Legacies of Eighteenth Century Revolutions
by William Weisberger

Sister Republics: The Origins of French and American Republicanism
By Patrice Higonnet

A Mighty Empire: The Origins of the American Revolution
By Marc Egnal

A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia
By Thomas Doerflinger

The three books under consideration reveal much about the eighteenth century. Taken together they represent recent scholarship about colonial and revolutionary America, embodying new and exciting themes about capitalism, expansionism, republicanism, and revolution. Consequently, they shed light on major developments in early Western Pennsylvania history.

Higonnet’s work is a comparative analysis of the American and French revolutions. The author approaches the revolutionary periods in the two nations in light of pertinent political, social, economic and cultural issues. Moreover, he develops theses concerning the mentalities of revolutionary republicanism in the two countries. He argues that republican ideologies in America led to the creation of a viable federal state with a productive capitalistic economy and that those in France ultimately failed, culminating in the violence of the Jacobins and the despotic regime of Napoleon. In eight topically arranged chapters, the book reveals how the impact of such ideologies and institutions differed greatly in both nations.

Sister Republics contains three chapters about colonial and revolutionary America. Higonnet, who primarily devotes attention to life and institutions in Massachusetts and in Virginia, argues that colonial Americans repudiated the institutions and traditions of European feudalism, developed a strong sense of community, and as advocates of liberalism and capitalism, endorsed the doctrine of individualism. He cites the Puritans as being exemplars of individualism, for they significantly contributed to the development of merchant colonial America. Unfortunately, Higonnet does not attempt to demonstrate how these patterns were applicable to Pennsylvania.

The author’s account of the origins and major events of the American Revolution is quite extensive. He stresses republican ideologies as being a significant cause of that revolution: leaders of this revolution are perceived as paragons of “virtue,” using a new “language of revolution” to vindicate their cause against the British and to advocate the creation of a republican state and the recognition of natural liberties. Higonnet, however, fails to recognize the importance of conservative merchant elites to the cause during the last years of the revolution. He also does not consider the major political and economic issues that arose during the Confederation era.

In his chapters on the French Revolution, Higonnet maintains that economic and social deterioration and political demise characterized pre-revolutionary France: the decline of guilds, the penetration of capitalistic ideas among aristocratic and middle class elites, the immense economic and tax problems of the peasantry, the failure of the reform programs of royal advisors, and the spread of Enlightenment doctrines led to the collapse of the ancien régime. The author explains how those elites espousing moderate republican ideologies failed to implement their policies and programs during the National Assembly era, and how Jacobin leaders, through their collectivistic program, imposed violence and terror on France. In the end, Higonnet concludes that collectivism, bureaucratic centralism, and violence were destructive qualities of the French Revolution and that liberalism, federalism and capitalism were constructive features of the American Revolution.

Although extensively researched, well-documented, and lucidly written, the book suffers from some organizational problems and repetition. Nevertheless, the work sheds light on a number of important historical questions dealing with the rhetoric and symbolism of revolutionary America, and with republican mentalities of the Atlantic rev-
olutions of the eighteenth century.

Like that of Higonnet, Egnal's approach to eighteenth-century America is a comparative one. In 16 topically arranged chapters, set within a chronological framework, the author develops a case for the historical importance of expansionism espoused by various elite groups in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and South Carolina between 1690 and 1787. Egnal maintains that expansionism is the central movement in colonial and revolutionary America and that in their assessment of the causes of the American Revolution, scholars from the imperial, progressive, and neo-Whig Schools have inadequately recognized the importance of this movement. His chief argument is that the mentality of the expansionists revolved around a messianic belief in the creation of a mighty empire in America. He also argues that expansionists, for the most part, were property-holding individuals, espousing beliefs in enhanced commercial opportunities and in land acquisition. Egnal, moreover, identifies the roles of specific ethnic and religious groups which fostered expansionist programs in the colonies examined.

