for public assistance and, therefore, that it could not provide her with any funds. Nonetheless, the society “promised to speak to the Overseers of the Poor” on Ball’s behalf. Accordingly, the records of the Almshouse show that “several Gentlemen of the St. George’s Society” met with two of the Overseers and secured a small out-relief payment for the family. This outcome is the more remarkable in that, at this time, funding for any sort of public relief outside of the Bettering House had been officially eliminated; it was only the influence of the society that spared the Ball family from confinement within that institution. Furthermore, the society later determined that the pension provided by the Overseers was insufficient to meet the family’s needs; when another round of appeals by the membership proved ineffective, the society decided to supplement the payments of the city with a small weekly allowance from its own funds.³¹

This preference of private over public relief is not surprising given the stifling conditions of the Bettering House and the popular aversion to it that historians have found among the poor. Though some of the ethnic societies tried to place moral restrictions on their benevolence, none of them could exert the level of control over the lives of their petitioners that

³⁰ Billy G. Smith, “The Institutional Poor: The Almshouse Daily Occurrence Docket,” in *Life in Early Philadelphia*, 36; Nash, “Poverty and Politics,” 3–4. On Jane Shepard, see Minutes, May 4, June 30, and Sept. 26, 1752, and on Barbara Grant, see Minutes, Nov. 30, 1750, June 17, Nov. 5, and Dec. 18, 1751, Feb. 29 and Aug. 31, 1752, St. Andrew’s Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts.

³¹ Minutes, July 23 and Oct. 23, 1772, and Jan. 23 and July 23, 1773, Society of the Sons of St. George Records; Daily Occurrence Docket, Aug. 10, 1772, Records of the Guardians of the Poor. The name listed here is *Sarah* Ball, though the timing, the number of family members, and the intervention of the society on her behalf show that it is the same family. One possible explanation for the discrepancy may be that Sarah was Mary’s mother or mother-in-law and that the petitioners determined that Sarah’s age would make her more likely to win assistance from the Overseers.

the managers of the Bettering House held over their inmates. These differing levels of control are perhaps most apparent when one considers the indenture of children. Impoverished parents who entered the Almshouse with small children ran the risk of those children being sold as indentured servants by the managers, as happened to Margaret and Martha Edwards. These indentures could, and often did, take place without the consent of the children's parents or family. Isabella Johnson was bound out in such a manner only later to be found and kidnapped by her mother. When the two were eventually apprehended, Isabella's mother was jailed and the child herself returned to the Bettering House where, within a month, she was again bound out as a servant. Fear of this sort of enforced family separation is likely what drove many of Philadelphia's poor to prefer any sort of private relief, or even immense deprivation, to confinement in the Almshouse.³²

The ethnic societies, of course, had no authority to split families in this manner, even if they had desired to. Indenture appears in their records rather differently. Mary McIntire was a poor Scottish woman who had been widowed with five children; in 1751 and '52 she received money from the St. Andrew's Society on three occasions and lost one of her children (probably to smallpox). Upon her third request for assistance, the society, in addition to providing the family with relief, recommended that she consider binding out some of her children. Had she been willing, it is likely the society would have helped them find a good home; later in 1752 the society agreed to pay five pounds to secure a good apprenticeship for another Scottish child. The Welsh Society also oversaw the indenture of impoverished children in its early years, but it seems from its records that it only bound out orphans that had come under the care of the society's Orphan Committee and then only as apprentices to craftsmen and artisans, rather than as mere laborers or servants.³³

Faced with the inadequacies of existing poor relief institutions, the societies provided three types of poor relief that the public system either did not or could not offer. These were: relief for immigrants, pensions,

³² Smith, "Institutional Poor," 36–37, 45; Daily Occurrence Docket, Aug. 16, 1800, Records of the Guardians of the Poor. For more information on the indenture of children by the managers of public relief, see John E. Murray and Ruth Wallis Herndon, "Markets for Children in Early America: A Political Economy of Pauper Apprenticeship," *Journal of Economic History* 62 (2002): 356–82.

³³ Minutes, Oct. 24, 1751, Jan. 29 and Nov. 30, 1752, St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts; Minutes, Mar. 1, 1806, June 5 and Dec. 4, 1809, Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia.

and a more expansive, proactive preemptive poor relief.

Relief for newly arrived immigrants was the most obvious specialty of the ethnic societies, and all four were deeply concerned with aiding those who had only recently set foot in America. The later societies were especially proactive in this regard, sending emissaries to meet immigrants at the docks to make certain they had not been abused on the voyage and to see to it that they were prepared to make a new home in Philadelphia. In cases of sickness or other disability, the societies offered medical care, housing, legal advice, or whatever else might be required. The Sons of St. George relieved one James Taylor, a new arrival from England, of his most immediate distress by loaning him the price of his passage and thus sparing him the trial of spending his first years in America as an indentured servant.³⁴

These immigrants were often ineligible for Philadelphia's public poor relief. Officially, such aid was only available to those who had first established a residency in the city either by paying taxes for one to two years or by renting a suitably expensive dwelling. Ineligible vagrants and paupers could, and often were, "warned out" of the city—escorted to the city limits, told to go back to wherever they had come from, and threatened with punishment should they attempt to return. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Almshouse hosted very few immigrants fresh from the boats; most of the inmates were long-time residents of the city.³⁵

Pensions—regular payments to poor individuals and families outside the Almshouse—were another form of assistance offered by the societies that the public institutions of poor relief subjected to increasingly greater restrictions after the creation of the Bettering House and all but eliminated between 1769 and 1775. Founded in the midst of this moratorium, the Society of the Sons of St. George made a habit of providing small but regular sums to needy petitioners to pay for their housing and/or sustenance. At least half a dozen different individuals and families received these sorts of pensions from the society between its founding and the Revolution, generally for three-month periods that were renewable if conditions had not improved for the petitioner. Thus Elizabeth Croxford, a poor widow in "great distress," received five shillings per week between

³⁴ Article 9, "Constitution of the Hibernian Society"; Minutes, Oct. 23, 1772, Society of the Sons of St. George Records.

³⁵ Nash, "Poverty and Poor Relief," 26n66; Smith, "Lower Sort," 171. For a more in-depth exploration of "warning out," albeit in New England, see Ruth Wallis Herndon, *Unwelcome Americans: Living on the Margin in Early New England* (Philadelphia, 2001).

January and April of 1775, at which point, after a reevaluation of her circumstances, the society determined to extend her allowance for another quarter. Mary Dodge, another poor English woman, received weekly payments for at least nine months in 1774.³⁶

These societies did not limit these sorts of payments to distressed widows, but also used them to help working men and their families pay for necessities during particularly difficult seasons. When Arthur Hurry, a Scottish cooper, became too sick to carry on his trade, he sent word to the St. Andrew's Society which granted him and his family ten shillings each week for six weeks or until he recovered. The bricklayer John Parker received the same weekly sum from the Sons of St. George when his business went sour in the winter of 1774. The Welsh Society paid for Lewis Miles, his wife, and all seven of their children to move to the Lazaretto when the family was struck by an unnamed disease in 1800 and continued to pay their expenses until the illness ran its course. Shelter, food, and medical attention were also available through the system of public relief, but often required confinement in the Bettering House with all the loss of liberties that entailed.³⁷

Furthermore, admittance to the Almshouse generally required that one be in a state of near complete destitution. Those with goods or property that they could sell were expected to sell it and live off the proceeds before they were put on the public dole. Consequently, while public relief could serve to keep the dependent poor from perishing in the streets, it was not intended or well equipped to help the working poor remain above the line of absolute dependency. John Gaven, a shoemaker, came to the Almshouse in January 1795, likely driven there by the costs of food and firewood and a lack of business. When it later discovered that Gaven still owned property in the city, the Almshouse immediately ejected him and demanded that he repay all the money spent on his care. When he proved unwilling or unable to do so, he was arrested and jailed. Because public relief required that applicants be truly destitute, individuals and families living on the edge of poverty often faced the grim alternatives of either living with inadequate food, clothing, and shelter or being forced to sell

³⁶ Minutes, Sept. 5, 1751, St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts; Minutes, Jan. 1 and Apr. 23, 1775, and July 23 and Oct. 24 1774, Society of the Sons of St. George Records. It appears that the pension for Mary Dodge was first granted at or before the society's quarterly meeting in April, but the minutes of that meeting are missing.

³⁷ Minutes, Jan. 24, 1774, Society of the Sons of St. George Records; Minutes, Dec. 1, 1800, Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia.

off what goods they did possess in exchange for public aid. Such circumstances pointed to the need for a different sort of assistance that served to fend off impoverishment rather than to aid the already impoverished.³⁸

The benevolent ethnic societies were dedicated to providing this sort of preemptive poor relief in various ways. By providing small, steady payments that supported or replaced the out-relief offered by public institutions, the societies helped fill the gap between what struggling individuals and families could earn and what was required to pay for necessities. Consequently, these families were able to stay in their own homes and businesses and remain off the streets and out of the Almshouse. Similarly, by proactively seeking out new arrivals and making sure that they succeeded in finding a home and a living in Philadelphia, the societies, particularly the Hibernian and Welsh societies, reduced the number of immigrants who suffered economic failure due to ignorance, disease, or mistreatment. In at least three other ways, the ethnic societies worked to prop up struggling members of the “lower sort” and keep them from slipping over the edge into complete dependency.

First, on several occasions, the societies provided small loans to help petitioners either start up new businesses or survive temporary downturns in ones they were already running. Patrick Wilson and his family received their income by operating a sawmill in Society Hill. When the mill fell into disrepair in 1751, Wilson approached the St. Andrew’s Society for assistance in getting it fixed. The society agreed to loan Wilson the money to have the mill repaired; six months later the work had been completed and paid for and the Wilsons were again able to maintain their livelihood. Joseph Bull, an immigrant from England, hoped to set up a business as a weaver in Philadelphia but due to “necessitous Circumstances” found himself unable to afford “a Loom and other Implements necessary to set up his Trade.” He found assistance in acquiring these items from the Sons of St. George. John Hewson, the aforementioned “industrious Sober” calico printer, first came to the English society while in the process of establishing his business and requested “the Assistance of the Society in carrying on this Undertaking.” After deeming his character acceptable, the society granted Hewson and his partner a ten pound loan. Small loans such as these, generally made over a period of about six months, helped Philadelphia’s immigrant craftsmen and artisans establish and retain their livelihood through particularly difficult

³⁸ Daily Occurrence Docket, May 18, 1796, Records of the Guardians of the Poor.

periods and thus kept them from sinking to the depths of true poverty from which they might not have been able to recover.³⁹

In addition to helping immigrants establish their businesses in Philadelphia, the societies also assisted unsuccessful immigrants in moving on to greener pastures or in returning to their homelands. William Stephen Shey traveled to Philadelphia from London intending to set himself up as a silk weaver. When his business collapsed he desired to return to England, but was left almost entirely bereft of funds. When he brought his situation before the Society of the Sons of St. George in 1774, the society agreed not only to pay a lump sum toward his transport home but also to support him with regular payments of five shillings a week until he could make the trip. The stewards of the Welsh Society found immigrant Edward Price "destitute in every respect" in the streets of Philadelphia. They "accordingly took him under their protection" and, since he desired to seek better fortunes in the West Indies, "appointed a Committee to procure him passage." After poor Mary Eaton of Glasgow was abandoned by her husband in 1750 and left to care for three young children on her own, the St. Andrew's Society supported her with funds for housing and bread. When, some months later, Eaton discovered that her runaway husband "was living very well in South Carolina," she determined to take her family there and "make him a visit." The society enlisted friendly shipmasters to provide free passage to the family and paid off Eaton's remaining debts in Philadelphia so that she and her family could move south. Numerous other examples exist of the societies' paying to send poor petitioners to other colonies or back to Great Britain when there was reason to believe they would have better fortune there than in Philadelphia. Such activities helped limit the number of hopeless paupers on Philadelphia's streets and helped place immigrants in situations where they were more likely to succeed, rather than leaving them trapped in permanent dependency. As with the small business loans the societies offered, this sort of preemptive poor relief was intended not just to support the poor but to provide them with a way of escaping, or avoiding, poverty altogether.⁴⁰

³⁹ Minutes, Nov. 30, 1751, Jan. 29 and June 6, 1752, St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts; Minutes, Jan. 23, 1773, and July 23, 1774, Society of the Sons of St. George Records.

⁴⁰ Minutes, Jan. 24, 1774, Society of the Sons of St. George Records; Minutes, Dec. 3, 1802, Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia; Minutes, May 31, 1750, and Oct. 24, 1751, St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts.

Finally, the societies provided professional services such as medical care and legal counsel to petitioners who might otherwise have been unable to afford them. The Welsh and Hibernian societies made these services official by electing qualified members to act as the physicians and lawyers of the society. These members were then effectively “on call” should the stewards encounter a countryman (or woman) in need of their advice or assistance. Though the earlier societies did not specifically elect members to act in such capacities, their membership rolls invariably contained individuals versed in medicine and law, and these members were often called upon to aid the poor petitioners of the society. Thus the distinguished Scottish physician Dr. Thomas Graeme, president of the St. Andrew’s Society, was called upon to cure Jane Mackinzie, a poor Scottish immigrant from Glasgow who came to the society to “humbly crave some relief of those Gentlemen of my Country” because of a “distemper in her mouth.” When Graeme, working with another physician from the society, was unable to find a cure for the ailment, the society paid to relocate Mackinzie to the countryside, where it hoped that she would fare better. The appointed physicians of the Welsh Society found Mary Pritchett in dire straits. Despite their best efforts, they came to conclude that she was “laboring under a consumption which afforded no hope of recovery.” Unable to cure her, the society nonetheless “extended such relief as afforded them to the consolation of knowing that her last moments were rendered in some measure comfortable.” Five years earlier, the Welsh Society had provided professional aid of a different sort to Mary Philips, a widow under their care. When she became involved in a legal dispute over withheld wages, the society decided that it was obligated to intervene on her behalf and appointed a committee to settle the matter for her. The Hibernian Society seems to have been particularly dedicated to securing justice in the courts for its charges. When the committee from the society met Irish immigrants at the docks, it not only inquired into their condition but also investigated the nature of their journey to confirm that they had received ample room, food, and water and that, in general, the laws regulating passenger traffic to Philadelphia had been obeyed. If such was not the case, the committee was required to “take all legal and proper measures for the prosecution and punishment of the offenders,” including summoning the society’s own legal counsel and, if necessary, hiring outside lawyers to assist them.⁴¹

⁴¹ Minutes, Jan. 10, Mar. 1, and May 22, 1750, St. Andrew’s Society of Philadelphia Minutes and

The immigrant "lower sort" often had little recourse when they suffered disease or were taken advantage of by unscrupulous individuals. Without the money to hire qualified medical or legal professionals or a familiarity with the workings of the legal system, such misfortunes could easily push them over the edge into insolvency. By providing these services freely and by providing them outside of a confined institutional setting, the benevolent ethnic societies helped their petitioners to weather trials that might otherwise have broken them and ruined their chances for success in the New World.

