

BOOK REVIEWS

Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia: Emancipation and the Long Struggle for Racial Justice in the City of Brotherly Love. Edited by RICHARD NEWMAN and JAMES MUELLER. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011. 272 pp. Notes, index. \$39.95.)

Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia is an important monograph that examines how the issues of slavery and freedom affected the city of Philadelphia from the 1680s through the 1850s. The essays featured in this book initially grew out of a debate over the representation of slavery, race, abolition, and historical memory at Philadelphia's Independence Mall. Editors Richard Newman and James Mueller argue that an examination of Philadelphia "illuminates the significance of urban locales in the history of both slavery and freedom" (5).

The nine essays are divided into three sections. Section 1, "Liberating Philadelphia," features a superbly crafted synthetic piece by Ira Berlin that explores the struggle for blacks to gain freedom and equality in society. Berlin's emphasis on the importance of studying the lives of people of African descent embodies much of the recent scholarship on slavery and freedom, which is replicated throughout many of the subsequent essays in this collection. Berlin's essay examines other themes that the book's contributors build upon such as early anti-slavery movements in the city and the divergent meanings of black freedom in society.

The five essays in section 2, "Black and White Abolitionists in Emancipating Philadelphia," explore reformers involved in Philadelphia's various antislavery movements prior to the 1830s. David Waldstreicher provides an ingenious assessment of early Quaker antislavery activists Thomas Tyson, Benjamin Lay, and Ralph Sandiford, while Julie Winch's essay on free black activists reminds us that African Americans believed that full equality in society must follow emancipation. Richard Newman's overview of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS) demonstrates that members of the PAS often fought for black rights while remaining unsure about what Winch's black abolitionists considered a fundamental component of emancipation: full citizenship in American society. Gary Nash's essay offers a clear example of the divergent views of black freedom in society through two prominent figures: James Forten and Tench Coxe.

The essays in section 3, "Shades of Freedom," illustrate how abolitionism became a hotly debated topic among members of the Philadelphia community. Caleb McDaniel heightens awareness of how Philadelphia's early antislavery activists sought to cultivate an abolitionist movement that extended beyond national borders. Dee Andrews expands ideas of abolitionism beyond the

Quakers and demonstrates that all denominations within Philadelphia's religious community sought to reconcile their faith with their views on slavery and freedom. Heather Nathan's innovative assessment of Philadelphia's theater shows that issues of slavery, race, and freedom took center stage and illustrated the positive and negative affect of black freedom in society. Elizabeth Varon recounts William Still's involvement in the Underground Railroad and reminds readers of the important role Still and other Africans Americans played in assisting fugitive slaves gain their freedom.

Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia features a strong interpretive framework that provides a new lens to help scholars examine how the issues of slavery and freedom affected Philadelphia society. Perhaps the only omission in an otherwise well-structured monograph is a careful examination of women's roles in Philadelphia's antislavery movement. *Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia* explores subjects that deserve more attention, and scholars interested in issues of slavery, race, and emancipation in the City of Brotherly Love will want to read these essays.

University of Delaware

KATRINA ANDERSON

Gleanings of Freedom: Free and Slave Labor along the Mason-Dixon Line, 1790–1860. By MAX GRIVNO. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011. 296 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$50.)

Historians have an enduring interest in the lives of ordinary people, but they are frustrated by meager paper trails. As Max Grivno reveals, not only did most ordinary workers pass through history into oblivion, many passed through their own times without mention. Between 1825 and 1841 George Heyser hired and recorded the earnings of 164 farmhands and, in many instances, did not even bother to record his employee's names. His account book lists them as "Six Irish," "Black Woman," and "Little Pennsylvanian" (110). With this kind of documentary record, how are we to understand ordinary lives lived in extraordinary times?

Quantitative historians are convinced that statistical analyses can substitute for qualitative detail in illuminating the lives of ordinary folk. Analysis of census records, city directories, tax rolls, and other documentary records substitute for names and faces, for flesh and bones. For nonquantitative historians, statistical analysis not only fails to rescue ordinary folk from oblivion, it condemns them to the purgatory of statistical tables.

Grivno's is one of a growing breed of books of high-quality, old-fashioned history committed to understanding the lives of common folk using hard-won archival information. Like Walter Johnson's *Soul by Soul* (1999) and Seth Rockman's *Scraping By* (2009), Grivno utilizes court and business records to

understand the conditions of nineteenth-century rural free and bound laborers. Thus, we learn about Harry Luckett's dire, hand-to-mouth existence. Luckett, a farmhand, was employed just an average of fifteen days each month, probably earning between 40 cents and \$1.25 per day. In some off-peak months he went without work altogether; even in peak periods, he rarely worked more than twenty days a month. His ability to support himself throughout the winter depended on harvest earnings. Like Luckett, most rural workers were transient, moving from farm to farm to make hay when they could. All workers' lives were precarious, but most scraped by somehow. Grivno has rescued some folk from oblivion, put some flesh on the statistical bones of history, and shown us just how hard scraping by could be.