Major developments and patterns regarding expansionism in early colonial America are examined in the book's first part, entitled, "The Factions Emerge, 1690-1762." This section includes several chapters on the emergence of expansionism in Massachusetts and a detailed chapter about its origin and evolution in Pennsylvania. Expansionists in this later commonwealth included Thomas Willing, William Allen, and Benjamin Franklin. In general, they tended to be either Anglicans or Presbyterians, repudiating the Quaker doctrine of non-resistance, and during the late 1740s, backed the efforts of Franklin in the Pennsylvania Assembly when he encouraged western movement into central and western Pennsylvania. The book contains fine sections about the defeat of George Washington at Fort Necessity in 1754 and about the efforts of Franklin and other Pennsylvania expansionists in the assem-

bly to enact legislation for the strengthening of defenses in frontier regions.

This first part also discusses the emergence of expansionism in such southern colonies as Virginia and South Carolina. Egnal develops an especially strong case for the role of the proponents of expansionism in Virginia. Since George Washington, Robert Carter, George Mason, and Arthur and Richard Henry Lee lived in the northern part of this colony, Egnal calls Virginia expansionists the "Northern Neckers." The author asserts that these expansionists favored movement into lands in western Virginia and Pennsylvania, that they dominated the affairs of the Ohio Company, and that they played an active role in defeating the French during the French and Indian War.

The second part of the book focuses on revolutionary politics between 1763 and 1770 and consists of six detailed chapters regarding the effects of British taxation policies upon the colonies under consideration. What Egnal clearly demonstrates is that expansionists from the upper class gained control of colonial assemblies, denounced the imposition of taxes, and relied upon the issue of taxes to secure support from artisans and craftsmen and from "less wealthy citizens" in America. The author also vividly shows that a severe depression swept the colonies at that time, forcing many farms into bankruptcy and bringing about a decline in the sale of flour, wheat, and tobacco.

A lengthy chapter concerning Massachusetts explains how the coalition between the expansionist elite, under John and Thomas Ham-

ock and John and James Otis, and the lower class group led by Sam Adams, was formed. This coalition then took a firm stand against the Townshend and Stamp Acts and provided leadership to both the Sons of Liberty and the Stamp Act Congress. In his chapter on Pennsylvania during the turbulent 1760s, Egnal maintains that such men as Benjamin Franklin, John Dickinson, Robert Morris and Thomas Willing headed the expansionist elite in Pennsylvania, remonstrated against the Stamp Act, and by the middle years of the 1760s secured support from artisans; he also illustrates how Franklin was involved with expansionism and used the American Philosophical Society to advance the causes of expansionism and independence. Similar patterns of resistance appeared in southern colonies. Egnal claims that Washington and the Lees opposed the Stamp Act and allied themselves with other merchants and planters in Virginia who favored western expansion and independence.

In the book's third section dealing with the quiet years between 1771 and 1773, Egnal shows that leaders of expansionist elites in South Carolina and other colonies tended to distance themselves from leaders of lower class groups until the final rupture with England in the middle 1770s.

A fourth part focuses on the activities of the expansionists during the early phases of the American Revolution. Egnal argues that after the Boston Tea Party, expansionist elites led by the Hancocks in Boston, by Franklin and Dickinson in Philadelphia, and by John Rutledge and the Charles Pinckney family in Charleston, united their efforts with artisans and craftsmen against the British. By 1775, expansionist leaders in these and other cities succeed in politically discrediting the non-expansionists and in taking military action against the British. Egnal especially makes a convincing case for Franklin, claiming that he played a central role in securing arms and supplies for the seditious American armies.
In the final chapter of the book, Egnal concludes that expansionism was the central motive for the movement towards American independence. The author also seems to support the thesis of Charles and Mary Beard: namely that wealthy elites calling for westward expansion and for the creation of republican institutions were victorious in 1787 at the constitutional convention in Philadelphia. Moreover, Egnal offers a macro-view of the American empire, claiming that expansionism was a major theme in American diplomacy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The book has both strong and weak points; it contains valuable appendices, is well-footnoted, but lacks a bibliography. Although this well-written study presents a persuasive case for the importance of expansionism in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and South Carolina, it fails to explain the attitudes and ideologies of leaders of expansionist elites and does not deal with the relationships among them. Nevertheless, this comparative study is a valuable addition to the historiography of colonial and revolutionary America and contains much for both general readers and scholars.