The reasons the benevolent ethnic societies conducted poor relief differently from Philadelphia's public relief institutions are varied. One factor that unquestionably limited the sort of relief public institutions could offer was the greater population they served. Because the societies did not always record acts of benevolence carried out between their quarterly meetings, it is difficult to gauge precisely how many lives they touched each year, but even under the most generous assumptions, in their busiest years they never dealt with as many needy petitioners as did the Almshouse. More expansive forms of assistance would only have exacerbated the fiscal distress the public institutions experienced more or less constantly from midcentury on.⁴²

Extending the sort of preemptive poor relief conducted by the ethnic societies to the city at large may simply have been beyond the economic means of the public system, but there is some reason to believe that differences also existed in how the societies and the public institutions viewed the poor they were assisting. The inmates of the Bettering House were expected to labor during their residence. Plying their trades, picking oakum, washing laundry or performing other tasks, the poor worked not only to lessen the cost of their upkeep but to affect a transformation in their character. In drafting the ordinances that would regulate the Bettering House in 1769, the managers declared that "All Persons admitted who are capable of working, shall be employed, *as well to inure them to Labor as to contribute to their support.*" Speaking before the General Assembly in 1768, the managers' representatives lauded the legal statute

Accounts; Minutes, Mar. 1, 1808, and June 6, 1803, Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia. By-law 11 of the 1793 Hibernian Society charter, in *The Incorporation, Bye-Laws, &c. of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland* (Philadelphia, 1793).

⁴² In most of the societies, an elected committee of stewards was empowered to provide a limited amount of relief to needy immigrants between quarterly meetings without waiting for permission from the society at large.

that had created the Bettering House for the ways in which it would “promote Industry and Frugality amongst all the Poor,” in part by “compelling the idle and slothful to perform such Labor as might be best adapted to their Circumstances.” The managers firmly believed that the poor did not merely need to be supported but also deeply altered, and at times they thought rather highly of their ability to perform such alterations. In 1770 they proudly announced that the poor who came into the Bettering House as “People of dissolute Manners,” “Nuisances to the Community,” or otherwise victims of disease and vice, emerged again “so remarkably altered, as to become Subjects of Surprise to many of the Inhabitants who had known them in their former Conditions.”⁴³

A central purpose of public poor relief was to transform the “idle and slothful” into the industrious and frugal. Those who had yet to experience this alteration or, worse still, resisted the labor and regulation meant to achieve it, often provoked considerable resentment and contempt from their would-be reformers. Even a cursory reading of the Daily Occurrence Docket of the Almshouse reveals that the recorder viewed many of the inmates with extreme derision. A few selections are illustrative:

AUGUST 2, 1790:

Admitted . . . Thomas Oakley—one of the most notorious Scoundrels that We have been frequently plagued with off and on, for upwards of twenty years, a common public Nuisance. He was whipped at a post in this Yard nearly about that time ago . . . for his Insolent and Disorderly Conduct, and ever since hath been a frequent Customer and Inhabitant of the Goal Workhouse and this Place, is now returned as Ragged, Lousey and Diseased as Ever.

NOVEMBER 8, 1793:

Eloped . . . Musgrove Harry. a drunken, idle disorderly fellow . . . good rid-dance of bad Rubbish.

NOVEMBER 28, 1793:

Discharged . . . Abraham Cowley. The Noted drunken one leg’d

⁴³ Ordinances Rules and Bye Laws for the Almshouse and House of Employment, Alms House Managers minutes of May 26, 1788, Records of the Guardians of the Poor (emphasis added). On the address to the assembly see *Pennsylvania Archives*, 8th ser., 7:6148. The claims of successful transformations appeared as part of a general report on the status of the institution in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 25, 1770. This report also appeared in the Alms House Managers minutes, Jan. 22, 1770.

Shoemaker—with his more Notorious Drunken, disorderly worthless Wife and their Child.

JULY 2, 1796:

Admitted . . . Matthew Richards, a noted drunken worthless, preaching Nuisance, he is now (as common) shamefully drunk and justly worthy of a commitment to a place of punishment, rather than to be admitted into an Alms-house, that he hath been a pest to, and common disturber of, for many years past.

While not all entries were quite so harsh, these are hardly exceptional, and terms such as "worthless," "unworthy," "lazy," "disorderly," and "notorious" recur in entry after entry, year after year; much more rarely does one find a kind word toward even the most pathetic of inmates. Similar pejoratives are difficult to find among the records of the ethnic societies, even with regard to petitioners who were rejected: when the St. Andrew's Society declared Mary Agnew "of an undeserving Character" it was being atypically harsh.⁴⁴

This image of the managers of public poor relief as judgmental, moralistic, and distrustful of the poor conforms with portrayals of them found in the works of Gary Nash, John Alexander, Billy Smith, Seth Rockman, and other historians who have deeply studied the poor and poor relief in the late eighteenth century. With words that might have been pulled from the Daily Occurrences Docket, Rockman has claimed that the moral reformers of public assistance viewed the recipient of that relief as "inherently lazy, sexually immoral, and a parasite upon hardworking taxpayers." Gary Nash's statement that there was a "growing tendency to regard the needy as flawed members of society who needed to be reformed rather than relieved" reflects a wide historiographical consensus. Such beliefs led to a harsh, restricted, institutional form of public relief that was primarily dedicated to forcing the "idle" poor to become moral and industrious and to rescuing those at the extremes of destitution from death. This outlook spared little interest, and less money, for the forms of preemptive poor relief practiced by the benevolent ethnic societies.⁴⁵

How, then, did the ethnic societies avoid this same mentality? This article tentatively suggests two answers. Alexander asserts that "the managers [of the Bettering House] typically dealt with the very bottom seg-

⁴⁴ Minutes, Dec. 18, 1751, St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia Minutes and Accounts.

⁴⁵ Rockman, *Welfare Reform in the Early Republic*, 19; Nash, "Poverty and Politics," 17.

ment of those receiving public poor relief,” and that this contributed to their negative view of the poor generally.⁴⁶ The records of the Almshouse do show that many of the poor it served were prostitutes, criminals, drunkards, unwed mothers, and other classes of the impoverished who would almost certainly have failed the character tests of ethnic societies and, for that reason, rarely applied to them for help. The societies’ ability to be selective in who they relieved meant that they generally saw the impoverished only in their best light. The petitioners who approached the Scottish and British societies were generally those who believed themselves “deserving” enough to warrant such benevolence and doubtless made every effort to put the best possible face on the circumstances that brought them to penury. The freshly arrived immigrants met by the Irish and Welsh societies hardly had time to exhibit moral failings before the societies’ stewards approached them. None of these indigent were committed to the societies’ care against their will, as was the case with various individuals in the Almshouse. Thus, the first answer is that the societies were better able to view the poor as upstanding because they tended to see only the upstanding poor.

The second answer is suggested by certain key phrases found in the societies’ records and founding documents. The Sons of St. George justified their ethnically limited benevolence on the grounds that their countrymen were their “peculiar care”; likewise the St. Andrew’s Society’s foremost apology for granting aid only to Scotsmen was that *they*, the members of the society, were Scotsmen. Even the Hibernian Society, which opened its doors to members of any nationality, began as a society *of Irishmen for Irishmen*. Most directly, the Welsh Society wrote of a “special Fellowship with the Descendants of our Ancestors” that created a “stronger obligation” to care for them. The societies were founded on the premise that immigrants from the same land, even if strangers separated by a generation or more, had a unique connection with one another. Both in their charitable and in their fraternal functions the societies constantly celebrated this special link that bound the members both to one another and to their petitioners.⁴⁷ Thus, the general trend in eighteenth-century society toward a harsher, more judgmental, more restricted view of the poor, so aptly chronicled in the historiography, was retarded in individuals and

⁴⁶ Alexander, *Render Them Submissive*, 93.

⁴⁷ First Constitution and Rules Adopted by the Welsh Society, Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia; 1772 Constitution, Society of the Sons of St. George Records.

organizations that recognized that they held some connection with the poor *beyond* simply providing them with relief. In the case of these societies, this other connection was formed by the bonds of a shared ethnic heritage and strengthened by a shared identity as immigrants to America.

Other works have found a similar divergence from the general social trend. Monique Bourque found that most of the counties around Philadelphia moved toward more institutionalized forms of poor relief in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, just as Philadelphia itself had done earlier. Like the reformers of Philadelphia, those drafting regulations for these county almshouses increasingly stressed the importance of "reforming" the idle and undeserving poor. Bourque asserts that, for various reasons, there was a "disjunction between poor relief policy . . . and actual practice on the local level." She notes that "officials used their discretion to temper regulations, thereby disclosing that they clung to more humane aspects of traditional relief while adjusting to the new age of institutions." This leniency may be attributable, Bourque argues, to the fact that the interactions between the recipients and administrators of poor relief in the rural counties were "more intimate than relief transactions in larger urban institutions" due to the tighter communal and commercial bonds in rural communities and the fact that the providers of poor relief often knew the applicants. Consequently, those providers "felt a strong sense of obligation" to their charges. Here, then, the overseers of public relief were more likely to be connected to their charges through bonds of local commerce, neighborhood acquaintance, or even friendship. They were, as a result, slower to embrace the regulated and restricted forms of institutional poor relief that had taken root earlier in Philadelphia.⁴⁸

Simon Newman explored the lot of Philadelphia's poor by examining death and burial in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Philadelphia through the burial records of the Reverend Nicholas Collins, a rector at Gloria Dei. Newman acknowledges that Collins lived in a city that was increasingly embracing the notion, made manifest in the Bettering House, that "the poor were themselves to blame for their condition." Yet Newman found that Collins, through his connections with the poor at the times of their demise, managed to avoid this common perception. His

⁴⁸ Monique Bourque, "Poor Relief 'Without Violating the Rights of Humanity': Almshouse Administration in the Philadelphia Region, 1790–1860," in *Down and Out in Early America*, 190, 196.

close association and identity with the impoverished allowed him to recognize “that the poor he lived among and buried had precious little control over their circumstances.” The same motivating realization can be found in the ethnic societies when they recognized the particular abuses and disappointments to which immigrants were subject. Both for Collins and the ethnic societies, the crucial revelation was that distress among the poor was often the result of forces beyond their control and not necessarily the fruit of apathy and debauchery.⁴⁹

A final example comes from John K. Alexander, who records that in the 1760s the Overseers of the Poor and the managers of the newly constructed Bettering House engaged in a dispute over the future of public relief, particularly over whether to continue out-relief for the “deserving poor.” Where the new managers meant to force all relief recipients into the “reforming” atmosphere of the Bettering House, the overseers believed that certain individuals on the city’s dole were morally sound enough to be left alone and did not need or deserve to be confined in exchange for assistance. The particular connection between the overseers and the poor, which the managers lacked, was one of economic proximity. Alexander writes that “the managers lived in a world where the immediate horrors of poverty did not often touch them in a direct, personal way. . . . On the other hand, the overseers . . . lived in a world where poverty was more likely to touch them or their acquaintances personally.” Like Nicholas Collins, the overseers were better able than most to see the reality of poverty through the eyes of the poor.⁵⁰

In each of these examples, individuals with particular connections to the impoverished, whether by local acquaintance, personal association, or economic proximity, developed the ability to see the poor as individuals like themselves. This association helped them to avoid the belief, increasingly common among the elite, that poverty could be blamed on those who suffered from it and that moral rectitude and penury were mutually exclusive. In the benevolent societies it was a shared immigrant identity and a shared ethnic heritage, celebrated over and over again in fraternal meals and laudatory toasts as well as in the care of the unfortunate, that performed this function.

Ethnic benevolence proved to be both exclusive and expansive, limit-

⁴⁹ Simon Newman, “Dead Bodies: Poverty and Death in Early National Philadelphia,” in *Down and Out in Early America*, 55.

⁵⁰ Alexander, *Render Them Submissive*, 93.

ing the breadth of charity while deepening it. The benevolence offered by these four societies points to the significance of personal relationships beyond those of provider-petitioner—to the importance of a “special Fellowship”—in shaping both the motives for and the methods of poor relief in late eighteenth-century Philadelphia.

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*“Something akin to a second birth”:
Joseph Trimble Rothrock and the
Formation of the Forestry
Movement in Pennsylvania,
1839–1922*

PENNSYLVANIA'S VERDANT LANDSCAPE might look entirely different had it not been for the efforts of conservationists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Devastated by logging and fires by the end of the nineteenth century, the vast majority of the commonwealth's forests today are second growth. Forests were an essential resource for early Americans. Before widespread development of coal and petroleum products, timber was the primary fuel source for heating, lighting, and motive power. By 1840, some calculate that 95 percent of these energy needs were supplied by wood. Many landowners cut down wooded areas on their property to supplement their income. In addition, farmers burned woodlands to make more space for pastures, while expansion undertaken by the rail systems further depleted timber supplies. During colonial times, Pennsylvania, or “Penn's Woods,” had been densely covered in old-growth forests. Over time, however, nearly all forested areas were harvested and left barren by various industries. By 1895, Pennsylvania had experienced a sharp decrease in the percentage of forested areas, from 90 percent of the state's acreage to approximately 36 percent. Of the state's land base of 44,817 square miles, at least 4,716 had become wastelands or worse and an additional 4,000 square miles of farmland had been abandoned because of degradation.¹

The research for this article was completed through the PHMC Environmental Internship at the Pennsylvania State Archives. Credit goes to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Pennsylvania Heritage Society, and the organizations that funded the internship: Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Professionals (PAEP), McCormick Taylor Engineers and Planners, Gannett Fleming Inc., and Cultural Heritage Research Services, Inc. (CHRS).

¹ Donald J. Pisani, “Forests and Conservation, 1865–1890,” *Journal of American History* 72

One of the most important early conservationists was Dr. Joseph Trimble Rothrock. Considered the “Father of Forestry in Pennsylvania,” he made enduring contributions to both forestry and botany by organizing a forestry movement within the state and paving the way for creation of a state forestry agency. Rothrock became, as the National Association of State Foresters noted, part of “that small band of a dozen or so who endowed America with a ‘conservation conscience’ at a time when its physical wealth had been sorely ravaged.” Rothrock’s extensive influence on Pennsylvania forestry is evident in the policies and practices adopted under his leadership: the creation of state-owned forest reserves, the development and promotion of educational programs to raise public awareness of the importance of forestlands, and increased focus by the state on public health and well-being. These many achievements attest to his influence on Pennsylvania’s forestry policy and conservation history. Under Rothrock’s direction, forestry in Pennsylvania became a professional field, controlled by educated experts. While his name and life may have been widely forgotten, especially in comparison to figures such as Gifford Pinchot, his accomplishments in creating an organized and professional forestry network are visible throughout the commonwealth. The creation of a state-supported forestry division, led by a scientific and educated elite, allowed trained individuals such as Pinchot to command political power. A complex political figure, Rothrock exuded Progressive notions of the ability of man to control and improve his environment, and he sought to build a political and professional network to support his efforts to save Penn’s Woods.²

Conservationism, often coupled with and like Progressivism, became an important movement in early twentieth-century politics. Proponents of environmental protection, however, did not all share the same fundamental philosophy. On one side of the divide were conservationists, who deplored the rapid depletion of natural resources and the squandering of related goods because such resources should be used efficiently and responsibly. This perspective was a utilitarian one (shared, e.g., by noted

(1985): 342, 343–44; Lester A. DeCoster, *The Legacy of Penn’s Woods: A History of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry* (Harrisburg, PA, 1995), 7; Peter Linehan, “Saving Penn’s Woods: Deforestation and Reforestation in Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania Legacies* 10 (2010): 20; Ralph R. Widner, *Forests and Forestry in the American States: A Reference Anthology* (Missoula, MT, 1968), 21.

