

The footnotes are nearly flawless. In a biographical sketch of James McClene, on pages 337-38, it is unfortunate that the editors drew some information from Robert L. Brunhouse's *Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790* (Harrisburg, 1942) because Brunhouse had confused James and Joseph McClene. They should have cited the primary source, the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Assembly, instead of a secondary work. On page 321, the editors failed to comment on a diary entry that is so startling that it demands explanation. An unidentified Mr. Reed was found to be in Burlington Gaol with a certificate for \$200,000, and Morris sent the paymaster general to try to take it away from him. How did that come about?

Division of History
Pennsylvania Historical
and Museum Commission
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

LOUIS M. WADDELL

Benjamin West: A Biography. By ROBERT C. ALBERTS. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978. Pp. xvi, 525. Introduction, acknowledgments, appendixes, notes and sources, bibliography, index. \$20.00.)

Benjamin West (1738-1820) was known as "The Father of American Art" — the "American Raphael." He grew up in the Lancaster area of Pennsylvania, lived in Philadelphia, and eventually became internationally known as the first painter from America to study in Italy. From there he made his home in London, leading a phenomenal life of good fortune and early success as the historical painter for King George III. West founded and served as president of the Royal Academy and became England's most popular painter.

Although many feel that West had the most successful career of any American artist, there has been no in-depth account of his life since his death in 1820. This is amazing since West's works were actually overpraised in his lifetime. However, they were undervalued for more than one hundred years after his death.

Robert C. Alberts has written the first comprehensive, scholarly, and soundly documented account of West's life. Centuries ago the philosopher Diogenes counseled Croesus that a man's fortune should not be evaluated until after his death. In line with this wise advice, Alberts departs from custom and commences his biography with the

death of the artist. In this surprise beginning, he describes the demise of West, preceded by that of King George III, who commented when he first found out that there were only four months difference in their ages: "Ah! Then when I die, West, *you* will shake in your shoes" (p. 1). Ironically enough, Benjamin West died six weeks after the king of whom he had recently said, "I have lost the best friend I ever had in my life" (p. 2).

Alberts brings forth fresh insights into the life of West — his expertise at ice skating, his poor Italian. He explains how the artist was criticized for painting subject matter that told a story or taught a moral. West was condemned for painting on an enormous scale, and some critics said he was great "only by the acre." The text is sprinkled with interesting information, such as how West used members of his family and friends as models for figures in his paintings. Alberts relates how West's student, Gilbert Stuart, donned a suit of armor and miserably lay on the studio floor for hours while the artist drew him in his painting *The Battle of the Boyne*.

Alberts discloses that in spite of early success which would have inspired the romantic novelist, not all was pleasant for West in the Royal Academy when he took over as president. The author relates in great detail the constant quarreling, jealousies, and turbulent times among members. Illustrative of this rivalry and struggle, Alberts includes a quotation of Sir Joshua Reynolds, first president of the academy: "It is impossible for two painters in the same department of the art to continue long in friendship with each other" (p. 161). Even humorous troubles confronted the academy, such as when the members had to decide what to do with some paintings of naked women which were submitted for the 1798 exhibit (p. 254).

Only one important phase of West's life is omitted, possibly because there is a certain amount of folklore connected with it, though Alberts did include the folklore of West's elopement. What is not included is the fact that West was a tavern sign painter early in his youth. Perhaps the most famous boards, other than the one he reputedly painted for the "Sign of the Bull" in Philadelphia, are "The Hat" and "The Three Crowns." Alice Morse Earle in her *Stagecoach and Tavern Days*, John Omwake in his book *The Conestoga Six-Horse Bell Teams of Eastern Pennsylvania*, William Uhler Hensel (an early owner of these signs), and Dr. Herbert H. Beck of the Lancaster County Historical Society all indicate that there is a strong possibility that West painted these signs. Carl W. Drepperd disputes, not the question of West painting the boards, but the place

where he painted them. He wrote, "Alice Morse Earle is wrong when she says that Benjamin West painted the tavern signs at Philadelphia. He painted them at Lancaster at about the age of 16."