The Doerflinger study devotes special attention to the behavior of various groups of merchants in Philadelphia during the eighteenth century. The central purpose of the study is to explore the business activities and relations of retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, bankers, and land speculators in that city during the colonial, revolutionary, and federal periods. Based on extensive primary materials from Philadelphia libraries and archives, this fine work depicts the status and functions of businessmen in relationship to the changing social structure and economic patterns of the community. The book revolves around the thesis that incentive and initiative led to vigorous enterprise and to many significant accomplishments in Philadelphia. It illustrates social and economic mobility and expansionism, and corroborates Max Weber's thesis regarding the middle-class work ethic. The study is well-organized, containing three parts broken into eight chronologically and topically arranged sections.

The first part of the book concerns the character of the Philadelphia merchant community; two chapters in this section focus on the recruitment and social structure of the city's merchant community and on the specialties, functions, and fortunes of Philadelphia businessmen. There are vivid insights about the social structure of the city's merchant community during the colonial era. Doerflinger maintains that Philadelphia merchants were of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds and operated in a loose, fluid, and mobile environment. He illustrates that entreprenurs individually from a variety of persuasions could derive immense fortunes in the city's amorphous yet mobile business society. The author clearly depicts Philadelphia merchant princes, describing the business firms, mansions, and cultural pursuits of such aristocrats as William Bingham, Thomas Clifford, and Robert Morris. Vivid depictions, too, appear of Philadelphia wholesalers. The author claims that city wholesalers encountered minimal problems in securing credit, tended to be risk-takers, and were quite mobile. Most wholesalers in colonial Philadelphia operated retail stores and were purveyors of food and dry goods. From a religious standpoint, Quaker, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Jewish merchants were involved with the wholesale trade and thus reflected how the concept of assimilation characterized the business activities of colonial Philadelphia. Doerflinger believes that credit, capital, contacts, and patronage were elements ultimately associated with the success of a Philadelphia wholesaler.

Various aspects of the trading activities of the city's merchants are examined. Doerflinger shows that they imported coffee, tea, and sugar from islands in the Caribbean, brought hardware and textiles in British markets, and exported foods, tobacco, and lumber to English and European ports. The author correctly suggests that Philadelphia emerged as an important trading center in colonial America, for its merchants helped to link markets in the Delaware Valley and in the Pennsylvania hinterland with those in the Caribbean and in Europe. He also argues that the increase in business activities in colonial Philadelphia led to the emergence of specialty wholesalers and to provision merchants who exported massive amounts of goods to Europe and to the West Indies. Philadelphia merchants sold on their own account and used their own ships to maximize profits; conversely, they would bring goods into the Delaware Valley, selling them in the Philadelphia vicinity, in Lancaster, at Fort Pitt, and in other distant settlements along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

Doerflinger explains that some merchants in colonial Philadelphia encountered adversity. He attributes their problems to the lack of business knowledge and experience, the shortage of capital and labor, the decline of export markets, and the glut of imported goods. When economic conditions began to decline, some merchants became involved with new business ventures. Doerflinger describes how the William Allen family and Henry and James Drinker started ironworks. He also addresses the Gratz brothers, Barnard and Michael; during the French and Indian War, they became land speculators and assumed great risk in selling merchandis to both Indians and settlers at Fort Pitt and at distant posts located along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