² DeCoster, *Legacy of Penn’s Woods*, 7.

politician and forester Gifford Pinchot). Others, labeled preservationists, advocated conservation on more philosophical, aesthetic, and transcendental grounds. Preservationists advanced forest protection and preservation because they believed in the natural world's intrinsic value, apart from its usefulness to man. In line with the conservationists and many Progressives, Rothrock promoted primarily utilitarian forestry ideas. However, despite his proclivity to view the forests in economic and material terms, Rothrock also shared preservationists' respect and appreciation for nature on its own terms. Both ideology and politics influenced Rothrock's environmental opinions, decisions, and policies.³

Rothrock displayed both conservationist and preservationist tendencies, but more importantly he was able to make the connection between the rhetoric of reform and political policy. Because Rothrock was able to translate complex scientific knowledge into lay terms through a Progressive filter, he was able to persuade both the public and policymakers and to enact change. Many citizens and politicians saw Rothrock as someone experienced with and knowledgeable about environmental issues to whom they could turn. He was able to bridge these two publics—the lay audience and legislators—and he spoke in ways that allowed him to accomplish his goals during this transitional period. Rothrock was a gentle and educated expert; he reassured Pennsylvanians that while the world needed to change—and that change may have been frightening to some—he and others educated in and experienced in forestry would help to guide them through the change and help them adjust to efforts to tackle the deforestation issue within Pennsylvania. As a member of the new scientific elite, Rothrock commanded respect from average citizens and ushered in the professionalization of forestry. Progressivism, which was fundamentally the belief in the manageability of the world, heavily influenced this transition, and conservation programs became a major staple of the Progressive political movement. The programs Rothrock espoused were intended to manage the landscape for the public's benefit, and he worked to achieve his goal by making these

³ Roderick Nash, "John Muir, William Kent, and the Conservation Schism," *Pacific Historical Review* 36 (1967): 427. Also see Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (Washington, DC, 2001), 4–12. The term "conservation" in this context originated with Pinchot and a colleague. See John M. Meyer, "Gifford Pinchot, John Muir, and the Boundaries of Politics in American Thought," *Polity* 30 (1997): 270, 274–80.

changes and ideas appealing. He imbued the work with a beauty that politicians could not.⁴

In *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890–1920*, Samuel Hays argues that conservationism was largely a scientific movement, through which scientific elites used their authority to shape environmental-resource policy and ultimately to attempt to reform the political system so that it would be guided by educated technicians in the furtherance of efficiency. Rothrock fits Hays's model, using his influence to enact legislation, including legislation that led to the creation of professional institutions. Rothrock seems unique, however, for his strong desire to educate the public for reasons that went beyond his efforts to create public support and political pressure for his goals.⁵

The few published works on Rothrock limit themselves to biographical surveys.⁶ In addition, the scholarship on forestry and preservation in Pennsylvania in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is sparse. Such works occasionally mention Rothrock, though they tend to focus on political and national figures such as Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt, while mentioning Rothrock infrequently in comparison (an example being *American Forestry* by William Robbins, which references Rothrock three times and Pinchot approximately twenty-five). Pieces specifically detailing forestry history in Pennsylvania are few in number, but authors typi-

⁴ John F. McClymer, *War and Welfare: Social Engineering in America, 1890–1925* (Westport, CT, 1980), 5; Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (New York, 1985), 262.

⁵ Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890–1920* (1959; repr., Pittsburgh, PA, 1999), 1–4.

⁶ Three brief biographical articles were published in the early twentieth century, two by colleagues of Rothrock: Joseph S. Illick, "Joseph Trimble Rothrock: Father of Pennsylvania Forestry," *Pennsylvania German Society* 34 (1929): 84–94; Henry Pleasants Jr., *Three Scientists of Chester County* (n.p., 1936), 37–49. A third, an autobiographical sketch, appeared in a larger text: "Joseph Trimble Rothrock," autobiographical sketch in *Some American Medical Botanists Commemorated in Our Botanical Nomenclature*, ed. Howard A. Kelly (Troy, NY, 1914), 202–13. More recently, Susan Dudley and David R. Goddard published a 1973 article about Rothrock and forest conservation that succinctly outlines his work in establishing forestry as a government division in Pennsylvania: "Joseph T. Rothrock and Forest Conservation," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 117 (1973): 37–50. Elizabeth H. Thomas of the Pennsylvania State University at Mont Alto wrote an article on Rothrock in 1977 focusing on his forest protection efforts and founding of the Mont Alto Forestry School: "Forest Protection and the Founding of Pennsylvania's First Forestry School, 1901–1903," *Pennsylvania History* 44 (1977): 291–315. The most comprehensive and recent scholarship on Rothrock was completed by Eleanor Maass in 2003, *Forestry Pioneer: The Life of Joseph Trimble Rothrock* (Lebanon, PA, 2003). While this piece is the most detailed and the only full biography to date, its citations are sparse.

cally make satisfactory reference to Rothrock. Few authors, however, have drawn substantial conclusions about Rothrock's life. Rothrock is a difficult figure for historians to analyze because of his complex character and transitional role.

The recognition of the importance of forests and concern about deforestation were not new to the late nineteenth century. James Fenimore Cooper in *The Pioneers* in 1823 and *The Prairie* in 1827 decried the growing destruction of trees, and André Michaux's influential *North American Sylva* was published in English in 1849. Most nature-conservation sentiments that predated the Civil War, however, focused on aesthetic, poetic, and devotional aspects of nature, as well as upon the connection between the human and natural worlds. These were the sentiments that informed Romantic writers in the mid-nineteenth century. By 1850, however, the scientific community had begun to evolve from a collective group of amateurs into a professional body linked with institutions.⁷

This article explores Rothrock's role in the development of the forestry profession, looking at Rothrock's education and early experience with environmental issues, his role as a teacher and organizer within both the forestry movement and the larger community, his work and achievements in professionalizing the field of forestry, and his importance as a political figure involved in problem solving and lobbying on forestry-related issues. The final section discusses Rothrock's lasting legacy.

Becoming a Forester

Dr. Joseph Trimble Rothrock was born April 9, 1839, in McVeytown, Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. He attributed his love of botany to his mother, Phoebe Brinton Trimble, who was a relative of the famous Pennsylvanian botanist William Darlington. In later life, Rothrock recounted how his mother taught him about different plant species when he was a child, fostering in him an abiding interest in and enthusiasm for botany. Nearly all accounts of Rothrock's life indicate that he was a sickly child; in an autobiographical sketch, he explained, "my education in early life was greatly interfered with by lack of vigorous health rather than by actual disease; open air was an absolute necessity to me, and throughout

⁷ Pisani, "Forests and Conservation," 342; Richard W. Judd, "A 'Wonderfull Order and Balance': Natural History and the Beginnings of Forest Conservation in America, 1730–1830," *Environmental History* 11 (2006): 30, 13.

my entire life, I have sought the 'out of doors' as a refuge against impending physical ills." Whether or not this sickliness, which manifested itself sporadically throughout Rothrock's life, was the result of an underlying medical condition, it seems likely that Rothrock's love for the outdoors, as evidenced in his writings, alleviated bouts of depression and stress.⁸

After completing his primary education, Rothrock attended Harvard and, in 1864, entered medical school at the University of Pennsylvania. Very shortly after his enrollment, Rothrock was chosen by the Smithsonian Institution to be a scientific explorer on a survey of British Columbia and Alaska. This expedition was sent to the Northwest primarily in the interest of the telegraph and cable companies considering the establishment of a telegraph line to the Pacific coast. The journey and his findings, principally detailed in his publication *Sketch of the Flora of Alaska* (1867), established Rothrock's scientific reputation. The excursion was the first major study of the region and its report played a significant role in Secretary of State William Seward's decision to purchase Alaska. In 1866, Rothrock returned to the University of Pennsylvania, and he received his medical degree the following year. The expedition, however, marked the beginning of a pattern of training for Rothrock; he would acquire his expertise not only through academic study, but through empirical observation. Through his surveying work, Rothrock began to gain respect within the scientific community as he further specialized his botanical interests and education.⁹

After completion of medical school and the Smithsonian expedition, Rothrock developed a medical practice in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Rothrock's holistic approach to medicine incorporated his faith in the restorative properties of forests. Forests benefited both public health and individual well-being. When faced with his own health problems, for example, Rothrock always retreated to the outdoors. Rothrock's great-grandson, Joseph Rothrock III, noted that it was well-known in the family that Rothrock simply *could not* stay indoors. Many of his retreats, however, involved exercise and strenuous activity, such as climbing and

⁸ Illick, "Joseph Trimble Rothrock," 85, 86; "Joseph Trimble Rothrock," in *Some American Medical Botanists*, 203.

⁹ Pleasants, *Three Scientists of Chester County*, 39; Clara Whiteside, "Still Fighting for Our Forests at Eighty-Three," unidentified newspaper clipping, c. 1922, box 5, John M. Phillips Papers, 1891–1966, MG 161, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg; Samuel T. Wiley, *Biographical and Portrait Cyclopaedia of Chester County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1893), 446–50; Dudley and Goddard, "Joseph T. Rothrock and Forest Conservation," 45.

hiking, despite his physical weaknesses. Rothrock always claimed these trips were healing. He believed that the outdoors held many benefits for people in general and especially for those who were sick or frail. The fact that deforestation could contribute to poor health—such as through the increased chance of disease from high water levels or floods—served to strengthen Rothrock's determination to restore the nation's forests for the public good. "Remove the forests and you remove the factor that makes the air fit to breathe," he wrote. Rothrock's devotion to conservation likely had philosophical roots in his health-orientation. This strong link between forests and health led him to advocate for conservation as a public benefit from a Progressive political and utilitarian perspective. Rothrock's faith in the healing and revitalizing powers of the outdoors strongly influenced his later work to rehabilitate Pennsylvania's forests.¹⁰

By the early 1870s, Rothrock found his health compromised, most likely the result of stress from developing his medical practice. As was his habit, he sought to recover in the outdoors, and he applied to serve on another expedition, the Geographical Survey West of the One Hundredth Meridian (Wheeler Survey) with the Smithsonian and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. During this expedition in 1873, Rothrock worked as both botanist and assistant surgeon. Rothrock compiled a richly detailed publication about the botanical findings of the survey in volume 6 of the *Report upon U.S. Geographical Surveys West of the One Hundredth Meridian*. The volume is a meticulously composed informational text. Rothrock's report garnered him additional respect and credentials. Two years after his return to Pennsylvania from the expedition in 1875, he received an appointment to the University of Pennsylvania as professor of botany, a position he held until 1893.¹¹

In 1880, Rothrock took a nine-month leave from the University of Pennsylvania to study in Germany under renowned botanist Anton

¹⁰ Joseph Rothrock III, interview by author, June 26, 2009; J. T. Rothrock, "Relations of Forests to Public Health and Prosperity," 8, box 5, George H. Wirt Papers, 1878–1959, MG 135, Pennsylvania State Archives; "Sketch of the Forestry Movement in Philadelphia," *Forest Leaves*, July 1886, 2.

¹¹ Rothrock most likely was given this position because of his previous experience with the Smithsonian, but it is still somewhat surprising that at his young age Rothrock was able to receive such prominent appointments. Rothrock stated that the date for his resignation from the University of Pennsylvania was 1891, but other sources indicate that it occurred when the Forestry Commission began in 1893, which seems the more likely date. Mira Dock, chronology for J. T. Rothrock, , box 6, folder 62, Dock Family Papers, 1865–1951, MG 43, Pennsylvania State Archives; *Report upon U.S. Geographical Surveys West of the One Hundredth Meridian . . .*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC, 1875–89): 6:xiv; "Joseph Trimble Rothrock," in *Some American Medical Botanists*, 210.

DeBary at the University of Strasbourg. His goal was to learn advanced German forestry techniques. During his time abroad, Rothrock studied scientific forest management; German forestry techniques were principally focused on economic interests, promoted through the mathematical ordering of the forests. As the historian Henry Lowood has argued, “the German forest became an archetype for imposing on disorderly nature the neatly arranged constructs of science.” Scientific forestry was not yet practiced within the United States in the late nineteenth century, and his experience in Germany and heightened forestry knowledge furthered Rothrock’s reputation as an expert.¹²

In 1893, Rothrock left his position at the University of Pennsylvania to undertake what would become his most significant scientific expedition. That year, the Pennsylvania legislature established a two-man commission consisting of Rothrock as the botanist and his associate engineer, William Shunk, to investigate the factors, both human-caused and natural, affecting Pennsylvania’s forests. The surveys of 1865 and 1873 had prepared Rothrock for this two-year project. The legislature charged the commission with investigating the condition of forests in Pennsylvania and reporting its findings, as Rothrock had done for three decades.

Rothrock opened his section of the commission’s report on Pennsylvania’s woodlands by explaining the problems of deforestation; outlined all previous laws from 1700 that were related to forests; and discussed timber production, land value, wastelands, taxation issues, ways to educate the public on the propagation of trees, and forestry-restorative measures that could be undertaken. Forests regulated and protected streams, reduced the height of floods and moderated extremes of low water, and protected mountain slopes against increased soil wash. As a result, deforestation had a substantial influence on many natural resources integral to the state. Through his report, Rothrock hoped to induce farmers to increase the number of trees on their land and to convince Pennsylvania government to “buy back and restore to timber the land that had been sold with all its wealth of timber for twenty-six and two-thirds cents an acre.”

¹² Pleasants, *Three Scientists of Chester County*, 39; Widner, *Forests and Forestry in the American States*, 27; Henry E. Lowood, “The Calculating Forester: Quantification, Cameral Science, and the Emergence of Scientific Forestry Management in Germany,” in *The Quantifying Spirit of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Tore Frängsmyr, J. L. Heilbron, and Robin E. Rider (Berkeley, CA, 1990), 341, 340–41.

Rothrock wrote about the devastation that fires caused, whether ignited by timber thieves to hide evidence of their work, railroad sparks, lightning, or farmers who set fires to prepare the land for feeding pastures. He lobbied heavily for fire legislation throughout his tenure as the state's forestry commissioner; he viewed such legislation as the principal preventive "essential" to forestry. Rothrock argued that "almost every forest fire is the result of ignorance, carelessness, or crime, and that there is some one to punish for it." He believed that fires that ravaged forests and left the soil barren were a crime against the people of Pennsylvania and future generations.¹³

To make clear the effects of deforestation, Rothrock frequently employed photography. Destruction of forested areas by industrial activities continued throughout the state in the late 1800s. In fact, between 1860 and 1870, Pennsylvania was the leading state in the nation for saw-timber production. Rothrock captured many of the devastated areas, previously unseen to many, on film. His images depicted the destruction that deforestation and such natural results as erosion, floods, and fires had on the Pennsylvania landscape. Rothrock characterized destruction of forested areas as "barbarism." In a paper published by the American Philosophical Society in 1894, he wrote that two centuries of American inhabitation had "matured the tree-destroying tendency into an instinct . . . we furnish an illustration of a nation lapsing into the extravagance of barbarism because of the abundance of our supplies, so far at least as our use of the trees is concerned."¹⁴

The pair presented their report, consisting of 361 pages with forty-four full-page illustrations, to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on the deadline, March 15, 1895. Their findings were not intended to demonstrate methods of restoration, but to show that "the safety of the State and of its interests required a change in existing method." While Rothrock continued to be a leader in the forestry movement throughout his life, this report was the climax of his work within Pennsylvania

¹³ "Report of Forestry Commission for House of Representatives 1894–1895," Records of the Department of Environmental Resources, RG 43, Pennsylvania State Archives; Dudley and Goddard, "Joseph T. Rothrock and Forest Conservation," 39; *Statement of Work Done by the Pennsylvania Department of Forestry, during 1901 and 1902* (Harrisburg, PA, 1902), 26–28; J. T. Rothrock, *Areas of Desolation in Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA, 1915), 19, 20; Gifford Pinchot, *The Training of a Forester* (Philadelphia, 1914), 21.

