

twice the space of the present volume. Nevertheless, this book is a good effort at bridging the scholarly gap that so frequently separates the continents.

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*Stagecoach East: Stagecoach Days in the East from the Colonial Period to the Civil War.* By Oliver W. Holmes and Peter T. Rohrbach. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983. Pp. vii, 220. Illustrations, table, notes, select bibliography of primary sources, index. \$17.50.)

For most Americans the word *stagecoach* evokes images of Wells Fargo and John Wayne riding shotgun in the Far West. *Stagecoach East* reminds readers that there was an earlier and equally important period, in which the American stagecoach lines played a vital role in linking the East together economically, socially, and culturally. Relying mainly on newspapers, travel journals, diaries, and government records, the authors trace the development of "staging" from the early eighteenth century through its golden decades, 1820-1840, to its decline in the East in the two decades before the Civil War. The work is a scholarly attempt to fill a major gap in the history of American transportation.

*Stagecoach East* endeavors to cover every important aspect of staging in the East from the stagecoach builders and drivers to the types of taverns along the routes. Among the most interesting chapters are those dealing with the ties between the federal postal system, newspapers, and the stagecoach lines. Until the advent of the railroads, the stagecoach was the principal carrier of United States mail and newspapers. The postmaster general, through his power to grant federal contracts, played a major role in scheduling routes and thus exercised a degree of regulatory power. Moreover, by requiring the lines to carry the newspapers at the lowest rates, the government could promote the Jeffersonian ideal of a literate informed public. On the other hand, travelers and commercial interests helped to subsidize the newspapers by paying higher rates. Indeed, the fourth estate enjoyed certain advantages.

Despite its originality and thorough research, *Stagecoach East* is not without some defects. Since staging required a fairly well-developed network of roads, the authors rightly concentrate on the Northeast and Southeast. However, seven pages cannot do justice to the importance of staging in the Old Northwest. Also, a work that describes in detail the various trunk and branch lines throughout the East should assist the reader by including more

than one map, especially when that one is a barely discernable copy of an 1804 print. Anyone interested in the history of American canals will be surprised to find no mention of this mode of transportation, even though canal packets were competitors of the stagecoach lines before the railroads came into existence. The authors offer no solid statistical evidence that the stages carried more passengers and freight than the nation's waterways or even its roads. Finally, there are a few obvious errors. For example, one learns that hostilities in the American Revolution did not begin until 1776!

Nevertheless, *Stagecoach East* merits the serious attention of anyone interested in studying a neglected and significant aspect in the history of American transportation.

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*Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850.* By Sean Wilentz. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984. Pp. xii, 446. Illustrations, notes, appendix, tables, figures, maps, bibliographical essay, index. \$34.95.)

This is a daring book. It addresses major issues in social theory. It ventures into many different subfields of American history: politics, urban life, labor, religion, economics, intellectual life, and reform movements. It is a tour de force in the varieties of evidence that it considers and methods it uses to analyze and interpret them. It makes skillful use of twenty-two illustrations, and its accounts of parades and festivities are both dramatic and insightful. *Chants Democratic* is also beautifully composed, with its title drawn from Walt Whitman, with passages from Whitman's poetry introducing each section, and with a conclusion explaining the poet's description of New York as "the most radical city in America." The book is a welcome exception to the complaint that too many historical works, especially revised dissertations, are cautious and overspecialized.

Sean Wilentz has constructed an impressive account of the changing conditions of work and changing purposes of workingmen's—and sometimes workingwomen's—organizations in New York. The scope is so wide and the argument so carefully fashioned that a brief review can recognize only a few important features of the work. Among the most significant is the delineation of a process of "metropolitan industrialization" undermining the "republican" virtues that artisans, in the enthusiasm of the Revolution, had learned to associate with their trades. Wilentz does