

Massachusetts Historical Society. His most recent books are FIRST FOUNDERS: AMERICAN PURITANS *and* PURITANISM IN AN ATLANTIC WORLD. BUILDING A NEW JERUSALEM: JOHN DAVENPORT, A PURITAN IN THREE WORLDS *will be published in 2012.*

Midnight Ride, Industrial Dawn: Paul Revere and the Growth of American Enterprise. By Robert Martello. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. Pp. viii, 422. \$65.00 cloth; \$30.00 paper.)

Robert Martello's finely crafted book succeeds on several levels. First, it offers an engaging biography of Paul Revere's professional career, one that takes us far beyond the famous Midnight Ride and into the minutiae of Revere's many artisanal endeavors. Second, it contextualizes Revere's versatile smithing operations in the shifting framework of Revolutionary-era social relations, highlighting the barriers and opportunities Revere experienced in his ongoing quest to become a gentleman, or at least a man deserving of the designation "Esquire." And finally, as the subtitle suggests, it delivers a nuanced and technologically thorough—at times, perhaps, overly thorough—analysis of the halting transitions from cottage-scale craft work to industrial capitalism. Martello deftly weaves these themes into a compelling narrative.

Professionally, Revere was less an innovator than an emulator. His pre-war silver pieces were known more for their precision than originality of design and his later work more for its consistent high quality than its uniqueness. However, Revere had a solid work ethic, complemented by an unbridled confidence in his ability to overcome technical hurdles. Faced with the task of smelting domestic copper into malleable copper, he responded, "I have never tried, but from the experiments I have made, I have no doubt I can do it" (p. 226). As a result, he achieved considerable success as a versatile metal worker who could craft silver teakettles, cast iron cannons and bells, and roll copper for ship siding. He was guided toward success by his unwavering self-assuredness, whether forging business relationships, managing workers, or scrutinizing demand. "His self-confidence," Martello aptly writes, "ran unchecked" (p. 227).

Despite his achievements, Revere did not escape adversity. He labored not only out of genuine love for his craft but in a quest for social status, which was somewhat more fluid in the Revolutionary era than in the nineteenth century. In this, he was less successful. To

be sure, Revere always enjoyed widespread respect as an engaged, well-connected, and civic-minded denizen of Boston. His famous ride reflected these qualities quite well. But the hard reality of early American social life could not be gainsaid: Revere was an artisan, artisans worked with their hands, and such manner of work, no matter how dignified, excluded workers, no matter how civic oriented, from the ranks of the elite. "Ironically," Martello observes of Revere, "the very practices that enabled him to succeed at innumerable technical and entrepreneurial challenges had barred him from the colonial gentry by tarring him with the stigma of manual labor" (p. 118). Martello might have explored with greater depth the underlying nature of this paradox. Nevertheless, his tracing of Revere's social trajectory confirms that, unlike in the latter part of the nineteenth century, there was a limit in the early republic to how far a man with dirt under his nails could ascend the status ladder.

What Martello's book might lack in analysis regarding Revere's status aspirations, it more than makes up for in attention to technological change. This book will have considerable appeal for historians of science and technology. Martello deftly, and with an impressive understanding of the micromechanics involved, charts Revere's progression from silver smith to cannon caster to copperplate maker and slitter. In these sections, the text often gets bogged down in technicalities, which is not so much a fault of the book as it is a limiting factor on the scope of its audience. But even the overly daunted reader is encouraged to persevere through the more abstruse passages, for the payoff is well worth it. Through his comprehensive analysis of Revere's work, Martello ultimately shows that, in essence, every mechanical accomplishment relied directly on a host of nonmechanical factors, including social connections, availability and organization of labor, managerial acumen, government involvement, legal access, and, as always, a little luck. In developing this broader context, Martello fleshes out the deeper reality of the early American entrepreneurial spirit and the nature of technological change in general.

In the end, Martello's Revere embodies what historians typically identify in more abstract terms: the transition from craft-based to industrial-scaled production. There was, of course, nothing immediate about this change. With respect to labor, Revere "mixed old and new methods" (p. 281); when it came to improved machinery, the cause was "countless incremental improvements to equipment and procedures made by large numbers of practitioners over a long period of time" (p. 287); and as for product standardization, "Revere

started incorporating machinery and experimenting with standardized output for his silver shop operations by the early 1780s, and by the early 1800s his Canton mill . . . made even greater strides toward the methods and goals of the American system” (p. 297). When it came to the rise of industrial capitalism, the past was always in flux with the present, and the future hinged upon nothing inevitable but, rather, the daily and often seemingly mundane choices made by men such as Paul Revere. Martello deserves credit for portraying these choices in a way that makes the famous ride a prelude to national innovation rather than an isolated act of bravery.

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The Forgotten Founding Father: Noah Webster’s Obsession and the Creation of an American Culture. By Joshua Kendall. (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2010. Pp. xii, 356. \$29.95 cloth; \$16.00 paper.)

In 2008, Joshua Kendall published his first single-authored book, *The Man Who Made Lists*. In it, he explained the achievement of Peter Mark Roget, the eponym of *Roget’s Thesaurus*, in terms of the mental illnesses that a number of his closest relatives suffered. Kendall concluded that Roget was driven to classify concepts and words as a means of preserving his own mental stability. Roget was, Kendall remarked, “obsessed with words” (*Man Who Made Lists*, p. 1); he had an “obsession with words” (p. 18); making wordlists “quickly became an obsession” for him (p. 40); classifying things was “an obsession that would preoccupy him” (p. 45); he brought “obsessive energy” to it (p. 45); and so on. Simon Winchester’s *The Professor and the Madman* (1998) had already shown how profitable a popular book about a mentally ill lexicographer could be.

The year 2008 happened to be the two-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Noah Webster, which was marked by celebrations at Yale, Webster’s and Kendall’s *alma mater*. In their course, the historian Howard Lamar gave a lecture identifying Webster as “Revolutionary Patriot, Outspoken Federalist . . . and Intellectual Nationalist” and characterizing him as “a multiple American founding father,” while Kendall gave a lecture titled “Noah Webster’s Obsession and the Creation of America’s First Dictionary.” *The Forgotten Founding Father* argues, first, that Webster was all the things that