¹⁴ Widner, *Forests and Forestry in the American States*, 24; J. T. Rothrock, "On the Growth of the Forestry Idea in Pennsylvania," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 32 (1894): 333.

forestry—the goal toward which he had worked.¹⁵ Observing the magnitude of the effort and the extent of recommendations, the legislature created a Division of Forestry within the Department of Agriculture, which reported to the Pennsylvania Forestry Commission and appointed Rothrock commissioner of the division. Such a complex subject needed translators for both the public and government, trained experts such as Rothrock. Once the legislature created the division, it enacted laws allowing the state to purchase lands sold for taxes. Rothrock and the Forestry Commission purchased tax-forfeiture lands and other titles to create forest reservations, especially at the headwaters of the important rivers in Pennsylvania: the Delaware, the Susquehanna, and the Ohio.¹⁶

Throughout his career as leader of the Pennsylvania forestry movement, Rothrock expanded his knowledge and disseminated his findings by examining, surveying, and reporting. In the process, he established his credentials and built his reputation within the scientific community and won the trust of both the general public and political bodies.

Educating and Organizing

Rothrock understood that any real progress toward addressing the problems of deforestation would require the support of the citizens of the commonwealth. Rothrock, therefore, took it upon himself to educate Pennsylvania's citizenry. His ability to appear to the public as both approachable and knowledgeable and also to work quietly behind the scenes of government proved to be indispensable qualities.

In 1877, the prestigious American Philosophical Society appointed Rothrock, then a professor of botany at the University of Pennsylvania, as lecturer for its Michaux Lectures on Forestry. Rothrock delivered these lectures between 1877 and 1894. Named for the French botanist François Michaux (son of André Michaux), who had left a legacy to the Philosophical Society, these lectures were intended to educate the public.

¹⁵ Whiteside, "Still Fighting for Our Forests at Eighty-Three"; Maass, *Forestry Pioneer*, 80–81; "Report of Forestry Commission for House of Representatives 1894–1895"; J. T. Rothrock, "History of Forests in U.S.," box 5, George H. Wirt Papers.

¹⁶ DeCoster, *Legacy of Penn's Woods*, 27; "Report of J. T. Rothrock, Botanist Member of the Pennsylvania Forestry Commission," 2, Records of the Department of Environmental Resources; Maass, *Forestry Pioneer*, 83; *Statement of the Work Done by the Pennsylvania Department of Forestry*, 12; Andrew Denny Rogers, *Bernhard Eduard Fernow: A Story of North American Forestry* (Princeton, NJ, 1951), 214.

Generally, each course consisted of seven lectures on the conditions of the forests within Pennsylvania, the nation, and even other regions of the world. Few attended the first lectures, perhaps because there was a general lack of scientific knowledge in the community and little public awareness of the threat to forests.¹⁷ Rothrock used his lectures to inform the public of the damages occurring to Pennsylvania's forests, explaining the science behind botany and forests, and demonstrating through his own photographs the extent of deforestation. Rothrock also stressed the beauty of natural surroundings and attempted to instill within others his own dedication to botanical subjects. In his 1892 lecture notes, he wrote:

This is a beautiful, bountiful earth; but because it is so, is no reason why we should squander its resources. Before mankind and the globe are done with each other the former will probably acquire all that the latter can produce. Economy in use of what we have is as much a duty as enjoyment in a privilege. The one is the counterpart of the other.

Combining conservationist and preservationist perspectives, Rothrock told the public that the earth was to be used, responsibly, but also to be cherished and enjoyed. He tied respect and appreciation for the beauty of the outdoors to his Progressive focus on efficiency and responsibility in resource use and a duty to protect and use resources wisely. Rothrock paid little attention to the philosophical dichotomy between conservation and preservation; it was irrelevant to him. His statement employed a language and tone that conveyed a belief in the efficacy of human action guided by an expert hand. Mankind had depleted the earth of its resources, but educated experts could correct this problem and educate the citizens.¹⁸

In 1886, Shortly after Rothrock returned to the United States from his German forestry training, two prominent Philadelphia women, Mary Scott Linton Lundy and Maria Middleton Fisher Coxe, concerned about the condition of Pennsylvania's forests, approached Rothrock about holding a meeting to consider the formation of an association for the promotion of "Scientific Forestry." These wealthy women sought to enlist

¹⁷ Illick, "Joseph Trimble Rothrock," 87; Widner, *Forests and Forestry in the American States*, 25–26; J. R. Schramm, "Influence—Past and Present—of François-André Michaux on Forestry and Forestry Research in America," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 101 (1957): 339–41.

¹⁸ Dudley and Goddard, "Joseph T. Rothrock and Forest Conservation," 38; J. T. Rothrock, Michaux Forestry Lecture, "What Is Economic Botany?" (1892), Records of the Department of Forests and Waters, RG 6, Pennsylvania State Archives.

Rothrock's support because of his scientific renown within the community and his efforts to promote scientific forestry management and public awareness of forestry issues. They named the new organization the Pennsylvania Forestry Association (PFA), and the membership elected Rothrock president in November 1886. The objectives of the PFA were clear and concise. Its mission was to advocate for state forest acquisition and maintenance, educate the public on the benefits of forestry, raise awareness of deforestation, water-supply conditions, climate change (it was believed that forests regulated climate), and deforestation's effects on industry, and to promote legislation. This body represented the beginning of the organized forestry movement in Pennsylvania, and its educational and legislative agenda reflected a belief in the necessity for expert knowledge and leadership.¹⁹ Through activities with the PFA, his Michaux lectures, and his written work, Rothrock worked to convince the public that care of the forests mattered on an individual and collective level.

Part of the reason for Rothrock's focus on education was his belief that public support for forestry laws would create political pressure and was necessary for such laws to be effective. In his article, "Forests of Pennsylvania," Rothrock articulated this understanding: "here we come back to the most general of all principles under a popular government, that laws are strong and effective only when backed by public sentiment, and this may only be surely attained by an appeal to individual interests." He knew, however, that he worked against a deeply ingrained mindset. "Twenty years ago I began agitation upon the forestry question," he wrote in 1901. "I have kept at it ever since; I propose to keep at it as long as I live, for we will need all the legislation and all the help to bring about the results which are now in sight. But you have no idea of the amount of work it requires to change a generation from tree destroyers to tree restorers; it is something akin to a second birth."²⁰

¹⁹ Mrs. Lundy was the wife of Protestant Episcopal minister Joseph P. Lundy, who served as president of the Pennsylvania Forestry Association. Mrs. Coxe was the wife of Brinton Coxe, a lawyer who served as president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania from 1884 until his death in 1892. Invitation to event honoring Rothrock, Apr. 15, 1914, and Dr. J. T. Rothrock chronology, box 5, George H. Wirt Papers; Thomas, "Forest Protection and the Founding of Pennsylvania's First Forestry School," 292–93; Maass, *Forestry Pioneer*, 60, 62; Pisani, "Forests and Conservation," 348; "Constitution of the Pennsylvania Forestry Association," *Forest Leaves*, July 1886, 3.

²⁰ Joseph T. Rothrock, "Forests of Pennsylvania," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 33 (1894): 126; J. T. Rothrock to Mr. Frederick Schoening, Jan. 2, 1901, box 5, George H. Wirt Papers.

By 1902, Rothrock was confident enough in the support the forestry movement had garnered to claim that the public as a whole was “in favor of the state taking back under its own management a very considerable portion of the mountain land which has been alienated by sale to corporations or individuals. It had become apparent to all thinking persons that there were certain natural laws which must be observed.” His words reflected a Progressive concern about corporate activities that endangered the public and the monopolistic control of resources and implied that opponents of state forestry practices were ignorant.²¹

Organization and efficiency were the twin supports of Rothrock’s political ideas. He believed that “every acre of ground in every country should be devoted to the very best use it is capable of, and it should be made useful constantly, if possible.” He reprimanded Pennsylvanians for their squandering of natural resources and called upon them to make amends:

The citizens of this State have much to repent of in their dealings with the generous soil which would have spontaneously restored these forests to perpetuate our industries and to glorify the landscape, if we had simply protected it. We have also much to be thankful for, because our repentance can be of the effective sort, which rights a wrong.

At the same time, Rothrock expressed an aesthetic appreciation for the forests (“glorify the landscape”).²²

Rothrock was heralded for his educational efforts. As one newspaper article from later in his career reported, “his was a voice crying in the wilderness of indifference and ignorance for years, but all the time the seed which he sowed was falling upon soil where it sprouted and finally grew into a strong public sentiment in support of the trees.” By establishing his reputation and creating a strong base for conservation within the population, Rothrock ensured that political pressure would be placed on the legislature to enact change. In addition, he was adept at organizational efficiency in his plans and proposals. Through his leadership in nearly all of the Pennsylvania forestry organizations in the late nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries, he advanced comprehensive strategies to estab-

²¹ *Statement of Work Done by the Pennsylvania Department of Forestry*, 9.

²² J. T. Rothrock, “What Forestry Is,” and Rothrock, “Relation of the Teachers to Forestry in This Commonwealth,” 8, box 5, George H. Wirt Papers.

lish forestry as a professionalized field in the commonwealth.²³

Professionalization

On February 25, 1901, the Pennsylvania legislature and governor approved Rothrock's idea of establishing a Department of Forestry as a separate entity from the Department of Agriculture and appointed Rothrock commissioner. This action accorded the cause of forestry significant status, and the newly created body grew larger and purchased more land for state reserves. When Governor William A. Stone came into office in 1899, Rothrock calculated that the state owned 18,904 acres of land that had been purchased at tax sales for forestry reservations. By December 10, 1902, the reserves totaled 305,851 acres, with an additional 266,871 acres under consideration for transfer to the commonwealth, making the total 572,722 acres. By 1903, under the leadership of Governor Samuel W. Pennypacker, Rothrock reported, the state "has purchased 622,576 acres of land . . . there remain under consideration, 86,448 acres, making a total of 709,024." From comparison to the holdings of just a year earlier, it is clear that under Rothrock's leadership the Department of Forestry was rapidly purchasing land for reserves. Notably between 1898 and 1910 the state bought 924,798 acres, nearly half of today's forest-reserve acreage, thanks in large part to Rothrock's active involvement.²⁴

Rothrock believed that with the expanding acreage of state reserve acquisitions, professional forest rangers were needed to care for the reserve and guard against thieves and fires. He outlined his idea for training such a cadre of forestry experts in a report to Governor Stone in 1902:

It is therefore of the first importance that at Mont Alto . . . a school of Forestry should be started. . . . The students, not to exceed twenty in number, during this period, would conjoin actual labor upon the reservation with study, doing all the necessary work upon the ground and becoming in the best sense practical foresters.

²³ Newspaper clipping, 1914, box 5, George H. Wirt Papers.

²⁴ *A Tribute to Dr. Joseph Trimble Rothrock by His Friends* (n.p., n.d.), 9, box 6, folder 62, Dock Family Papers; DeCoster, *Legacy of Penn's Woods*, 31, 27; Report to Gov. William Stone from J. T. Rothrock, State Forestry Reservation Commission, Dec. 1, 1902, box 1, William A. Stone Papers, 1895–1903, MG 181, Pennsylvania State Archives; J. T. Rothrock to Gov. Pennypacker, Mar. 3, 1904, box 24, Samuel W. Pennypacker Papers, 1703–1916, MG 171, Pennsylvania State Archives.

The curriculum of the school, as Rothrock envisioned it, would reflect his own training from the western surveys and combine hands-on experience with academic study. Because of the absence of a forestry school in Pennsylvania and other considerations, the legislature accepted his proposal. Only recently had a few forestry schools been established across the nation; in the entirety of the United States, there were only about twenty U.S. citizens with forestry training at the time, and two of them had obtained their education in Europe. In 1903, George Wirt was assigned to establish a forestry school in Mont Alto, Franklin County, to train the foresters who would be needed to manage the forests of Pennsylvania. Wirt became the first director of the State Forest Academy at Mont Alto, and he held that position until 1910.²⁵

Many Pennsylvanians viewed the Pennsylvania State Forest Academy with great pride and interest. In a synopsis of the forestry department's accomplishments soon after the academy was established, Rothrock boasted, "The Pennsylvania State Forest Academy is unique. It is the only institution of its kind in the western Hemisphere carried on by State or National Government. It is admitted by those who know to be the most promising institution of its kind in America." Reflecting his commitment to practical or utilitarian forestry methods, Rothrock directed that the school teach practical skills, such as how to handle axes and saws, in addition to academic subjects. Academic subjects included chemistry, German, physics, algebra, silviculture (the selective cutting of trees on a parcel of land), and zoology. Upon completion of their training, graduates were required to work for the Forest Reserves Commission for a period of time. Eventually, the Forest Academy at Mont Alto merged with the Department of Forestry in the School of Agriculture (established in 1907) at the Pennsylvania State College (later the Pennsylvania State University).²⁶

Through his leadership in establishing forestry organizations such as the Department of Forestry and the Forest Academy, Rothrock advanced the professionalization of the discipline in the commonwealth. The creation of the Department of Forestry gave the movement a strong institu-

²⁵ Report to Gov. William Stone from J. T. Rothrock, Dec. 1, 1902; Henry D. Gerhold, *A Century of Forest Resources Education at Penn State: Serving Our Forests, Waters, Wildlife, and Wood Industries* (University Park, PA, 2007), 13; DeCoster, *Legacy of Penn's Woods*, 33.

²⁶ J. T. Rothrock, "Synopsis of Facts Relating to Pennsylvania State Forest Reserve Work," ca. 1906, box 5, George H. Wirt Papers; DeCoster, *Legacy of Penn's Woods*, 37, 38; Gerhold, *Century of Forest Resources Education at Penn State*, 29.

tion and ensured its representation in government; the establishment of the Mont Alto forestry school produced trained and experienced foresters to oversee state-acquired reserve lands. The forestry school essentially solidified the professionalized field of forestry in Pennsylvania; for one to be educated in forestry and considered an expert forester, formal training would now be necessary.

