

were deeply engaged in questions similar to those at the center of Diemer's study, and one wonders how their greater inclusion here might complicate his argument. An examination of women's politics would likely show how African American ideas of citizenship were often viewed through lenses of masculinity, perhaps putting them at odds with African American women's interests.

As it stands, Diemer presents an important study and adds to a growing canon of literature on African American citizenship before the Civil War.

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*Whispers of Cruel Wrongs: The Correspondence of Louisa Jacobs and Her Circle, 1879–1911.* Edited by MARY MAILLARD. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2017. 240 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$64.95.)

One of the most precious experiences in learning about nineteenth-century life is to read personal letters. Unlike diaries, which are often lists of events, or autobiographies meant as an edited public record, letters are often spontaneous conversations full of interesting tidbits, gossip, rants, and emotional outbursts. They also tell snoopy historians about a wide range of people and events, many we will never know anything more about than their brief mention in one letter.

This collection, meticulously edited by Mary Maillard, reveals the world of Louisa Matilda Jacobs “and her circle” between 1879 and 1911. “Lulu” was the daughter of the enslaved Harriet Jacobs, the author of the 1861 slave narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, and Samuel Tredwell Sawyer, a newspaper editor and member of Congress. When Lulu was six years old, Tredwell brought her to Brooklyn, New York, to live with his cousin's family. He paid for her education, including teacher training courses in Boston, and supported her until his death in 1865. Then she was on her own.

The seventy-eight letters in this volume consist of fifty-eight from Lulu's pen, thirteen from that of Annie Purvis, and seven others from other friends. The seventy-one from Lulu and Annie Purvis were addressed to Eugenie (“Genie”) Webb, but there are no replies. All are housed in the Annie Wood Webb Papers at the Library Company of Philadelphia. There are many familiar names (i.e., Forten, Purvis, and Grimké) bandied about in the letters, all reflecting the established middle-class black community primarily in Philadelphia and Washington, DC.

Through brief biographies, family trees, and extensive endnotes, Maillard takes readers through the letters. The story they tell is not necessarily the one readers expect. Lulu, Annie, and Genie were all educated and lived within an elite community of African Americans. Yet none married; all cared for siblings and aging parents; and all lived hard-working lives. Lulu, whom readers learn the most

about, worked tirelessly. She was always seeking a livelihood. She and her mother moved constantly, always keeping in mind the need to rent rooms to boarders. Sometimes, they took on housekeeping. Lulu worked in the canning and bakery business, then created her own line of jams and pickles. For a while, she taught home economics at Howard University and was the only female instructor at the institution. She also had positions as the matron of the National Home for the Relief of Destitute Colored Women and Children in Washington, DC, and then matron of Miner Hall at Howard. There was no end to making ends meet.

Sometimes Lulu lashed out at white injustice, especially over her lost inheritance of her great-grandmother's property, but she always kept her optimism through her love of friends and family and her deep religious conviction. Most moving is her statement of September 27, 1896: "So let us be hopeful and never turn aside from the little glimmers of sunshine that meet us here and there on our way" (153). This thought reveals the perseverance and humanity of Louisa Jacobs and her circle of single, hard-pressed, nineteenth-century black women.

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*A Greene Country Towne: Philadelphia's Ecology in the Cultural Imagination.* Edited by ALAN C. BRADDOCK and LAURA TURNER IGOE. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016. 248 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$59.47.)

In the acknowledgements for *A Greene Country Towne*, editors Alan C. Braddock and Laura Turner Igoe thank the usual suspects, including their partners, the volume's contributors, and their respective institutions. However, they also make a point to single out some surprising players in their daily lives: "the intrepid squirrels, sparrows, and even a red-tailed hawk who alighted on a bird feeder hanging behind Alan's apartment," local specimens of "hyacinth, lantana, Mexican hyssop" growing in a nearby garden, "large sinkholes" in front of Igoe's home, and Braddock's cats (xi). In bringing in these "nonhuman denizens" whose very existence is rarely noted by the many people who live with them every day, Igoe and Braddock draw attention to the agency of their local plants, animals, and infrastructure and suggest that their community is not simply one of human actors but also includes "nonhuman beings, things, forces, and matter" (2). In doing so, Braddock and Igoe set the tone for what is to come in the chapters ahead: a cultural history of Philadelphia, but one that includes some unusual subjects.

According to the editors, *A Greene Country Towne* (a title that derives from William Penn's description of an early but abandoned plan for Philadelphia) "explores the ways in which art and literature have imagined, animated, and embodied the complex ecology of Philadelphia since the seventeenth century" (2).