As much as there is to like about Grivno's book, only two chapters offer much that is original. His discussions of masters' control over indentured servants and slaves, the emergence of temperance and antigambling societies to inculcate better work habits among workers, the ways that race undermined the development of a working-class consciousness, and the effects of incipient industrialization on employer-employee relationships plow already well-tilled fields. For Grivno, the material inequality between rural capitalists and workers reduced workers' control over their own lives. The economically powerful, for example, wrote laws that allowed the children of free blacks to be taken from intact households and bound into servitude, ostensibly for the benefit of the children. He does, however, acknowledge that the capitalist-landowner-farmer's well-being was—while perhaps not as in thrall to the worker's whims as the worker's well-being was to his—made more difficult by the worker's transience, intemperance, gambling, whoring, and other unproductive behaviors.

Gleanings of Freedom is best read as a history of a tumultuous period in which the transportation revolution reordered the economy, slavery reordered the polity, and the nation hurtled toward its defining crisis. Grivno's book shows that markets are relentless taskmasters that limit the choices of workers and capitalists alike. It also provides refreshing first-person narratives describing how employees and employers responded to each other in an emerging modern economy. In accomplishing this last, not insignificant, feat, Grivno deserves our gratitude.

Clemson University

HOWARD BODENHORN

"We Will Be Satisfied With Nothing Less": The African American Struggle for Equal Rights in the North during Reconstruction. By HUGH DAVIS. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011. 232 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$45.)

We may wonder if a definitive history of Reconstruction is possible. Reconstruction, after all, refers both to a complicated and evolving body of policies as well as to a two-decade-long era. Eric Foner's *Reconstruction* is a magisterial survey of Reconstruction policy, yet important aspects of the era's history are overshadowed by his almost singular focus on the South and the nation's capital. More recently, in *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War*, Heather Cox Richardson has placed the West at the center of Reconstruction. Now, with *"We Will Be Satisfied With Nothing Less,"* Hugh Davis demonstrates the importance of including the North, and especially northern African Americans, in any account of the Reconstruction era.

Davis's book concisely and persuasively charts northern black activism on behalf of campaigns for universal male voting rights, access to public education, and the abolition of all racial and caste discrimination. He unapologetically focuses on black political elites, such as Henry Highland Garnett, Octavius Catto, George B. Vashon, John Mercer Langston, and James B. Forten, and such organizations as the National Equal Rights League. Davis explains that the paucity of sources relating to African Americans in the North stymie any attempts to draw a full portrait of black activists. Nevertheless, he does a laudable job of drawing attention to working-class and women's activism whenever possible.

Among the insights that Davis offers is the continuity in tactics and ideology that connected black northern activism before the Civil War with black activism later in the century. Reliance on suasion was unavoidable, and recurring invocations of sentiment and of the founding principles of the republic were at once pragmatic and principled. Davis recounts how blacks steadfastly implored whites to recognize the justice and necessity of universal male suffrage. Blacks calibrated their appeals to principle; some blacks endorsed restrictions (e.g., literacy and property qualifications) on male suffrage as a pragmatic concession to prevailing white preferences. Others shunted the question of black female suffrage to the future on the grounds that black male suffrage was within grasp and any intransigent insistence of woman suffrage would jeopardize whatever protection black male suffrage might offer the larger community. Davis traces the fissures that the debates over suffrage revealed in the black community but concludes that their lasting influence was constructive rather than debilitating to blacks' goals.

Another major thrust in northern African American activism was access to quality public education. Davis outlines the array of techniques that white northerners used to segregate, discourage, and harass black students. Through appeals to white conscience, legal suits, and lobbying, blacks made headway in expand-

ing their access to public education in some communities. But they had to overcome pervasive racism and the hostility of the Democratic Party in the North to any reforms that eroded white supremacy. If northern blacks could point with pride to their contributions to the writing and passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, they had only a few victories to celebrate in their campaign for access to public schools.

The successes and disappointments of northern black activists during Reconstruction are a reminder of the obstacles to reform in the nineteenth-century United States. For the small black communities in the cities of the North, meaningful political influence was possible only when the white vote was evenly divided. Then blacks could cast decisive votes, helping to secure victory for the Republican Party. But that very possibility inevitably rendered black communities targets for white violence and repression. In cities with a robust Democratic Party, including Philadelphia, the northern city with one of the oldest and largest black communities, blacks needed indefatigable optimism to sustain their activism.

Written in crisp and clear prose, *"We Will Be Satisfied With Nothing Less"* is a valuable addition to the crowded field of Reconstruction scholarship. As Davis makes clear, we are indebted to these lonely black activists in the North during Reconstruction for prodding, cajoling, and swaying the nation to grapple with racial injustices that would otherwise have been endorsed, elided, or ignored.

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill W. FITZHUGH BRUNDAGE