Problem Solving and Lobbying

While Rothrock maintained his public presence, he also worked behind the scenes in the legislative process. In fact, Rothrock's educational endeavors were usually meant to exert political pressure in this manner. He worked with political figures both indirectly and directly. He drafted bills and spoke with politicians on behalf of various forestry organizations, and he was fully aware of the political barriers, such as efforts by timber lobbyists, that prevented many goals of the forestry administration from being quickly realized. A true Progressive, Rothrock placed his trust in professionals and exhibited a visible disgust at political appointments and partisanship. Despite his distinct dislike for politics, however, he was knee-deep in the political process during his time within the Forestry Division and Department of Forestry.²⁷

Rothrock took a pragmatic approach to politics. In concert with other conservationists, Rothrock worked to convince the timber industry to support conservation efforts. He assured them that "the whole object of the forestry agitation is to perpetuate the lumbering interests and in protecting them." As scholars such as George Gonzalez have argued, "practical" or utilitarian forestry dominated national policy because it was embraced by the timber and railroad industries, which were able to profit from forest conservation. Practical forestry was compatible with the American capitalist culture because it encouraged profit and was congruous with the interests of the economic elites. Rothrock, however, identified with utilitarian forestry because of its efficiency and benefits for civilization. "Trees are certainly intended to be cut as they are to be planted," he wrote, and, elsewhere, "the forest is for use, and must be used. To realize one part of its value it must be cut. There is no other way. It is better that it should be cut than that it should decay."²⁸

²⁷ Maass, *Forestry Pioneer*, 87.

²⁸ J. T. Rothrock, "A Plain Statement of an Important Problem," 7–8; Rothrock, "What Forestry

Rothrock worked closely with the legislature on several forestry-related issues. After several failed attempts to pass bills to establish a forestry organization, Rothrock's strong influence—he largely drafted the bill—helped the Pennsylvania legislature to approve the bill that created a Pennsylvania Forestry Commission in 1893. The knowledgeable and gentle scientist was also a mover and shaker. According to Rothrock, passage of that bill indicated a “reform in other directions than appears on the surface. It is a recognition of the broad fact that we as a young people have been wasteful in the use of all our resources.” Rothrock emphasized the bill's importance as a break from the old methods of dealing with forestry issues.²⁹

As forestry commissioner, Rothrock continued the practice of surveying and reporting, and he used his reports to convince the legislature and people of Pennsylvania of the necessity of creating state-owned forest reserves, as well as of the need to rely on trained and professional foresters to lead the way. In his 1894 commission report, Rothrock emphasized the responsibility of the state to provide for its own continued existence and prosperity. The state forest reserves were an important part of that future. “A primal, fundamental law is that the first duty of the State is to provide for its own prosperous perpetuity. If it fails to do this, it fails to secure the cheerful co-operation of the citizens.” His concern over the state's ability to sustain itself and its resources for future generations appeared in many of his pieces. In the 1894 article “On the Growth of the Forestry Idea in Pennsylvania,” he wrote, “It is for this reason that we submit to legal control; for without perpetuity, the strong inducement to thrift, in the interest of our children, is lacking.” Rothrock's vision was that both forethought and legislation (protection for forests and government-owned reserves) were necessary for the well-being of future generations. Rothrock echoed critics who condemned America's obsession with short-term profit. The historian Donald Pisani has observed that “writer after writer concluded that the violation of nature's laws threatened the material and spiritual foundation of American civilization. [For] Americans . . . the obsession with short-term profit blinded them to the truth that the essence of civilization was its debt to future generations.” Rothrock often admonished

Is”; and Rothrock, “Relation of the Teachers to Forestry in This Commonwealth,” 8, all box 5, George H. Wirt Papers; George A. Gonzalez, “The Conservation Policy Network, 1890–1910: The Development and Implementation of ‘Practical’ Forestry,” *Polity* 31 (1998): 292, 272.

²⁹ Rothrock, “On the Growth of the Forestry Idea in Pennsylvania,” 339–40, 342.

citizens for blindly utilizing forest resources for their own gain while leaving the land barren and scarred for future generations.³⁰

After the commission surveyed and filed its report on the condition of Pennsylvania forests, the state purchased its first lands under an act passed in 1897 that authorized the purchase “of unseated lands for non-payment of taxes for the purpose of creating a State Forest Reservation.” The first purchase, made in 1898, was a tract of 415 acres in Beech Creek Township, Clinton County, sold at tax sale, for which the commonwealth paid \$30.70. Rothrock explained the rationale behind the support of state-reserve ownership, arguing that, “In general it is unwise for the State to enter upon any business where it will compete with its citizens. The forests could be restored only by state action because of the resources required and because the state had the duty to assure its perpetuity and the public good. The state could also assure, he believed, that the right type of people—trained professionals—were in charge of the process. The impact of forest destruction—worsening of the lumber industry, lack of clean mountain water for municipal purposes, lack of water to produce electricity, erosion from the significant decrease of forest cover and the resultant vulnerability to floods, and the loss of revenue from barren lands—justified state reserve purchases. Rothrock quoted a prominent preservationist on state forestry legislation: “as John Muir once said, ‘Such legislation hurts no one, helps everyone, and pleases God.’”³¹

Recognizing the motivating power of self-interest, Rothrock advocated enactment of laws that would solve significant social problems by influencing individual behavior. He supported taxation policies that would encourage the preservations of forested areas. He believed that taxes were one of the primary and earliest factors encouraging landowners to strip timber from their lands. Rothrock, therefore, sought to have timberlands freed of taxes, since forested lands contributed to the public good. Rothrock proposed that timberlands be designated as a separate class of land, on which the legislature could then decide specific, lower, tax levels.

³⁰ *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Passed at the Session of 1897* (Harrisburg, PA, 1897), 11–12; “Report of J. T. Rothrock, Botanist Member of the Pennsylvania Forestry Commission,” 2; Rothrock, “On the Growth of the Forestry Idea in Pennsylvania,” 335; Pisani, “Forests and Conservation,” 351.

³¹ Rothrock, “Synopsis of Facts Relating to Pennsylvania State Forest Reserve Work”; Rothrock, “Relation of the Teachers to Forestry in This Commonwealth,” 12; and Rothrock, “Growth of the Forestry Idea in Pennsylvania,” 5, all in box 5, George H. Wirt Papers.

This tax policy would encourage landowners to grow or preserve forests. Taxes on timber would have the same effect: "It is easy to see that taxing timber when cut would induce the owner to hold it as long as possible." His ideas on taxes were never fully accepted and often were stridently opposed, but they remained a centerpiece of his vision for preserving Pennsylvania's forests. Late in his life, Rothrock did witness the enactment of the Auxiliary Forest Reserve Act, which altered taxes on forested lands. However, the law was declared unconstitutional shortly after its enactment, and, today, there remains no resolution of the forest-taxation issue.³²

While scholars have focused on Rothrock's work in the forestry realm, he also had a substantial impact on Pennsylvania through his work as a medical doctor and his ideas regarding forests and health. As noted above, Rothrock's own health and medical training led him to make a strong connection between forests and individual and public health. Rothrock had distinct empathy for tuberculosis patients, and he used his influence to harness private and government support for their treatment. Rothrock was a firm believer in open-air treatment for tuberculosis patients, noting that people recovered much more quickly in the air of the mountains than they did in cramped and less-sanitary city conditions. He knew of "regions, healthful regions in Pennsylvania, where monied interests have combined to bar out those who suffer from this disease [tuberculosis], where no compromise is considered and no division of God's gift of fresh air allowed."³³

Rothrock advocated for the establishment of a sanatorium at Mont Alto, in Franklin County, for tuberculosis patients, and his proposal was widely accepted and supported. The camp received donations from private individuals, and Rothrock began construction of the facility's camp on the upper grounds of Mont Alto. He discussed progress of the camp in a 1902 letter to Governor Stone, writing that "the plan has been eminently successful and attracted wide attention, not only in this State, but in other States." The camp was maintained solely on private funds until June 1, 1903, when, through Rothrock's influence, the institution received

³² DeCoster, *Legacy of Penn's Woods*, 24, 26; Rothrock, "Relation of the Teachers to Forestry in This Commonwealth," 11; "Report of J. T. Rothrock, Botanist Member of the Pennsylvania Forestry Commission," 2.

³³ Maass, *Forestry Pioneer*, 112–14; *Statement of Work Done by the Pennsylvania Department of Forestry*, 42; "Joseph Trimble Rothrock," in *Some American Medical Botanists*, 213.

eight thousand dollars from the legislature and another fifteen thousand dollars for 1905 through 1907. Rothrock later reported that after June 1, 1903, sixty-one of the eighty-nine patients at the State Consumptive Camp at Mont Alto had been cured or greatly restored to health, while many of those who did not survive were in the latter stages of the disease and had little chance of recovery. The camp remained part of the Department of Forestry until it was transferred to the newly created Department of Health in 1907. One of Rothrock's sons, Dr. Addison Rothrock, who also had attended medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, served as camp physician until the facility was turned over to the Department of Health.³⁴

Rothrock's devotion to nature was linked to his holistic views on healthful living and on the benefits of living and exercising within the outdoors. He also held that the state should aid those suffering from disease. He wrote in his notes that "a citizen's health and its maintenance is important—a resource" and that, "the State can and should help well people stay well and rehabilitate those who have been weakened by disease, work or other cause." In addition, he believed that the goals of sanatoriums mirrored those of foresters and lumbermen, as all benefited from reforestation and proper forestry management. In one of his articles, Rothrock posed the rhetorical question: "How long will it be before the lumberman, the sanitarian and the forester discover that their highest, most enduring interests can best be served by a policy which they should have in common?" Rothrock saw the forests not just as a "tree farm," but as healthful places that citizens should use and appreciate, especially for their well-being.³⁵

Despite Rothrock's stated dislike for politics, he was an adept political player. In part because of his lobbying and drafting work, the legislature acknowledged the forest-depletion issue and created the Forestry Commission and, later, the Department of Forestry. Rothrock's expertise commanded a significant amount of authority among legislators. In addition, Rothrock worked consistently to educate the public on deforestation and related forestry issues and to enlist its support for state protection of forested areas. Rothrock was able to accumulate sizable state funds to sup-

³⁴ Report to Gov. William Stone from J. T. Rothrock, Dec. 1, 1902; DeCoster, *Legacy of Penn's Wood*, 39; J. T. Rothrock, "Statement about Sanatorium in Forest Reserve," ca. 1906, box 5, George H. Wirt Papers; Maass, *Forestry Pioneer*, 116–17.

³⁵ J. T. Rothrock Forestry Notes, and Rothrock, "Relations of Forests to Public Health and Prosperity," 14, box 5, George H. Wirt Papers.

port both the forestry school and sanatorium at Mont Alto. While he may have appeared an apolitical expert, Rothrock clearly was adept at working within the political sphere, convincing the legislature and various other political bodies to support the forestry movement's goals.

The Centrality of Rothrock

In March 1903, Rothrock wrote to Governor Pennypacker asking to leave office by June 1. His health had deteriorated and, at the request of his family, he appealed to Pennypacker to accept his resignation as Commissioner of Forestry. The response to his request—a minor uprising against his proposed resignation—underscores how important and respected Rothrock was in Pennsylvania for his forestry efforts. Both individuals and organizations contacted Pennypacker asking him to find a way to persuade Rothrock to stay. One individual wrote, “I regret to learn of any effort on the part of Dr. Rothrock to resign, as he is so familiar with the large number of details in this work it . . . would be very difficult to find a man to replace him who could take up the work intelligently.” Rothrock had created a system of professionalized forestry with himself at the center of it and few could imagine the forestry movement moving forward without him. He had been the head of every subsequent forestry organization since the formation of the PFA in 1886.³⁶

Rothrock was persuaded to stay on as commissioner until his health became too great an issue. In 1904, he again wrote to Pennypacker asking that his resignation be accepted. The strongest response came from the Pennsylvania State Forestry Reservation Commission, which stated that the organization was “affected with a keen sense of regret and deeply deplores the retirement of Dr. Rothrock from public service.” The commission went on to note that:

The creation of the Pennsylvania Department of Forestry and . . . [its] successful conduct . . . are directly attributable to the untiring energy and labor of Dr. Rothrock. He it was who laid the permanent foundations for the Department and enunciated the principles of public policy within which the future life and usefulness of the Department are to be firmly grounded.

³⁶ J. T. Rothrock to Gov. Pennypacker, Mar. 3, 1904, and John Fulton to Gov. Pennypacker, Mar. 7, 1903, box 24, Samuel W. Pennypacker Papers.

The governor accepted Rothrock's decision to retire, but he and the rest of the forestry community lamented the end of Rothrock's career as head of the Pennsylvania forestry movement. It was from his direction that the major forestry organizations had derived their focus and ideas. Upon his retirement, Rothrock was immediately appointed to the Forest Reservation Commission, on which he served, intermittently, until his death in 1922. Notably, Pennsylvania was one of the only states able to adopt a state reserves policy and forestry department, achievements largely attributable to Rothrock.³⁷

In 1909, Rothrock, now age seventy, sold his vast herbarium and library to the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. The collection reportedly contained 22,207 specimens. According to Louis Williams, who served as chairman of the Department of Botany at the Field Museum, the herbarium was the most valuable one of its kind in America and perhaps the world. Despite the decline in his health that accompanied increasing age, Rothrock continued to contribute to the PFA's magazine, *Forest Leaves*, and served on the Forest Reservation Committee for several terms. Both before his death and after, Rothrock received numerous awards. In 1914, a collection of friends arranged a luncheon and award celebration and bestowed upon him a loving cup. On April 11, 1919, Arbor Day, there was a special planting of eighty white oak trees at Caledonia State Park to honor the recent eightieth birthday of Rothrock. That same year, a bronze marker honoring Rothrock was placed at the Mont Alto Sanatorium. These honors were in addition to the earlier designation of Rothrock State Forest in Forest District #5, near Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. Rothrock, through his leadership and organization of the forestry movement, in a way became the forestry movement. The movement and his persona were inextricably connected.³⁸

³⁷ J. T. Rothrock to Gov. Pennypacker, Feb. 15, 1904, box 24, Samuel W. Pennypacker Papers; Resolution of the Pennsylvania State Forestry Reservation Commission, Jan. 2 1914, box 5, George H. Wirt Papers; John William Larnier, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Trimble Rothrock, M.D.: Guide and Index to the Scholarly Resources Microfilm Edition* (Wilmington, DE, 2001), 22–23; Pisani, "Forests and Conservation," 341.

³⁸ Joseph Rothrock III has a collection of his great-grandfather's personal items, including the loving cup, his microscopes, and camera. My sincere thanks to him and Susan Ellis for their interview and willingness to help me explore his life and see their collection. Dudley and Goddard, "Joseph T. Rothrock and Forest Conservation," 49; Report from Rothrock Memorial Committee, May 12, 1914, and George H. Wirt to All Foresters, Apr. 4, 1919, box 5, George H. Wirt Papers; Larnier, ed., *Papers of Joseph Trimble Rothrock, M.D.*, 23.

