

**Buttenwieser, Ann L. *Manhattan Water-Bound: Planning and Developing Manhattan's Waterfront from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*. New York: New York University Press, 1987. Pp. xxii, 243. Black and white photographs, maps, index. \$35.00 (U.S.)**

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goods. Comprehending the unique position of the automobile as a product is crucial to understanding the close relationship between industry and community which this study highlights.

The early domination by Detroit's elite did not, however, last. The impact of conspicuous production was such that although the old elites originated the automobile industry, their social prejudices eventually cost them control over it. As Davis argues, the inability to move beyond their status anxieties concerning the automobile was a key factor in undermining their control of the industry. Most importantly, the old elite failed to recognize the growing consumer strength of the middle and lower classes.

In a strong chapter on Henry Ford, Davis depicts Ford as the exception among Detroit's automobile manufacturers, being the first to break the monopoly of the old elite. The success of Ford by the 1930s, as well as that of GM and Chrysler, was marked by an ability to escape the binds of the price-class hierarchy, marketing a full range of products in defiance of the industry's class barriers.

Given the unique symbiotic relationship of city and industry, the inability to escape the status connotations of the automobile would ultimately prove detrimental to Detroit as a whole. The implications of conspicuous production for the wider community had taken a serious turn by 1933. Davis shows how the decision not to build lower-priced models led not only to a loss of control of the industry by the elite, but also to a loss of control of the local financial institutions, thus rendering them helpless to prevent the subsequent bank collapse in 1933. This decision to pursue conspicuous production made the Detroit of 1933 a city characterized by "an enfeebled upper class, crippled banks, and an economy largely dominated by absentee interests."

Technology possesses a personal human dimension which cannot be ignored. In this admirable study Davis has demonstrated how an innovation's social meaning remains as important as its technological meaning. The study is equally significant for the manner in which sub-disciplines are incorporated. Crossing smoothly from one to another, Davis also shows how arbitrary, and at times artificial, the distinction between urban, business, and technological history can be.

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**Buttenwieser, Ann L. *Manhattan Water-Bound: Planning and Developing Manhattan's Waterfront from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*. New York: New York University Press, 1987. Pp. xxii, 243. Black and white photographs, maps, index. \$35.00 (U.S.).**

There are probably only a handful of ports in the world where as much cargo — both human and other — has been handled as at the Port of New York. The movement of goods and people from ship to shore and back again became the basis for a massive urban economy in which the shoreline and the artifacts constructed on it became central features in the growth and prosperity of Manhattan and eventually of the greater New York City region.

A history of the way in which the shoreline of Manhattan has changed in shape and size to accommodate the burgeoning New World trade economy is therefore warranted. It adds to a surprisingly small but growing library of recent, specialist works on New York's past that includes Robert Caro's *Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* and James R. Hudson's *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan*.

Adding to the historical relevance of the work is the fact that, like many waterfront cities, New York is in the process of reclaiming — or perhaps more accurately, discovering — the waterfront for public access and recreational use. Like other waterfront cities, Manhattan can surely benefit from an accurate review of the development of its shoreline in order to provide a historical context to the impending resuscitation of the area. Buttenwieser's work follows the obligatory chronology of the port, beginning with mythical bargaining with the natives on Manhattan's shore. What follows is a clear and concise account of the evolution of the port and the city that attached itself to it. We follow with fascination the continual process of port expansion, pier construction, infilling waterlots to create more dock space, and the relentless urbanization northward on the island.

In the course of the chronological journey, we encounter a number of interesting issues played out for us. The first is the struggle of private versus public control and regulation of the waterfront. Allied with this is the complex process, unique to federal states, of determining which government controls the shore and who would do its planning. Inevitably compromises are made that promise to choke the creative planning and development of the waterfront with layers of agencies, commissions, and boards.

Despite the red tape, numerous plans for the harbour and the waterfront emerged from the offices of public authorities as well as private agencies. Grand schemes for resolving problems of sanitation, land-based transportation, and many other prominent difficulties associated with rapid urban growth were put forward. But, however grand the schemes proved to be, they were rarely able to keep abreast of the relentless growth and changing technology of shipping.

