The little work that has been done on families in Pittsburgh underscores these different attitudes. In their book, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960*, John Bodner, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber provide many examples of the role of “useful” children among working class Poles and Italians who added their wages to the family coffers and gained their sense of value from their economic role. On the other hand, no better description of the useless but priceless child could be found than that in the memoirs of the upper-middle class *Spencers of Amerson Avenue*.

Zelizer, though a sociologist who is chiefly interested in discovering “the general nature of the relationship between economic and non-economic factors in social life, between price and value,” and in challenging “the absolutization of the market” in social and economic thought, has nonetheless produced a work of great value to historians of childhood and the family. She also provides insightful comments about the impact of these changes in attitudes about children on parents and on children themselves. Her final chapter, like Demos’, provides a clear example of the usefulness of historical understanding when confronting current problems. “From Useful to Useless and Back to Useful? Emerging Patterns in the Valuation of Children” discusses the current concern with the role of children and teenagers in the family. Are they being rushed too quickly into adulthood or are they being denied the opportunity to be useful and productive, at least within the home? Those asking such questions would do well to read *Pricing the Priceless Child* before they offer their answers.

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By Simon Baatz.


An agricultural society in Philadelphia? According to Simon Baatz’s "Venerate the Plough": A History of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture, 1785-1985, the PSPA has not only endured but has remained remarkably resilient amidst social and economic change. Written to commemorate the PSPA’s bicentennial, Baatz presents a
workmanlike chronicle of the people and events that dominated the organization's history.

Like other recent works of this genre, Baatz carefully connects the history of his institution to familiar themes in American history. Indeed, Baatz presents his narrative in agreement with the general contours of American political history. For instance, he characterizes the PSPA's eighteenth century founders as embodiments of enlightenment thought, eager to spread the virtues of scientific rationalism to the republic's yeomanry. During the Jacksonian period, however, these two groups were doomed to clash: the sturdy yeomanry, now versed in Jacksonian ideology, verbally assaulted the elitism of the patrician leadership. Subsequent chapters link the PSPA leadership first to Gilded Age robber barons, then to Progressive professional do-gooders, and finally to New Deal managerial types. The result is a useful chronicle of events, though much too predictable in presentation. But what is most troublesome about Baatz's account on this score is that he largely fails to explain why the PSPA mirrored society so perfectly. Stated simply, Baatz fails to explain causation.

Baatz presents his work as an exercise in social history. Unfortunately most of his forays into this subdiscipline are brief and inconclusive. For instance, Baatz argues that class conflict between leaders and the led was a major theme in the PSPA's history, but the source of this conflict is never adequately addressed. According to Baatz, it was all a matter of status: farmers simply resented the paternalistic tendencies of their wealthy neighbors. But this is probably on a partial answer. A more thorough presentation might have considered the distinct agrarian mentalities that informed the behavior of the two groups. Unfortunately, Baatz never adequately explains the texture of agricultural life in which the PSPA operated. As a result, he missed an opportunity to contribute to an important topic in contemporary historiography — agrarian mentalities.

Despite these criticisms, 'Venerate the Plough' has considerable merit. Historians of Pennsylvania agriculture will find Baatz's account a welcome introduction to a significant agricultural society. And intimates of the PSPA will no doubt enjoy Baatz's detailed record of events. Nevertheless, much more might have been said.

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