Rothrock had a deep pride in and affection for his home state and sincerely desired the best for his fellow citizens. "It will require . . . many more [years] to fully establish the work of timber restoration," he wrote in 1900, "but we are working in a State of which we are proud and which we believe is to outlast the centuries." Rothrock maintained his deep belief in the power of government to do good despite his distaste for politics. Throughout his life, Rothrock remained modest. He wrote that "I often wonder why I have received so much consideration. I am not conscious of having done any thing remarkable. I simply have had an honest desire to be of some use in this big world of ours." Forestry, to him, would preserve the state and human welfare. In reassuring those concerned about the future of the forestry movement, he announced with distinct clarity that "we will have wise laws, and righteously execute them. We will have clean politics, filter plants, pure water supplies, and reservoirs which will hold water. Just take hope." As lasting as his political accomplishments was Rothrock's success in establishing a professionalized and educated workforce in Pennsylvania forestry. By the end of his tenure as forestry commissioner in 1904, the commonwealth was in possession of nearly seven hundred thousand acres of land on which to develop its forestry system. These purchased and rehabilitated lands became the core of Pennsylvania's state forest system, and the commonwealth has continually added to these lands over the past century.³⁹

On June 2, 1922, Rothrock passed away at his home in West Chester, Pennsylvania, at the age of eighty-three. Despite his contributions to Pennsylvania's history, his name has largely been forgotten, though a few memorials remain. In his hometown of McVeytown, a boulder monument was completed on November 1, 1924. Several prominent forestry workers gave tribute speeches at its unveiling, including Governor Pinchot, who stated that Rothrock "was one of the greatest public servants in the history of our Commonwealth. . . . He was wholly unselfish to the point of extreme self-sacrifice, capable to the level of the brilliant achievements which distinguished his career." George Wirt, Rothrock's protégé, informed the crowd that "it was [Rothrock's] deliberate plan to live his life for what he believed to be an essential to the continued wel-

³⁹ J. T. Rothrock to Editor of *Mifflintown Sentinel and Republican*, Apr. 4, 1900; J. T. Rothrock to Walter Ludwig, Feb. 17, 1914; Rothrock, "Relations of Forests to Public Health and Prosperity," 2, all in box 5, George H. Wirt Papers; *Tenth Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, 1904* (Harrisburg, PA, 1905), 468; Linchan, "Saving Penn's Woods," 24.

fare of his fellow Pennsylvanians—the perpetuation of her forest resources.”⁴⁰

Once Rothrock and his colleagues and acquaintances had passed away, however, his name and contributions began to fade from public consciousness. The establishment of an organized Department of Forestry, along with his other botanical, medical, and legislative accomplishments, were significant achievements. While, as historian Roderick Nash has noted, “only later did a few persons begin to realize that one of the most significant results of the establishment of the first national and state park had been the preservation of *wilderness*,” Rothrock viewed preservation of forests as integral to the public’s well-being and survival. In the age of destructive timber barons, his foresight recovered and ensured Pennsylvania’s prosperity. As he wrote in one of his texts, “we must understand that the land is ours to use, to enjoy, to transmit; but that it is not ours to desolate, that we are bound to leave it in as good condition for those who follow us as we found it for ourselves.”⁴¹

Countless acquaintances, friends, historians, and forestry personnel have bestowed on Rothrock the title of forestry “pioneer.” The idea of identifying Rothrock as a forestry pioneer is undoubtedly attractive, but the word does not capture his strategic genius. Rather, Rothrock was a transitional figure. As a highly educated, politically savvy person who appealed to multiple audiences, Rothrock exercised significant power. Throughout his early life, he established scientific credibility and reputation through research and surveying. Rothrock used his experience and expertise to translate the urgencies and goals of Progressive forestry into something that nonexperts could understand and care about and to win both the public’s confidence and admiration and the legislators’ trust.

Rothrock oversaw the development of professional forestry in Pennsylvania and the transition from a period of lax forestry laws primarily promulgated by landowners or amateur conservationists to one characterized by state-owned forest reserves, stricter laws, and an educated forestry elite. With his long white beard and kindly appearance, Joseph Trimble Rothrock conveyed the impression of a gentle expert. But to ignore his tactical erudition and work in professionalizing the field of

⁴⁰ Larner, ed., *Papers of Joseph Trimble Rothrock, M.D.*, 23; Rothrock Memorial invitation; Speech at the Rothrock Memorial by Gov. Gifford Pinchot, Nov. 1, 1924; and address on memory of Joseph T. Rothrock by George H. Wirt, Apr. 4 1923, all in box 5, George H. Wirt Papers.

⁴¹ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, CT, 1967), 108; Rothrock, *Areas of Desolation in Pennsylvania*, 30.

forestry within Pennsylvania only reinforces the notion that turn-of-the-century environmentalism emerged as a coherent and fully matured movement. In fact, Rothrock's life demonstrates the complexity of the era in which he worked. Rothrock's multiple characteristics as educator, physician, surveyor, and politician underscore his importance and position as a transitional leader in the forestry movement at the turn of the twentieth century.

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FEATURED REVIEW

A Movement Without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia. By LISA LEVENSTEIN. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. xvi, 300 pp. Bibliography, index. Cloth, \$45; paper, \$22.95.)

“Health Care Reform or Welfare Program?” asked a conservative columnist in an attack on a health care bill in Congress in 2009.¹ Opponents of health care reform inserted the “welfare wedge” into the health care debate.² With it came the racialized and gendered imagery of the poor and an “us-versus-them” analysis in which the reform package was characterized as “putting one-fifth of the U.S. on welfare”—a program for the undeserving, provided at the expense of the deserving.³ “This little tyke” read an anti-“Obamacare” poster of a smiling, blond boy, “will work thirty years to pay for your E.R. visits, abortions, tattoo removals, smoking cessation,” and other supposed medical misuses perpetrated by a lower class caricatured in gender and race stereotypes. For these, the new policy will “rais[e] . . . everyone else’s rates, redistributing their wealth to the new freeloaders.” Such critiques rest on assumptions about (white) middle-class independence—“independent individuals” in favor of “paying your own way”—and lower-class (nonwhite) dependent medical “freeloaders.”⁴

The health care debate’s descent follows the path tread by many other public policies in the past several decades. Since the first accounts of the Great Society’s demise, journalists and scholars have argued that as African Americans became associated with War on Poverty programs and

¹ Steve Selengut, “Health Care Reform or Welfare Program—Who Pays the Bill?” *Fortune Watch* (blog), Aug. 23, 2009, <http://www.fortunewatch.com/health-care-reform-or-welfare-program-who-pays-the-bill-2/>.

² Ed Kilgore, “The Return of the Welfare Queen,” *Salon.com*, Aug. 31, 2009, http://www.salon.com/opinion/feature/2009/08/31/welfare_wedge/index.html.

³ Conn Carol, “In Pictures: Obamacare Puts One-Fifth of U.S. on Welfare,” *The Foundry* (blog), Heritage Foundation, Nov. 16, 2009, <http://blog.heritage.org/2009/11/16/obamacare-puts-one-fifth-of-us-on-welfare/>.

⁴ Robert Tracinski, “Dems’ Plan Will Eliminate Health Insurance,” *Real Clear Politics*, Aug. 5, 2009, http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2009/08/05/obamas_war_on_health_insurance_97767.html.

welfare, whites lashed back against government spending on social services ranging from public housing to job training, food stamps to Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income to disability.⁵ More recently, scholars of white Americans in postwar-era cities and suburbs, while challenging the 1960s “backlash” narratives, nevertheless have arrived at similar conclusions. They describe with more detail and nuance the long-developing relationship between race, government programs, and politics in the postwar period. They argue that whites, while relying on less visible forms of government support, such as home loan subsidies, came to identify African Americans with more visible public institutions and public spending. That perception had devastating political and policy consequences.⁶ Missing from these otherwise astute analyses of race, the state, and politics are arguably the most important people in this story: African American women. It is they who laid claim to government programs, public institutions, and public sector employment in large numbers—numbers disproportionate to their percentage of the general population. It is they who became political stock figures, deformed stereotypes of “laziness” or “immorality” inextricably linked to denunciations of government programs as wasteful, mismanaged “handouts.” And it is they who have been disproportionately harmed politically and materially as public programs for health, education, and welfare have decreased and public sector jobs have disappeared.

Lisa Levenstein’s wonderful book, *A Movement Without Marches*, reinserts African American women into the picture. Her research provides a starting point for understanding the gendered and racialized politics of public policy of the last fifty years. It is a path-breaking account of the relationships between African American women and state institutions in the decades after World War II. A social history at its core, Levenstein’s methodology follows in the simple, elegant tradition of the best histories of the poor and working classes and their relationships with

⁵ See, for example, in chronological order: James L. Sundquist, ed., *On Fighting Poverty: Perspectives from Experience* (New York, 1969); Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York, 1984); Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York, 1991); Jill S. Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York, 1994); Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence, KS, 1996).

⁶ Perhaps the best examples of this are Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ, 2003); and David M. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago, 2007).

public institutions.⁷ She mines the archives of five separate public institutions, documenting how African American women in postwar Philadelphia made their way into public-assistance offices, municipal courts, public housing, schools, and hospitals in order to secure their lives and those of their families. She considers what these institutions meant to them, and she chronicles the generally alarmed reactions of Philadelphia policy makers.

Levenstein's purpose is to demonstrate how African American women's everyday survival strategies intertwined with the state and politics in the early post-World War II decades. Political dynamics shape each of her stories about African American women and public institutions. Her primary emphasis is on these women's determined efforts to gain access to public resources and to use them in ways that served them best. Levenstein views these efforts as fundamentally political—as making claims upon the state. All five of her chapters highlight African American women's savvy utilization of the public resources available to them. “Many women tried to turn ADC [Aid to Dependent Children] into a program that better met their needs,” writes Levenstein, “by using their grants in ways that authorities did not condone” (47). Some used ADC to allow them to leave poorly paid, arduous jobs; others augmented ADC with “under the table” employment to compensate for miserly payments. Still others used ADC to leave abusive or unreliable men, and many ignored social workers' narrowly defined list of “necessities” and utilized their grants to purchase the food and other consumer products they deemed necessary for their homes. Since “pursuing legal action was less stigmatized than receiving welfare,” African American women turned to the municipal courts in remarkable numbers in order to bring state power to bear on their unsatisfactory relationships with men (67). Their cases for financial support pressed the state strategically to force men to contribute to the support of their children. Moreover, they “placed the issue of domestic violence squarely on the public stage” when no one else did (64).

If welfare and the courts often represented places of last resort, other public institutions represented respectability. Public housing symbolized

⁷ Ruth Wallis Herndon, *Unwelcome Americans: Living on the Margin in Early New England* (Philadelphia, 2001); Regina G. Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890–1945* (New Haven, CT, 1993); Kenneth L. Kusmer, *Down & Out, On the Road: The Homeless in American History* (New York, 2002); Raymond A. Mohl, *Poverty in New York, 1783–1825* (New York, 1971); Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore, 2008).

“undreamed of luxury”—clean, new, safe, secure housing for African American women who had suffered in overcrowded, substandard apartments in segregated neighborhoods (91). They fought city bureaucrats to gain access to public housing and, once situated, “cultivated community relationships.” Levenstein details housekeeping and gardening efforts, safety concerns, and the formation of “Mothers Clubs” and “Boys and Girls Clubs” within the various public-housing communities. Like housing, the public schools symbolized progress and upward mobility to many African American mothers.

Levenstein provides a truly innovative view of educational activism, highlighting how working-class African American women considered dressing their children in the best quality clothes, sending them to Sunday school, and keeping their streets and neighborhoods safe from crime as being essential components of supporting their children’s education. She also documents their efforts to enroll their children in the best possible schools—often majority white—in order to improve their education. Though African American women had high hopes for schools and public housing, the Philadelphia public hospital was the institution they admired most and the one that best met their needs. Levenstein chronicles how African American women’s exceptional use of the hospital for primary-care needs in pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, and internal medicine prompted the hospital to expand and improve these programs enormously.

As Levenstein discusses the claims African Americans made on public institutions, she details a second, less auspicious political dynamic—the powerful pushback from policy makers and service providers seeking to limit African American women’s access to those institutions. Except for one public institution—the public hospital—they featured administrators, judges, and policy makers who feared or resented African American women’s assertive involvement in their programs. They instituted new rules, monitored behavior, and attempted to reduce program costs. In telling these stories, Levenstein illustrates bureaucrats’ evolving and sophisticated use of state power and reveals the extension of existing institutionalized sexism and racism in these institutions.

The chapter on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC, the successor program to ADC) confirms much of what we already know from other studies of the program: in Philadelphia, the more women gained access to AFDC, the more city officials and welfare administrators

sought to limit their access to grants and proscribe their behavior. But Levenstein tells new stories about the other public institutions. The social control of the public welfare program seeped into the municipal courts, for example. There, judges sought to decrease welfare costs and limit African American women's discretion in seeking nonsupport claims by forcing women receiving AFDC to pursue nonsupport claims even against men who might have been dangerous to them. Seeking additional cost savings, they also "established uniform procedures for domestic abuse cases that emphasized reconciliation," without considering the results for threatened wives (85).

The dynamics of social control even entered into those institutions for which African American women had high hopes. Public-housing tenants were shocked at the number of rules instituted upon their entrance. "Fearing that tenants would ruin public housing if they were not tightly controlled," administrators limited women's ability to beautify their homes and public spaces, they monitored their overnight visitors—and hence their personal relationships—and performed routine inspections of homes and apartments (91). Teachers and public school administrators similarly seemed to fear working-class African American mothers. While mothers attempted to get their children to school safely, and to meet with teachers at conferences, school administrators tracked their children into inferior curricula, allocated greater resources to white schools, and even published a report on how single mothers "retard" pupils' academic progress (138).

Levenstein's investigation of the fraught dynamic between working-class African American women and the leaders of the public institutions to which they laid claim effectively reveals the contested politics of the public sector in the postwar period. Levenstein largely succeeds in making a broad case for what she's found in Philadelphia. As she notes in her introduction, it is impossible to understand the history of the so-called urban crisis and "underclass" without thinking about the actions of African American women residing there. She also fundamentally challenges the preeminent place accorded to AFDC in the history of gender, race, and social policy. Her study properly resituates AFDC as one among many public programs and institutions utilized by African American women. This insight also forces historians to reexamine the surprisingly rich "pre-history" of the welfare rights and antipoverty activism of African American women in the 1960s and early 1970s. Her book demonstrates

the concrete investments in and knowledge of a host of public institutions that would be necessary to African American women's successful political mobilization.

These historiographical accomplishments exceed expectations, as Levenstein makes a broad case for what she's found in Philadelphia. However, she might have pushed her savvy research and acute analysis one step further to demonstrate fully how the "movement without marches" mattered for American politics writ large.

First, there is the matter of numbers. To solidify her case for a mass movement of African American women into public services and institutions, Levenstein might have augmented her Philadelphia findings with national data, or at least data from other major cities. Admittedly, some statistics, such as aggregate figures on municipal court usage, may have been too difficult to compile. But a good deal of basic information exists, and much of the national data would likely have amplified her Philadelphia findings: poverty rates for African American women were high; they used welfare in numbers greater than their proportion of the population; they took advantage of public housing where they could, becoming majority users in several cities; and schools in northern cities were deeply segregated and had higher enrollments of African Americans due to white flight. Though Philadelphia may have been unique in some respects, its general reflection of national trends would strengthen Levenstein's case for a significant, broad-based movement of African American women into these programs and for the political argument she builds around it.

