
Bruce Krushelnicki
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 large 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.

Stephen J. Davies
Department of History
Nipissing University College


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 water lots 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
late 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.
Buttenwieser 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.

Bruce Krushelnicki
Institute of Urban and Environmental Studies
Brock University

Dalzell, Robert F., Jr. Enterprising Elite:
The Boston Associates and the World
They Made. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard
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