The book's second part concern-
ing Philadelphia merchants during the American Revolution is quite interesting. Unlike Egnal, Doerflinger maintains that merchant princes and wealthy wholesalers were "reluctant revolutionaries," for the businesses of these merchant elites were still quite profitable during the early 1770s. The author stresses the point that as a result of fears about losing their constitutional liberties, many merchants from the upper class in Philadelphia decided by 1776 to extend their support to the cause of the patriots. Then, the shocks of war produced insidious effects upon many of the city's merchants: the British occupation of Philadelphia, the problems of financing the war, the pressures of inflation, and the emergence of enormous debts led either to the demise or to the bankruptcy of many of the city's merchants. The author shows how by 1780, Robert Morris, Thomas Willing and other conservative merchant aristocrats acted to bring an end to the War of Independence and to rebuild the city's economic base. He maintains that Morris and other members of this conservative group were nationalists, establishing the Bank of North America in 1781 to pay off revolutionary debts through the selling of securities. When this bank encountered severe problems in 1786, Morris and his friends became involved with the Federalist coup and ultimately supported the promulgation of the American constitution.

The third part of the book focuses on the efforts of Philadelphia merchants to move into other business fields. Doerflinger maintains that during the 1780s, a few Philadelphia merchants did well in the manufacturing of textiles and that others accrued profits from the China trade. He also shows that land speculation during this decade increased and that Morris, William Bingham, and other city merchants were not particularly successful in selling their lands in western Pennsylvania and New York for great profits.

In the book's final chapter, Doerflinger describes the activities of Philadelphia merchants in light of business and economic patterns in America between 1780 and 1840. This chapter contains illuminating sections on the continued involvement of Philadelphia merchants in the tobacco trade, on the gradual emergence of New York City as a commercial and financial center, and on the concomitant demise of Philadelphia in finance and business.

This work reveals much about American business and urban history during the eighteenth century. The book is lucidly written and illustrates the major themes of incentive, innovation, and economic and social mobility. It offers fine insights into eighteenth century business life and gives detailed explanations about the activities and mentalities of prominent Philadelphia businessmen. The book also treats the role of Philadelphia as an international trading center and suggests its importance to the westward movement. Doerflinger is to be commended for his incisive interpretations that Philadelphia merchants were reluctant revolutionaries and that Robert Morris and his business associates led the conservative cause during the last phase of the American Revolution. The book includes a useful bibliography and detailed appendices about various aspects of merchant life in eighteenth century Philadelphia. In sum, this book is both macro- and micro-history at its best and will be a paragon for future business and urban studies.

Major concepts and themes from these three books help to explain the evolution of Pittsburgh during the eighteenth century. Expansionism stimulated the waging of colonial wars, the economic thirst of Philadelphia and Lancaster land speculators, and the activities of the leaders of the Ohio and Vandalia companies. During the American Revolution, Fort Pitt became an important post for the conduct of frontier military activities. After the revolution, former American officers and soldiers secured lands in Western Pennsylvania, brought with them the attitudes and ideas of the Enlightenment, and ultimately gave direction to the shaping of the pioneer settlement of Pittsburgh. The ideologies of this transatlantic movement led to the creation of republican government in Western Pennsylvania, to the flowering of cultural institutions in this region, and to the development of capitalistic mentalities and business life in late eighteenth century Pittsburgh.

**Founding Families of Pittsburgh: The Evolution of a Regional Elite, 1760-1910**

By Joseph Rishel

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990. Pp. 256. $34.95

T HIS is a study of the founding families of Pittsburgh that reports a wealth of quantitative information in a highly readable way. The author has selected a 20 family sample from Frank Powelson's "Founding Families of Allegheny County," a 1963 compilation of biographies of 129 prominent pre-Civil War families that had filed wills in the county before 1867. Rishel's 20 families were drawn randomly from 39 of Powelson's families that remained after the author excluded those that arrived in the region after 1820, those that had common surnames, and those that had inadequate genealogical information in the earlier study. Tracking these 20 families through four generations yielded a study group of 1,006 individuals who were divided into "core" (the 47 percent who were family founders and descendants retaining the family name) and "non-core" groups (the 53 percent who were males marrying into the core and their descendants).

The author explains the persistence and progress of this upper class elite by describing each family's "main chance" or launch from a strategic position, and its "accumulation of advantages." The family's ability to preserve these social resources for succeeding generations determined its persistence as an elite. A listing in Powelson's study and