This is an entertaining and informative biography that will acquaint readers with John Barry and the world in which he lived, worked, and fought. While specialists may have problems with parts of his work, McGrath should be commended for compellingly reintroducing a hero of the early United States who has undeservedly fallen into obscurity.

Naval History and Heritage Command

DENNIS M. CONRAD


This is a beautiful book, lovingly produced for readers who adore William Bartram (1739–1823) as an artist, Romantic, naturalist, and gardener and painstakingly assembled by scholars who approach him from a variety of perspectives. It provides clear capsule introductions to primary texts otherwise unavailable to most readers. Calling it “the first full selection of Bartram’s manuscripts” (1) is a fair description of a book that both selects and abridges. It includes the range of unpublished sources—letters, manuscripts, and illustrations—whereas other collections have focused more and/or included less. It does not include the published Travels (1791), Bartram’s only book; the long “Report” that he wrote for his patron, Dr. John Fothergill; or his “Observations” on the Creek and Cherokee Indians. These are appropriate omissions, since all three are available in a number of editions, including Francis Harper’s annotated versions.

The contributors are well chosen for their range of expertise—on Indians, natural history, garden design, archaeology, art history, literature, and philosophy. Rarely, their introductions overstretch to make an academic point or to claim interpretive novelty. For example, biographers have not, as one contributor suggests, “generally portrayed him as a shy and reclusive figure who lived in relative isolation” (xv), and it is unclear how letters could provide evidence either for or against Bartram’s shyness. It is well known that Bartram ran something of a salon later in his life and received countless pilgrims who sought out his wisdom, asked gardening advice, or simply wanted to meet the Romantic naturalist and artist.

The collection of letters is probably the key contribution of the book, as many of Bartram’s illustrations have been published already, most notably by Joseph Ewan in an ill-fated American Philosophical Society edition, most copies of which were destroyed in a basement flood. Scholars will still have to return to the originals for textual analysis that looks back from published versions to manuscript drafts since, as the editors explain, “not every text merits full publication here, and in cases where documents require technical knowledge, the critical
introductions may serve readers more than the texts themselves” (2). The book provides such specialists leads and locations, though, in clarifying introductions to the texts. The correspondence “includes all but a handful of letters” (1), which means the volume is sufficient for almost all readers.

Electronic searches have enabled the editors to remedy the “scattered state of the archive” (2), for which admirers of Bartram will be grateful. Indeed, the editors’ ambition to “balance the needs of academic and general readers” is largely successful. Often such attempts to create hybrids produce books that are neither fish nor fowl, but this one has nary a fin where a beak belongs and would make the shy Bartram blush.

University of Rochester

THOMAS P. SLAUGHTER


Academic writing on Benjamin Franklin has recently burgeoned into what some have called “Franklin studies,” with two volumes of scholarly essays (one published, another on the way) and monographs focusing on his contributions to science, philosophy, and letters, among other subjects. Because of a strange twist of fate, Bruce Yenawine’s useful and interesting contribution both predates and comes at the crest of this rising wave. Just published in Pickering & Chatto’s Financial History series, it is an edited but not significantly updated version of his 1995 dissertation, completed two years before his death.

Yenawine analyzed the origins and legacy of a unique codicil in Franklin’s will that granted two thousand pounds each to Boston and to Philadelphia, to be loaned out in small sums to artisans to establish them in business. After a century, part of the funds was to be spent for civic improvements. After two centuries, all remaining money—which Franklin characteristically calculated to the last pound—was to be split between the governments of the two cities and of their states. The book places Franklin’s bequest in the context of his readings in finance and correspondence with late-Enlightenment financial innovators, combined with his continued affinity for what he and his contemporaries called “mechanics,” that is, skilled workers. As Yenawine ably details, within a few decades the funds’ managing committees in both cities subverted Franklin’s intent, in Boston by investing the principal in an insurance company and in Philadelphia by investing the principal to pay down municipal debt. Yenawine convincingly attributes this failure to the class bias of the funds’ elitist managers rather than a lack of potential candidates in cities that grew by leaps and bounds over the course of the nineteenth century. That said, he also notes organized labor’s resistance to money