Next, there is the matter of scope. While Levenstein studied a remarkably wide range of public institutions, she nevertheless left out one of the most notable examples of African American women's claim on state resources in this period: public-sector employment. Government became a major employer of African American women in the postwar period. Between 1950 and 1960, African American women increased their representation in government employment by nearly 45 percent. Between 1960 and 1970, when government employment accounted for over one-fourth of all job growth in the United States, African American women increased their representation in government employment by nearly 100 percent, resulting in one-quarter of all government jobs being held by African American women in 1970. By 1983, African American women held nearly one-third of government jobs, before their representation lev-

eled out and began to decline.⁸ These jobs provided a relatively secure living and “have proved the most powerful vehicles for African American economic mobility.”⁹ It would be interesting to know how women in Philadelphia—and by extension the nation as a whole—experienced public-sector employment and how it played into their sense of citizenship and state entitlement.

It would also be important to understand the political consequences of African American women’s overrepresentation in government jobs. Just as public health, welfare, and education institutions have been cut and stigmatized, so, too, has public-sector employment. Government employment has not expanded since the 1970s, and it has been scaled back in precisely those areas in which most African American women are employed—health, education, and welfare programs.¹⁰ In addition, negative stereotypes of government workers as “lazy, self-serving, and misguided” have become widespread. Is it coincidence that these images are the same as those used to describe African American women who use public-sector social programs and institutions?¹¹ Levenstein’s conclusions about the gendered racialized politics of a wide range of other public institutions suggest that we must investigate their role in public-sector employment. This fuller picture of the gender and racialized public sector would significantly expand historians’ understandings of the evolving politics of gender, race, and government institutions in the postwar period.

Finally, there is the matter of impact. To push her story to its widest possible conclusion, Levenstein might have fleshed out further her own evidence about the connections between citizenship, race, and the state. In each of her chapters, Levenstein notes to some degree the reaction of the white public: African American women’s increasing use of public institutions transformed these institutions for many whites. White Philadelphians began to regard welfare, the courts, and public housing as

⁸ Lynn C. Burbridge, “The Reliance of African-American Women on Government and Third-Sector Employment,” *American Economic Review* 84, no. 2 (1994): 104. Levenstein notes in passing that Philadelphia African Americans pioneered the entrance into this sector and constituted a remarkable 39 percent of the municipal labor force by the early 1960s (p. 18).

⁹ Michael B. Katz and Mark J. Stern, “Beyond Discrimination: Understanding African American Inequality in the Twenty-First Century,” *Dissent* 55, no. 1 (2008): 61–65.

¹⁰ Burbridge, “Reliance of African-American Women on Government and Third-Sector Employment,” 106; Philip I. Moss, “Employment Gains by Minorities, Women, in Large City Government, 1976–83,” *Monthly Labor Review* 111, no. 11 (1988): 23, 19.

¹¹ Bradley Wright, “Public-Sector Work Motivation: A Review of the Current Literature and a Revised Conceptual Model,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 11 (2001): 560.

somehow disgraceful; thus, they avoided them. Even institutions that required no means testing and no public humiliation—inner-city schools and hospitals—were tarnished. In other words, at the very moment that—and because—African American women expanded their notion of citizenship to include their entitlement to state institutions, whites abandoned and discredited the institutions. Of course, white Philadelphians turned to other forms of government support, such as subsidized home loans, suburban public schools, banking regulation that helped ensure high property values in white neighborhoods, and Social Security and Medicare, among others. But these proved less visible in comparison to the public institutions like welfare, the courts, public housing, schools, and hospitals. Levenstein therefore provides telling glimpses of a process she does not fully describe or analyze: African American women and whites were drafting different notions of citizenship and the state at precisely the same moment due to their opposite reactions to the same phenomena. And the results were disastrous.

While other recent histories of race, the state, and politics have revealed specific slices of the racialization of citizenship through differential use of state programs, none are as promising as Levenstein's. Though she never situates her study directly in this literature, nor fully analyzes her findings on these issues, she nevertheless points to the fact that others have missed: the absolute centrality of gender to this process. In addition, her wide-ranging study of five public institutions suggests a pervasiveness, depth, and force of this phenomenon that historians have not recognized. The field of twentieth-century U.S. politics desperately needs more of her sustained analysis of how African American women's "movement without marches" reshaped the racial and gendered politics of citizenship and the state in postwar America.

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JENNIFER MITTELSTADT

BOOK REVIEWS

Acta Germanopolis: Records of the Corporation of Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1691–1707. Edited with an introduction by J. M. DUFFIN, with a foreword by DON YODER (Philadelphia: Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, 2008. 700 pp., Illustrations, appendices, index. \$75.)

In 1904, the Colonial Society of Pennsylvania published *Records of the Court of New Castle on Delaware, 1676–1681*, followed in 1910 by *Record of the Courts of Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1681–1697*, in 1935 by volume 2 of the *Records of the Court of New Castle, Delaware* (1681–1699), and in 1943 by *Records of the Courts of Quarter Sessions and Common Pleas of Bucks County Pennsylvania, 1684–1700*. Eighty-eight years after that first publication, the Colonial Society (in collaboration with the Welcome Society of Pennsylvania) underwrote publication of the two-volume *Records of the Courts of Sussex County, Delaware, 1677–1710*. Now, more than a century after that first publication, the Colonial Society (in partnership with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania) has produced an edition of the public records of the corporation of Germantown, covering the period from 1691 to 1707.

J. M. Duffin, senior archivist at the University of Pennsylvania, ably assisted by Don Yoder, University of Pennsylvania professor emeritus in folklore and folk-life, has provided a complete transcription of the original German, Dutch, Latin, and English records of the corporation and a complete English translation of those first three languages, based in part on previous translations by Marion D. Learned and Samuel W. Pennypacker.

In the foreword, Don Yoder examines the historiography of Germantown and finds that various researchers disagreed on the ethnic and religious makeup of those original settlers; there was also no consensus on whether Germantown was the first “German” settlement in British North America. After reviewing the evidence, however, Yoder concludes that Germantown was, indeed, the first such settlement and one with historical significance for both Pennsylvania and America.

Duffin follows with a lengthy, detailed introduction that looks at the region from which the settlers migrated, the circumstances surrounding the creation of the corporation, the rapid establishment of its linen and papermaking industries, the uniqueness of its political and legal institutions, and the reasons for the revoking of its charter in 1707. Perhaps most importantly, Duffin outlines the carefully crafted methodology he used for the transcription and the translations, the most important and difficult tasks facing editors of scholarly publications of

original manuscripts.

When William Penn founded Pennsylvania, he realized that he needed more than English Quaker immigrants in order to create a prosperous and, hopefully, profitable colony. He advertised widely and in particular hoped to entice the industrious Germans to migrate to his new colony. In fact, he succeeded, albeit initially on a small scale, when thirteen families arrived at Philadelphia on the *Concord* on October 6, 1683, and settled about six miles northwest of the center of Philadelphia. By 1690, there were forty-four families in Germantown Township, which the following year was formally granted by charter the right of self government, one of only three such charters William Penn issued during his lifetime.

This edition covers the official records of the corporation from 1691, when the charter went into effect, to 1707, when it was revoked, and it includes all the corporation ordinances, the proceedings of the General Court and of the Court of Record, the property register or deed book, the 1691 document naturalizing 62 Germantowners as English citizens, and the 1707 petition for naturalization signed by 155 German immigrants. Duffin has also added an appendix with "a comprehensive and codified account of landownership in Germantown over the first three decades of its existence," (493) which he took from the court records of the corporation, from the Philadelphia County deed books, and from other surviving deeds.

Most of the records were in High German with some entries in Low German, Dutch, Latin, and English. However, while the Germantown court ordered that births, marriages, and deaths be recorded in English, those records, if they ever existed, are no longer extant.

Researchers are often surprised at the breadth of colonial legal and official proceedings, which are also on view here. These include: passage of ordinances; appointments of officers; recording of deeds; settling of estates; surveying and laying out of roads; branding of horses; trimming of cows' horns; supervision of fences; collection of taxes; authorization of apprenticeships; support of the aged, the poor, needy widows, and orphans; inspection of chimneys; and oversight and prosecution of scandalous, inappropriate, and criminal behavior.

Preparing a scholarly edition of manuscripts is extremely difficult, as it requires painstaking attention to detail, an understanding of the handwriting, punctuation, spelling, and conventions of the period, editorial skills, and, above all, the good fortune to find a publisher willing to undertake the financial burden necessary to bring the project to fruition.

Fortunately, with J. M. Duffin, Don Yoder, and the Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, all of those elements came together to create this magisterial volume that will long stand the test of time.

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CRAIG HORLE

The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom: Sense and Sensibility in the Age of the American Revolution. Edited by SUSAN E. KLEPP and KARIN WULF. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010. 376 pp., Illustrations, index. \$24.95.)

Susan Klepp and Karin Wulf have done scholars of early American women's history a great service by editing, interpreting, and publishing this eighteenth-century Quaker woman's diary. Hannah Callender (1737–1801) was the daughter of wealthy and influential Philadelphians. She married Samuel Sansom, of similar parentage, in 1762. She began diary keeping at age twenty-one in 1758 and, with significant gaps during periods of family and national preoccupation, recorded her thoughts for thirty years. Her journal opens a window into the family, social, religious, intellectual, and working lives of women of the Quaker elite in the period following the withdrawal of Quaker men from control of the Pennsylvania government.

The diary itself cannot be described as a riveting read. For the most part it is a daily account of the comings and goings of family members, social visits made and received, Quaker meetings attended and speakers heard, and needlework or sewing begun and completed. Two factors make this edition compelling and valuable, however. First, Klepp and Wulf precede each of the three sections of the diary (as defined by the major gaps) with an essay that interprets the major themes of the section. Here they weave the patterns seen in the recurrent entries with the embellishments of "HCS's" occasional remarks on her feelings, the doings of family and friends, and, more rarely, events in the larger world. Especially useful is the way they interpret the diary in light of two issues of recent interest to historians: the importance of sociability at midcentury and the rise of sensibility in the era of the Revolution. They skillfully exploit the very "dailiness" of Hannah's constant round of visits and tea drinkings (she faithfully recorded all with whom she "tead") to illustrate the importance of genteel conversation in sustaining social networks. After 1780, they contrast her own lackluster marriage with her enthusiasm for the romantic choice made by her daughter. Hannah's remarks on the emotional suitability of her prospective son-in-law, and her championing of his courtship (he was not born into the Society of Friends and, despite his willingness to convert, had to overcome the resistance of Samuel Sansom and others) shows her allegiance to the new cult of sensibility. The editors' introduction, afterword, and three interpretive chapters are essential to appreciating the diary in its social and cultural context and make it both useful to specialists in the period and accessible to general readers.

This edition is also a valuable companion to the diary of HCS's friend Elizabeth Drinker (edited by Elaine F. Crane and published by Northeastern University Press in 1991). Drinker's diary is rich, but it has long stood alone as the most substantial woman's diary from eighteenth-century Philadelphia. Now we have something with which to compare it. Klepp and Wulf's notes concern-

ing Hannah's literary quotations and reading, for example, are helpful in contrasting her literary consumption with that of the more bookish Drinker. Klepp and Wulf might have followed Crane's lead, however, in providing more extensive annotation. Initial identification of persons mentioned would have greatly increased the utility of the diary for social-network analysis. But such lacunae are also assets in that while the editors' essays demonstrate the diary's significance, they do not foreclose its utility for further inquiry.

Ursinus College

C. DALLETT HEMPHILL

Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760–1820. By SUSAN E. KLEPP. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. 328 pp., Illustrations, figures, tables, appendix, notes. \$24.95.)

Susan E. Klepp's *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760–1820* is an outstanding study of the onset of a decline in fertility during the revolutionary era. Klepp seeks to explain why colonial birth rates were so high, why revolutionary-era women were among the first women in the world to limit their childbearing, and how the growing practice of fertility control within marriage was related to changing ideas about sexuality, health, children, marriage, family, religious authority, individuality, sentimentality, economic aspirations, numeracy, and gender.

Unfortunately, there are few sources explicitly describing couples' sexual or contraceptive practices. Through a creative reading of a wide range of sources, including letters, diaries, almanacs, portraits, medical tracts, and demographic data, however, Klepp is able to document a dramatic shift in ideas about fertility and the cultural acceptability of limited childbearing. Prior to the Revolution, social conventions characterized childbearing as procreation and associated it with the generation of wealth; afterwards they described it as reproduction and separated from the creation of wealth. "Breeding" became a term used only when discussing livestock and slaves, and pregnancy connoted sickness. Prerevolutionary portraits depicted the female body with flowers and fruit symbolizing fecundity, "cornucopias pouring out symbolic babies and future wealth from their bodies" (143). Postrevolutionary portraits represented women as less sexualized and celebrated women's restrained virtues and domestic roles.

A chapter on the technology of birth control cogently argues that women's demand for contraception and abortion was high, if not always effectively met. Contemporary definitions of disease and the perceived need to regulate the menstrual cycle provided a possible way for women to eliminate unwanted pregnancies with emmenagogic medicines. Women shared knowledge about abortifac-

cients and other methods to limit fertility, such as prolonging breast feeding, through informal networks. The cumulative weight of this new evidence is convincing. Clearly, women in the early republic articulated a new idea of prudent, family limitation that challenged the earlier, pronatal culture of the colonial era.

If there is a failing of this admirable book it is in perhaps assuming that this shift in women's intentions and attitudes led to greater change in demographic behavior than the evidence supports. Although Klepp openly acknowledges potential biases and difficulties in interpreting her sources, she ultimately contends that women in the revolutionary era consciously created a revolution of their own by deliberately breaking from the high fertility practices of the colonial era. While this was certainly the case for some women in New England and the Mid-Atlantic regions, it remains unclear how common or how effective the practice of marital fertility control was before 1820. Contrary to Klepp's assertion, age-specific marital fertility rates do not indicate a significant presence of "stopping" behavior before the mid-nineteenth century. Increased spacing between births, while significant, is difficult to interpret as evidence of conscious behavior.

We should also bear in mind that American fertility rates were high in the colonial era and that the decline in fertility was modest before the mid-nineteenth century. It took less than a decade to make a political break from England; it took nearly a century before American women bore fewer children than their English counterparts. If revolutionary-era women instigated the practice of limited childbearing within marriage, it was not until their granddaughters' generation that the practice was extensive or effective enough to have had a significant impact on national birth rates.

Binghamton University, State University of New York

J. DAVID HACKER

The Liberty Bell. By GARY NASH. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010. 256 pp., Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.)

On April 1, 1996, Americans across the nation woke to the shocking news that the National Park Service had sold the Liberty Bell to the fast-food chain Taco Bell. Phone calls flooded into Independence National Historical Park, and by lunchtime the park service had to convene a press conference. No, the Bell had not been sold. It was all an elaborate—and beautifully executed—April Fool's joke by Taco Bell.

Gary Nash opens the final chapter of this breezy and thoroughly entertaining history of America's most beloved bell with this story. He does so to underscore that the Liberty Bell, in any number of commercialized forms from teapots to bourbon bottles, from t-shirts to naughty knickers, has been bought and sold since the nineteenth century. In this sense, the Liberty Bell has become that most

perfect American combination of the sacred and the profane.

