

*Spies in the Continental Capital: Espionage across Pennsylvania during the American Revolution.* By JOHN A. NAGY. (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2011. 256 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$26.)

Revolutionary Philadelphia was, according to John Nagy, a den of intrigue crisscrossed by secret couriers, professional spies, double agents, and opportunistic amateur sleuths. The nature of espionage, however, limited the production of incriminating evidence, a fact that deprives historians of valuable primary accounts of intelligence activities during the war. What information exists comes in the form of memoirs, secondhand correspondence, family stories, and legends, all of which serve to obscure the truth rather than elucidate it.

The sketchiness of available sources used in Nagy's earlier book *Invisible Ink: Spycraft of the American Revolution* (2009) apparently inspired the author's current work, which is written "to identify as many Pennsylvania spies as possible and to determine what evidence is true and what may be fiction" (xiii). Nagy has no qualms about forgoing a clear thesis to focus instead on an exploration of the facts behind each tale of espionage related to Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the achievement of Nagy's goal is hampered by his lack of direction. To prove the veracity of spy stories and without an argument to guide him, Nagy immerses the reader in details, often blanketing thrilling narratives in minutiae. The result is less a tale of espionage than a chronological encyclopedia of spies.

*Spies in the Continental Capital* falls into three sections tied together by time rather than by topic. Nagy's first pair of chapters discuss French and British spies operating in America in the 1760s and early 1770s. The French agents sought opportunities to reclaim their country's North American empire, while the British operatives tried to understand the causes of rising colonial resentment against the royal government. Chapters 3 through 8 examine both British and American intrigues in Philadelphia before, during, and after the British occupation of the city during the winter of 1777–78. Nagy examines the intelligence networks established by each side and the steps taken to secure information. The book's final five chapters take a broader view, following spies associated with Philadelphia out into the world. Nagy examines Benedict Arnold, emissaries in the Pennsylvania countryside, and undercover agents on the frontier. He also discusses foreign sleuths and their attempts to glean information from American diplomats overseas. Nagy ends the book with a summary of his success at separating fact from fiction.

Though this book is a major resource as a synthesis of sources, it is limited by its generic organization. Nagy's trajectory is a simple movement along the Revolutionary timeline. He jumps from one spy and topic to the next with few transitions. The resulting choppy nature makes the story difficult to follow. It is often unclear how one element of the book ties into others. Nagy unabashedly focuses on piecing together fragments of information rather than using them to

build a broader understanding of the role of espionage in the Revolution, a goal he largely accomplished in *Invisible Ink*. He admirably fills the void left by the spies themselves and reconstructs their activities from a range of sources. However, in making this historiographical contribution, Nagy misses out on an opportunity to enrich our understanding of the topic.

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*The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*. By KATE HAULMAN.  
(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. 290 pp. Illustrations,  
notes, index. \$39.95.)

The boycotts protesting imperial taxation in the 1760 and 1770s relied on good recordkeeping. Local committees of observation and inspection stalked city docks, taking down names of wayward merchants who tried to distribute fashionable fabrics and collecting the signatures of those who complied with nonimportation agreements. With their logbooks, these committees enforced a political reading of imported material culture that linked fashion with unacceptable political dependence. Less than a decade later, this simple equation had collapsed, as one such logbook illustrates. On its back cover, a new owner (or perhaps one of those same community enforcers) inked a list of imported hair powder, silk stockings, and other fashionable finery purchased for a season of social visits. In her book *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*, Kate Haulman sets out to explain what happened to cause such a reversal.

Haulman argues that the Revolutionaries' claim that imported goods threatened the political order grew out of a half century of power struggles in which fashion seemed to menace the social order of the colonies. From the beginning of the century, fashion served as a critical way to mark distinctions of rank and sex and, at the same time, to confuse and undermine them. For elite men and women, dressing the part was important in finding a mate and securing a social position, but critics of women's hoops and men's periwigs complained that such styles made women too commanding and men too decadent. As she explores these confrontations over power, Haulman reminds us that fashion was both a series of popular styles of dress and a larger cultural concept associated with luxury, taste, changeability, and sexual desirability. Both senses of the term were deployed as cultural weapons. Drawing upon transatlantic print culture, merchants' business records, and personal letters, she presents a subtle and detailed narrative of the changing ways that Anglo-Americans thought and argued about what to wear and what it meant. Other historians have depicted episodes in fashion wars; Haulman connects them to a fuller picture, rooted in