

What emerges from these pages is a carefully detailed profile of the Hill, an immigrant colony with an unusually low rate of geographic mobility, few periods of instability (which the author attributes to the colony's long settlement and migration process), and a quality of permanence in the years 1900-1930 based on evidence found in naturalization petition statistics and city directories, although here the author's sample covers only the principal streets and the six years that spanned 1921-1928.

For all those interested in urban and immigration history, this study of the Hill offers rich rewards. Baseball fans will learn among other things that its playing fields produced Joe Garagiola and Yogi Berra. Whether all the author's positions on more substantive issues ultimately prove to be acceptable — and as stated I am dubious about some of them — he has nevertheless produced a scholarly, stimulating history that makes an important contribution to immigration literature.

Marian C. McKenna
Department of History
University of Calgary

Byers, Edward. *The Nation of Nantucket: Society and Politics in an Early American Commercial Center, 1660-1820*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987. Pp xv, 367. Illustrations, tables, maps, index. \$35.00 (U.S.).

Add one more to the growing list of well executed local histories of early Massachusetts communities. Edward Byers has done for the island town of Nantucket what others have done previously for Andover, Boston, Concord, Dedham, Newburyport, Springfield, Sudbury, to name only some of the localities receiving full treatment in the past generation. Byers' book covers the years from Nantucket's first European settlement through the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Its contents reflect both the uniqueness of the Nantucket experience and the now standardized themes of much New England local history written by professionals.

Nantucket was, indeed, a special world. Its native population remained largely unaffected by the various epidemics which decimated coastal tribes in the seventeenth century, adapted readily to Christianity, outnumbered whites until about 1710, and contributed much to the island's economy until shortly before the revolution. Nantucket's first European settlers—speculative proprietors from northern Massachusetts and what is now New Hampshire—arrived expecting to raise crops and livestock, yet their descendents became some of the most imaginative, aggressive, and successful commercial entrepreneurs in early America. The island was part of New York until 1692, of Massachusetts

after that, and pretty much a world unto itself no matter what province it found itself part of (today it is both a town and a county, and periodically threatens to secede from the Bay State). Congregationalism and Quakerism shared top billing among the island's various denominations, but no one seems to have taken religion as seriously as colonial New Englanders in general. During both the American Revolution and the War of 1812, Nantucket did its best to remain neutral. Byers has entitled his book "The Nation of Nantucket" to emphasize the island's uniqueness.

The development which most influenced Nantucket's early history was whaling. There exists, of course, an immense literature on the subject. Byers has been careful not to repeat what others have emphasized. He is less interested in the technical details and romance of whaling than in its impact on community. Some of the richest passages in the volume appear in a lengthy unit called "The Rise of A Whaling Port 1690-1740." Population became increasingly concentrated near the best harbour on the north shore. Indians, once relatively independent, found themselves reduced to an impoverished underclass. Ship captains and owners dominated political and cultural life. Island wives—their husbands at sea for longer and longer intervals—managed family life even more thoroughly than did their mainland farming counterparts. Whaling in subsequent decades made Nantucket one of New England's most prosperous and populated towns. The island in 1726 had about 900 inhabitants. In 1775 it had over 4,500. Dependence on whaling, in turn, made the community especially vulnerable during the wars and explains, along with Quaker antipathy to the military, why many islanders tried to find a middle ground between the combatants.

For all its differences from other New England towns, however, the Nantucket Byers presents will seem familiar to those who keep up with literature in early New England community development. The whole genre has become a bit predictable. Writers address the community vs. individual theme: Byers at several points describes the island culture as more "liberal" and individualistic than the rest of New England. There has to have been a period of harmonious stability which as modernists we can look fondly back on. Part three of *The Nation of Nantucket* is called "Life in an American Utopia, 1740-75" and includes chapters on "The Culture of an American Utopia" and "The Politics of Cultural Uniformity and Social Stability"; part four has "The Shattering of Unity, 1775-1820" as its title. A third theme has to do with elitism. Everyone acknowledges the presence of dominant elites defined by intermarriage, wealth, and generational continuity. Byers describes with precision the emergence of this group in Nantucket, but seems torn between admiration and rejection of their world. The latter is most evident in casual aside (p.8, n.8) that despite its liberalism the Nantucket of his book "must still be judged as undemocratic." Finally, the proof of having mastered statistics. Byers concludes his work with nearly thirty pages of elaborate figures