does thorough research bog down the swift-paced narrative or the word-portraits of key men. *The Frontiersmen* and *Wilderness Empire* are recommended as good reading for a long, long winter.

*Pittsburgh*  
Florence C. McLaughlin


The field of urban history is being explored by an increasing number of able scholars who are studying the city from varying approaches. While such studies are useful, they can not easily be compared because themes and methods of research differ. Scholars and readers of urban history will therefore gratefully receive Sam Bass Warner, Jr.’s, recent study of Philadelphia. Much as Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis prompted and guided research and writing on Western history, Warner’s work will enable the establishment of a scaffolding for urban history. Utilizing statistical data and an interdisciplinary approach, Professor Warner reveals why “to an historian, twentieth century urban America presents a picture of endlessly repeated failures.”

*The Private City* attempts to uncover the essence of Philadelphia's history which the author believes has been repeated across the nation. Warner’s thesis is that the tradition of privatism is the most important element of American culture for understanding the development of cities. The essence of privatism is its emphasis upon the individual and his search for wealth. The relationship between the successes of the private market and the successes of American cities demonstrates the impact of privatism on both the urban resident and his environment.

In order to examine the impact of privatism, Sam Bass Warner, Jr., concentrates upon three Philadelphias: the town of 1770-1780 with all the tensions and struggles brought out by the Revolution; the big city of 1830-1860, which Warner feels is the turning point in American urban history; and the industrial metropolis of 1920-1930 where our urban inheritance was formed. By limiting himself to these three significant periods of Philadelphia’s history Warner presents a careful and highly readable account of Philadelphia’s development without burdening the reader with a mass of detail.

In the eighteenth century privatism and the social and economic
environment of colonial towns were mutually beneficial. However, as big cities emerged so did the conflict between private interest and public welfare. The concept that if each man would look to his own prosperity the entire town would prosper lost its validity with the coming of the industrialized metropolis.

Making excellent use of secondary sources, Warner examines several aspects of Philadelphia's history and relates them to the thesis of privatism. The relationship between the Revolution and the economic situation in the city; the connections involving industrialization, immigration and labor organization prior to the depression of 1837; and the impact of suburban growth upon the downtown area after 1920 are among the topics which reflect the essence of the history of Philadelphia. The story of the development of a vital municipal institution, the waterworks, serves as a microcosm for explaining how the city's general culture of privatism restricted good intentions and technical possibilities.

Forced by repeated yellow fever epidemics into building America's first municipal waterworks in 1801, Philadelphia's merchant-led committee system of government promoted public health while struggling against heavy deficits. With only two bath-houses in the entire city in 1810 most Philadelphians depended for water on street hydrants or private wells. In the face of financial difficulties the City Council continued its progressive policies by developing the Fairmount Waterworks. As Philadelphia's pace of growth increased and home bathrooms came into popular use after 1830 the water system began to reach more citizens and make a profit. Yet, the city's culture of privatism prevented this public health program from expanding to its full potential. As the fear of epidemics lessened, public support for the water system decreased. Warner reveals that, "The popular goal of the private city was a goal to make Philadelphia a moderately safe place for ordinary men and women to go about conducting their own business; the goal was never to help raise the level of living of the poor."

While Warner's study of Philadelphia is imaginative and well executed, his thesis of privatism can become a restricting one. If it is used to connect all facets of the urban environment, the theme can be overextended and serve to control rather than explain. The factors that determine a city's history are more complex than Professor Warner might lead one to believe.

Possibly in acknowledgment of the limitations of privatism Warner has established a framework for urban history which goes
beyond privatism. An essential element of *The Private City* is the use of tables to analyze census data and meaningfully relate it to the text. There are twenty-one such tables and an appendix to explain them. Besides revealing Philadelphia, these tables and the computer operations used to formulate them have established a custom of research that will conceivably allow a reader to compare the history of one city to the history of another. Warner reveals this exciting possibility in his article in the *American Historical Review* (October 1968) entitled "If All the World Were Philadelphia." Here he presents an intellectual scaffolding for urban history that does not necessarily involve privatism.

It would be worthwhile to attempt to apply the techniques and possibly the thesis of *The Private City* to the history of Pittsburgh. Such an application would help to show the validity of Warner's theories as well as illumine aspects of Pittsburgh's urban history. The efforts of Sam Bass Warner, Jr., provide not only an improved view of Philadelphia, but a better perspective for the study of all urban America.

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