Alberts presents interesting insights into the lives of artists contemporary with his subject — especially those that were his students: Allston, Copley, the Peales, Stuart, Sully, Trumbull, and the inventor Samuel F. B. Morse. All the important American artists of his day traveled to London to study under West, who "fed them, housed them, lent them money, introduced them to patrons, found them work and commissions, encouraged them, and imbued them with pride in their profession" (p. 68). Alberts devotes at least nine pages to Copley and how his life intermingled with West's. He includes the foremost British artists as well — Constable, Fuseli, Gainsborough, Angelica Kauffmann, Lawrence, Hoppner, and Reynolds.

Not only the artists but the patrons (such as Robert Fulton of steamboat fame) and collectors of art are presented vividly in this work. Alberts also provides information throughout the text on the status of some of the old masterpieces which over the years have disappeared from the public eye. This is an invaluable aid to devotees of art.

Alberts gives picturesque eighteenth and early nineteenth-century background on Philadelphia, London, Paris, and Rome. Of Rome he writes that it was "recognized as the most attractive, agreeable, and stimulating city in Christendom. It was a city of pleasant sounds, of church bells by day and of the fountains in its squares by night" (p. 35).

The biographer's style is clear and precise. At times, as an update, he reminds the reader who a previously mentioned character is. For example, he writes, "When Benjamin West was seventeen, his friend Samuel Flower — the neighbor with the motherless children and the English governess . . ." (p. 17). He begins each of his twenty-seven chapters with an interesting quotation which adds charm to the work. In the epilogue, Alberts describes West: "As a teacher and champion of the young he had no peer . . ." (p. 401). Included in the text are eighty black-and-white photographs.

Alberts corrects numerous errors that have persisted throughout history in regard to West and includes in an appendix a discourse on the artist's earlier biographer, John Galt, who wrote much folklore about West in 1816 and 1820. Included also is an account of West's reputation for having achieved a seminal departure in art. West planted the seed of a new art form by painting heroes in their contemporary

dress instead of presenting them in ancient Greek and Roman costumes, which was the prevailing style at that time.

This book has been a long time in coming and the reader is well rewarded for the delay.

Greensburg

HELENE SMITH

Economic Development in the Philadelphia Region, 1810-1850. By DIANE LINDSTROM. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978. Pp. viii, 255. Preface, appendixes, endnotes, selected bibliography, index. \$16.50.)

Not so long ago, historians of the American economy generally agreed that antebellum increases in per capita income were in some substantial way a function of regional specialization. First canals, and then railroads, allowed the East to concentrate on manufacturing, the South on cotton, the West on foodstuffs. If Philadelphia trade patterns (this is a book about trade patterns) reflect those of other major cities, Diane Lindstrom has issued a formidable challenge to the mythology of the national market. The critical ingredients in the city's economic success were two: intraregional trade (within the East) — primarily in coal, secondarily in textiles; and commerce with the hinterland.

Lindstrom begins by focusing on Philadelphia's 1810-1850 transformation from a commercial to a manufacturing city. (This argument is essential, for Lindstrom equates the city's economic progress with structural transformation.) The evidence in support of such changes is hardly overwhelming, however. Philadelphia's industrial output at least doubled in the three decades after 1810, but was this "impressive growth" (p. 42)? Lindstrom assumes that it was, and this allows her to emphasize eastern demand, because it was "large and more concentrated in the regional economy's goods" (p. 91), at the expense of trans-Appalachian (that is, national) trade. The latter, though growing more rapidly than any other branch of Philadelphia's commerce, is slighted because much of it was in goods made in Europe and New England. In short, if a trade pattern did not contribute to the development of Philadelphia's manufacturing sector, it must not have been central to the city's development. Lindstrom has not so much confronted the national-market theory head-on as side-stepped it by introducing a "dynamic sector" model of economic development.

The relationship between the core city, Philadelphia, and its