

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

not oversimplify this process; he stresses that it created a "labyrinth of factories and tiny artisan establishments, central workrooms and outworkers' cellars, luxury firms and sweatwork strapping shops," and he takes pains to follow all the chambers and corridors of this "maze." If Wilentz admires radicals protesting the degradation that the wage relation imposed on workers' lives, he also offers fair-minded accounts of street preachers, temperance reformers, and other urban types. Many pages are devoted to increasingly confident proponents of competition and uplift, such as one who proclaimed in 1837: "In our bounteous land individuals alone are poor; but they form no poor class, because with them poverty is but a transient evil."

Although Wilentz is properly critical of others who have used the term *class consciousness* without historical sensitivity, his own use of the term to describe the attitudes of New York's workmen in the 1850s is not entirely convincing. Sometimes the documentation for strikes and violent confrontations seems too sketchy to warrant generalizations about workers as a class. Toward the end of the book Wilentz lumps together "the city's workers and labor radicals" in a manner inconsistent with his previous demonstrations of the confusing, labyrinthine process that was transforming New York. Nevertheless, he convincingly recaptures a radical republican outlook at odds with Jacksonian political parties and Whig benevolence. In so doing, he offers exciting challenges to much of the conventional wisdom about antebellum society and politics.

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The Public Lands in Jacksonian Politics. By Daniel Feller. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984. Pp. xvi, 264. Tables, notes, note on sources, bibliography, index. \$29.50.)

Daniel Feller sets out three objectives for this study: to examine the origins and evolution of the controversy over federal land policy during the Jacksonian era; to relate that controversy to other issues; and to demonstrate how it contributed to political alignments and the emergence of the second party system. After reviewing the background of land policy to 1821, Feller gives a detailed account of congressional debates on a wide variety of measures for disposing of the federal domain. The debates centered on such questions as the minimum unit and minimum price for land offered for sale by the government, federal credit for land purchases, preemption rights, graduated price reductions on unsold land, and cession of federal lands to states. They pitted those who saw public lands as property of the people, believed that