Nash writes the history of the Liberty Bell in five chronologically arranged chapters. As a bell, it proved something of a dud. Cast in England, damaged almost immediately after its arrival in Philadelphia, and then recast in Philadelphia, it finally and famously cracked by the early nineteenth century. By that time, however, the Bell was well on its way from utilitarian instrument to national icon.

While the Bell no longer rang, the inscription around its top has proved to have enduring resonance: "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof." With the Bell's clapper stilled, those words became the focus of the Bell's significance and the means through which all kinds of Americans linked their own causes and concerns with it.

In the antebellum period, abolitionists found the Bell a powerful symbol for their crusade to end slavery. At virtually the same moment, journalist George Lippard invented the story that the Bell rang out on July 4, 1776. And for many Americans, I suspect, that story still hasn't died.

After the Civil War, the Bell was used at the 1876 Centennial Exposition as a symbol of national unity and as a device for healing a fractured nation. During the great age of American industrial expansion, the Bell went on the road to be a featured attraction at several of the enormous world's fairs that celebrated that growth. During both world wars, the Bell was pressed into service to sell bonds. Philadelphia's mayor tapped out a Morse-code "Liberty," which was played to the first wave of soldiers before they hit the beaches of Normandy. With fascism defeated, the Bell got little rest before it was used as an anticommunist symbol during the cold war. Nash closes with a discussion of the most recent fights over how the Bell will be used in its new interpretive center to acknowledge the centrality of slavery at the founding of the nation.

In short, it has been a busy bell indeed. In this fine and readable book, Nash not only gives us a terrific biography of this one-ton piece of metal, but he reminds us that, perhaps more than anything else in American life, the Liberty Bell has served as a touchstone for us to contemplate the complicated and contested meaning of the very notion of liberty.

Ohio State University

STEVEN CONN

The Historicism of Charles Brockden Brown: Radical History and the Early Republic. By MARK L. KAMRATH. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2010. 352 pp., Illustrations, notes, index. \$65.)

Mark L. Kamrath's new book, *The Historicism of Charles Brockden Brown: Radical History and the Early Republic*, confirms what I have long believed:

Charles Brockden Brown was uniquely attuned to his era, absorbing and critically examining every contemporary event and philosophy. Whereas most previous studies focus almost exclusively on Brown's novels, Kamrath widens the scope to include periodical publications, pamphlets, and histories. Through the lens of Brown's historical writings, Kamrath concludes that, contrary to earlier assessments, Brown did not retreat into middle-class conservatism but rather retained his political radicalism throughout his lifetime. Moreover, the author contends that Brown demonstrated a quite modern concern with historical objectivity long before late twentieth-century historians addressed the issue. Such focal points should make Kamrath's book of great interest to literary critics and historians alike.

The first of the book's three sections, titled "Remembering the Past," presents a review of European and colonial American traditions of history writing. It then analyzes Brown's novels and their concern with "Domestic History," which focused on individuals (particularly women) and social history rather than political events and figures. Kamrath importantly shows that Brown's novels were really forms of historical writings and that the author's aesthetic method remained consistent throughout his novelistic career. Since Brown was most famous for his works of fiction, those interested in him might be tempted to cease reading at the end of the first section; they would be unwise to do so, however.

In the second and third parts, "Historiography and the 'Art of the Historian'" and "The Politics of History," Kamrath turns to a number of Brown's texts that have remained mostly unexamined or misunderstood. Brown edited periodicals, composed historical sketches, and compiled the "Annals of Europe and America," to which he appended numerous footnotes. Here Kamrath shows how Brown's concerns remained consistent regardless of genre, that he endorsed a more secular and skeptical approach to writing history, and that he radically challenged the belief in American exceptionalism and measured the costs as well as the benefits of the empire for liberty.

Kamrath's book is very well researched, and it brings much needed attention to a significantly underappreciated aspect of Brown's intellect while also scrutinizing texts from Brown's late career that deserve more serious study than they have hitherto received. One great disappointment lies in the study's failure to discuss Brown's shorter fiction. While Brown did not write many short stories, most of them appeared in the periodicals Kamrath considers, and they often dealt with the exact issues found in the novels. "A Lesson on Concealment," for example, has much to do with "Domestic History," while stories like "Thessalonica" and "Death of Cicero" are historical pieces. "The Trials of Arden," furthermore, draws upon a sensational contemporary court case as source material. Each of these would seem to fall within Kamrath's scope, yet he leaves them unexamined. Readers might also be disappointed that the book does not interrogate texts from

Brown's pre-novel-writing career.

These shortcomings should not, however, detract from the numerous virtues of this new study. The issues Kamrath raises will almost certainly spur scholars of both literature and history to rethink their assumptions about Brown and his era.

Western Michigan University

SCOTT SLAWINSKI

The Trial of Frederick Eberle: Language, Patriotism, and Citizenship in Philadelphia's German Community, 1790 to 1830. By FRIEDERIKE BAER. (New York: New York University Press, 2008. viii, 272 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$48.)

The trial of Frederick Eberle involved over fifty men, all of whom were indicted and ultimately convicted for conspiracy and rioting in Philadelphia in 1816. They were constituents of the German Lutheran Church St. Michael's and Zion and had fought with other members of the church over whether they should include English-language services and education in their ministry. Almost a decade earlier, a group of pro-English-language Lutherans had left the church over a similar controversy, and as Baer explains in this excellent micro-history of the church community, these fights over church governance and religious practice were significant in early republican Philadelphia.

The trial of Eberle and others became a debate over the place of ethnicity and language in the American republic. As such, it reflected crucial themes, such as the problem of citizenship in a new country. It also touched upon the cultural problems of heterogeneity, as well as individual rights and privileges in the face of majority rule and state power.

Although the conflict between these various church factions was complicated, Baer's close analysis reveals certain trends. The pro-English group tended to be more politically engaged and more involved with the larger English-speaking community, both in Philadelphia and the state. The pro-German group was comprised of more recent immigrants, many of whom were small artisans and petty retailers who served the German-speaking populations of Philadelphia; they lived in the Northern Liberties and Southwark, the city's suburbs.

In some ways the book reflects the ambivalent open-endedness of the theme itself. Conflicts over immigrants' language, nationality, ethnicity, and citizenship have been ongoing in different local communities throughout the United States, and the debates within the German community would continue, change shape, and shift in the decades after this crisis. Although the court chastised these particular pro-German-language Lutherans and penalized them with substantial fines and court costs, they would actually pay little and would win their battle

within St. Michael's and Zion. After failing to secure English services within the church and its governing institutions, the pro-English men resigned and pursued their case with the Pennsylvania Assembly. Despite initial favorable action by the assembly, the state had no authority to force the German community to abandon its language and "rights" (177). Ultimately, the pro-English group split from the main body of the church just as another substantial component of pro-English supporters had done in the early nineteenth century. So, Baer wisely shrinks from making an easy conclusion about this fight between two factions in one community, both of which had a good cause for concern about their place and future in the new nation. In doing so, Baer has shed light on the dynamic processes by which immigrants—of all ethnicities—have fought to live together in the United States.

Binghamton University, State University of New York DOUGLAS BRADBURN

Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians. By ROBERT M. SANDOW. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009. 234 pp. Figures, tables, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.)

Wartime opposition, both North and South, played a major role not only in Federal and Confederate state policies but also in daily social interactions between soldiers and civilians on both sides of the conflict. Although there is little to suggest that ideological opposition physically inhibited either government from carrying out military policy, numerous historians have identified the psychological stress and anxiety that accompanied disloyalty. This is especially true in the North, where the widespread opposition by Peace Democrats, or "Copperheads," was seen as a Confederate conspiracy rather than a democratic, constitutional protest against the federal government's infringement upon individual rights. Robert Sandow's book, *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians*, is a case study of wartime opposition in the rural North, and it illuminates the regional variances that influenced dissent and the broader social and political reactions that pitted local citizens against the federal government.

Copperheadism, as an extension of the Democratic Party, has traditionally been linked to urban areas where high-profile incidents, such as the draft riots in New York City in July 1863, occurred. Historians tend to view Northern antiwar sentiment as a product of the growing class and ethnic tensions that accompanied industrialization (8, 101). Studies of Southern Unionism have also focused on issues of class, as historians have noted the economic disparity that existed between men and women of the Southern "hill country" and those who occupied the more fertile agricultural land. Sandow, however, rightfully suggests that past

studies of Northern opposition have oversimplified the oft-complex reasons that led men and women to challenge the federal government on issues such as the draft and county quotas. By examining the Appalachian region in its entirety, the issues of class and economic viability in wartime protest, both North and South, are made readily apparent. As a case study of Northern opposition to the war, the Pennsylvania Appalachians provide valuable insight into the impact of the Civil War on the rural North.

Sandow proposes that wartime resistance stemmed from the growing antagonism during the 1850s between rural farmers, who had traditionally made part or all of their yearly income through rafting, and larger lumber corporations, whose tactics of floating logs to the mills not only made rivers unnavigable but also drove down market prices. "The dramatic transformations in the regional economy," Sandow writes, "threatened the survival of poorer farmers and gave urgency to wartime dissent" (28). This dissent, first manifest in the Raftmen's Rebellion of 1857, was symbolic of antigovernment protest as many people saw a direct correlation between government intervention on the behalf of large lumber corporations in the antebellum period and the extension of federal power during the war itself. War opposition, whether in the form of political organization into Democratic clubs or more open defiance through draft resistance, desertion, and aid to these men, was conceptualized in this context. Despite individual notions of self preservation and republicanism, Sandow points out that neither the government nor local Unionists were willing to see these actions as anything but treasonous, which motivated provost marshals to arrest anyone associated with these types of activities. The interplay between the government and resisters illuminates the contrasting personal beliefs of these Pennsylvanians and their localized reactions to the war within the larger social construct of opposition during this period.

Robert Sandow's study of the Pennsylvania Appalachian region is an excellent example of the new direction in Civil War history. As we move away from broad interpretations of the war and towards more localized studies, we may better understand the interplay that existed, not only between soldiers and the home front, but also between local communities and the larger nation.

Fordham University

RYAN W. KEATING

Pittsburgh: A New Portrait. By FRANKLIN TOKER. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. xv, 528 pp., Illustrations, further reading, index. \$34.95.)

In the early 1950s, American city mayors, planners, and urbanists alike hailed Pittsburgh as a model for urban renaissance. In the 1980s, Pittsburgh trans-

formed itself again from a scrubbed industrial giant into the epitome of modern urban postindustrialism. The city had become an example of what urban studies theorist Richard Florida calls the “creative economy.” In 1986, when H. J. Heinz still produced ketchup in Pittsburgh and LTV Steel (the old Jones and Laughlin) steel and coke, Franklin Toker produced a superbly useful guidebook of then still marginally industrialized Pittsburgh called *Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait*. Toker’s black and white images actually captured the fading glow of a city that was once the fiery behemoth of American industrialism.

Toker’s glossy, colorfully illustrated 2009 sequel, *Pittsburgh: A New Portrait*, exquisitely and eloquently announces the birth of postindustrial Pittsburgh. Not a history—and too weighty and grandiloquent to serve as a crutch for class tours of the Steel City—it serves instead as a scripture, an authoritative body of knowledge about the city focused mainly on the city’s architectural or built environment. It is a beautifully crafted paean to Pittsburgh as someplace special.

While Toker incorporates large segments of his 1986 text into the 2009 version, and while the essential structure of the 1986 book remains—treating Pittsburgh section by section, street by street—the new volume is different. We learn nothing here about Pittsburgh’s violent labor history. Nor do we discern why, in 1868, James Parton called it “Hell with the lid off,” or why in 1914 Lincoln Steffens, in his study of Pittsburgh politics, called it “a city ashamed.” However, in attempting to inform his readers about Pittsburgh’s *zeitgeist*, about why Pittsburgh’s downtown and its North Side, Deutchtown, Birmingham, the South Side, and other city and suburban neighborhoods are all special, Toker occasionally delves into history, doling out delightful cameos of prominent citizens and key architects as well as snapshots of important events. By the end of this long, 512-page volume, the reader is well informed about how people like Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, W. R. Mellon, Edward Bigelow, Henry H. Richardson, Frederick Osterling, and Walter Gropius helped shape the Steel City.

The book’s richness, however, lies less in its scattered and uneven historical content and more in its sumptuous and sometimes anecdotal vignettes about how the battle of the Titans, Carnegie and Frick, produced the grandeur of Grant Street, how Mae West made appearances at the Harvard, Yale, and Princeton clubs, and the significance of the automobile in creating East Liberty. Ultimately, the real value of Toker’s sequel lies in how he articulates the amazing transformation of the city over the past twenty-five years. Pittsburgh emerges not as the home of Joe Magarac and U.S. Steel, but as the heart of a creative research- and service-oriented urban economy. It is a global city where, significantly, the giant letters of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) are now emblazoned across the apex of the city’s highly symbolic, corten-steel-clad skyscraper—the U.S. Steel Building.

Toker aims both to illuminate and celebrate the fact that over time, given a

remarkable landscape of rivers and hills, Pittsburgh elites carved a rich and enduring architectural and cultural legacy. He equally underscores the point that during the city's long "Age of Industrialism," city builders turned their homes, magnificent churches, courthouses, and business edifices away from its historic rivers. In Pittsburgh's postindustrial era, the city has deliberately reoriented its residential, commercial, and recreational development to reclaim these riverfronts for the people and their pleasure.

Toker's *New Portrait* vastly expands the abbreviated descriptive narrative of his first book. Moreover, in this volume maps and other illustrations are in brilliant color. For non-Pittsburghers contemplating a visit to the city, the book's dazzling images, even its sometimes florid descriptions, make Pittsburgh an irresistible destination. For example, Toker loves classical art and architecture. He finds wonderful allusions to Halicarnassus in the apex of the Gulf Building and joyously describes a North Side home bearing "Neptune on a stringcourse above a radiant Minerva" (129).

However, by organizing the sequel as before, section by section, street by street, Toker misses the profound *whole* of the city. He ignores the enormous physical impact of UPMC as a dominant social, economic, as well as architectural force in the new city. He never mentions that UPMC's Children's Hospital replaced an old and revered neighborhood hospital, the St. Francis Medical Center. Nevertheless, this is a beautiful book, a truly eloquent tribute to the beauty, the character, and the architectural heritage of a great city.

Muskie School, University of Southern Maine

JOHN F. BAUMAN

THE
Pennsylvania
Magazine

OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY
VOLUME CXXXIV



Historical Society
of Pennsylvania

1300 LOCUST STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107
2010

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UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

Publication Title: **PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND GENEALOGY** Issue Date: **July 2010**

Issue Frequency: **Quarterly** Number of Issues Published Annually: **4** Issue Date: **9/16/2010**

Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, ZIP+4®): **HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA, 1300 LOCUST STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107**

Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): **HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA, 1300 LOCUST STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107**

Full Name and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank): **TAMARA GANWELL, HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA, 1300 LOCUST STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107**

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15. Publication Title: **PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND GENEALOGY** Issue Date: **July 2010**

16. Issue Frequency: **Quarterly** Number of Issues Published Annually: **4** Issue Date: **9/16/2010**

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