No sooner had piers been extended to accommodate the ever-growing length of ships than they were made obsolete by the

latest addition to the fleets. Ironically, the piers into the Hudson River had become so long and the strait so narrow by the continuous infilling of the waterlots to create more docklands that larger ships could not be manoeuvred into the births on the Upper West Side.

A large section of this book is devoted to the plans for the west side of the Island of Manhattan known in the book as the West Wall. Beginning with the struggle for Riverside Park and leading ultimately to the contemporary development proposals of the likes of Donald Trump and Associates, this section of the book provides a glimpse of the social and political ferment that accompanied physical planning and development.

Plans for the West Wall began in an era of growing prosperity and during a period of fervent urban reform. The clash between mercantile interests and reformers provides a rewarding case study of the groups and the individual personalities who contributed to the moulding of the waterfront in this part of the city.

It is also interesting here to note how history can be influenced by the historian. Buitendijk has a nice passage on the importance of women in the cause of urban reform, recounting the efforts of progressive women's groups in imagining and securing a more humane built environment for the many who were resigned to inhabit the squalor of the waterfront slums.

For such a small book on such a large topic, *Manhattan Water-Bound* does an admirable job. Complete with abundant figures, photographs, and tables to guide the reader through what could be rather tedious factual matters, the text is very readable.

The only sharp criticism that can be made of the presentation has to do with the maps. Though abundant and much appreciated, the maps are virtually unreadable. The print is

too small and the contextual information too laconic. In fact, when one sits to read this book one would be well advised to have at hand a good, large tourist-style map of Manhattan Island, especially if one does not have a detailed grasp of Manhattan's fairly logical street system. There are many textual references that would be rather befuddling to the non-New Yorker.

In literary terms, the work, though pleasantly written, lacks something of the romanticism and earthiness that one would hope for in an account of what is surely one of the more colourful and picturesque parts of a colourful and picturesque city. Instead, the people in this book are primarily drawn from the New York elite, and although some of the official intrigue reported provides interesting reading, one cannot help but get the impression that this is a much sanitized or at least innocent version of the planning and development of the Manhattan waterfront.

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**Dalzell, Robert F., Jr. *Enterprising Elite: The Boston Associates and the World They Made*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987. Pp. xviii, 298. Illustrations.**

*Enterprising Elite*, by R. F. Dalzell, offers an important and provocative interpretation of the social origins of industrial capitalism and the ability of capitalism to reconstruct and consolidate a passing social order. The author argues that a desire to preserve their social positions and that of their children motivated the Boston Associates, already successful as merchants, to assemble between 1810 to 1860 a business complex of textile manufacturing, transportation companies, and financial institutions. More than this, the sum of individual efforts to assert social leadership and to protect their heirs throughout this period, created layers of

classes and class consciousness. Entrepreneurial innovation and class formation, thus, expressed a cultural and social conservatism.

In examining the industrial espionage of Francis Cabot Lowell, the promotion of America's first modern factory, the introduction of the Waltham-Lowell system of labour, and the application of the corporate model to various forms of capital mobilization, Dalzell has wrought a careful synthesis of a well-developed fund of secondary literature. Yet, in so doing, he disputes the conventional interpretation found in the work of Caroline Ware, Robert Sobel, and Francis W. Gregory, among others, that the declining profitability of mercantile enterprise promoted the migration of merchant capital into manufacturing investments in early 19th-century New England. Manufacturing, he contends, did not offer more profitable returns than commerce, and indeed shipping figures reveal no evidence of a flight of Boston investment from mercantile enterprise. If this was the case, what then explains such calculated diversification?

Dalzell presents another dimension to the familiar theme of New England inter-generational mobility; the enterprising elite might well be identified — after Philip Greven in his work on colonial Andover, Massachusetts — as the fifth and sixth generations. Perpetuation of social position required new forms of business. Whereas commerce had provided both the financial wherewithal and leisure for Boston's pre-Revolutionary elite to exercise political and cultural leadership, early 19th century merchants confronted a no less profitable, but far more risky and stressful, field of endeavour. Moreover, republican politics demanded more time, just when the press of business made freeing one's energies for public life more difficult. To play a public role as their fathers had done, the Boston Associates needed to find some new enterprise, less time-consuming, less psychologically absorbing, and more