

great American arts institutions pursue a wide array of cultural and social agendas. Key Metropolitan trustees in addition to Morgan included Beaux-Arts architect Charles McKim; prominent corporate lawyer and Theodore Roosevelt's secretary of war Elihu Root; and Charity Organization Society and Russell Sage Foundation president Robert W. de Forest. Were these men aiming to advertise New York's wealth as a way of establishing its financial credibility as it rose to challenge London, Paris, and Berlin? Were they aiming to demonstrate New York's, and America's, legitimacy as an heir to western civilization—both to impress foreign investors and foreign governments and as a gesture of respect to immigrants? Did they wish to show that a private, nongovernment museum could rival the best state museums of Europe?

Molesworth follows Jeffrey Trask (*Things American: Art Museums and Civic Culture in the Progressive Era* [2012]) in emphasizing the “encyclopedic” character of the Met under Morgan and his successors. But encyclopedias can never embrace everything in the world—they must always be selective. Until the last decades of the twentieth century the Met emphasized the arts of the great civilizations of Europe and Asia—and included an American wing championed by de Forest that placed U.S. arts within the story of those great civilizations. Did Morgan and other trustees come to the conclusion that Fry's rising commitment to modern art made him a poor fit for their purposes? *The Capitalist and the Critic* deserves credit for prompting these questions. It leaves the task of answering them to others.

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A Time of Scandal: Charles R. Forbes, Warren G. Harding, and the Making of the Veterans Bureau. *By Rosemary Stevens.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016. xviii + 376 pp. Photographs, notes, index. Cloth, \$34.95. ISBN: 978-1-4214-2130-8.

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Reviewed by Michael W. Flamm

“I have no trouble with my enemies,” President Warren G. Harding reputedly told Kansas newspaper editor William Allen White. “I can

take care of my enemies all right. But my damn friends, my god-damned friends, White, they're the ones who keep me walking the floor nights" (T. Harry Williams, *A History of the United States* [1959]). This colorful quotation, whether apocryphal or not, captures the popular image of Harding as a fundamentally decent, if intellectually overmatched, Republican leader whose "friends"—Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty, Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall, and Charles R. Forbes, the founding director of the Veterans Bureau—ultimately betrayed the president and undermined his administration. By creating a cavalcade of corruption, they severely tarnished Harding's political and historical reputation, which has never fully recovered.

Now Rosemary Stevens, professor emeritus of history and sociology of science at the University of Pennsylvania, has made a compelling case that at least part of this familiar story is wrong. In *A Time of Scandal*, she convincingly argues based on court records and government documents that Forbes was wrongfully convicted of conspiracy to defraud the United States in 1925. She also asserts, less persuasively, that although he ran the Veterans Bureau for only eighteen months, from August 1921 to February 1923, Forbes played a vital role in building the institution known today as the Department of Veterans Affairs.

According to Stevens, Forbes was "not without guilt—when guilt is defined in terms of social inadequacies, managerial failures, and behavioral sins" (p. 308). The son of a deserter and an immigrant from Scotland, he invented or embellished many aspects of his past, especially after he met Harding in Hawaii and joined the administration as a decorated World War I veteran. On his way to Leavenworth Prison in 1926, Forbes even married the ex-wife of his main accuser, Elias Harvey Mortimer, a con man, congenital liar, and professional "witness" for the Justice Department. But after impressive research the author credibly concludes that Forbes was not a fellow conspirator in a scheme to sell hospital construction contracts. Instead, he was a trusting friend who had the misfortune to cross paths with the predatory Mortimer and then suffered from guilt by association when clouds of suspicion engulfed Daugherty and Fall (the central player in the famous Teapot Dome Scandal).

Stevens is on shakier ground when she contends that Forbes was a critical figure in the making of the Veterans Bureau (the subtitle of her book). Her argument rests on two pillars: that as the initial director he consolidated several agencies despite bureaucratic opposition and established the lasting principle that veterans should have their own facilities rather than rely upon civilian institutions. Forbes certainly deserves some credit for these accomplishments. Yet his tenure as director was so brief—and so great was the political appeal of separate facilities for

military veterans—that it seems a stretch to claim that almost a century later the Department of Veterans Affairs, which at present operates more than 150 military hospitals, 120 nursing homes, and 800 community clinics, is the outgrowth of the “long-ago hopes, actions, and accomplishments of Colonel Forbes” (p. 304).

Nevertheless, Stevens has usefully reminded us that after World War I the treatment of veterans—including the payment of a bonus—was a hot political issue. The provision of pensions, benefits, medical care, and vocational training was also integral to the construction of the modern American welfare state, as Theda Skocpol demonstrated in her classic work, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (1992). Military veterans, some from the Civil War, received 97 percent of federal social welfare expenditures in 1923 (p. 45). The approved budget of the newly created Veterans Bureau was greater than the total expenditures by the federal government in any year prior to 1897 (p. 80). Given the confluence of money and politics, it is perhaps not surprising that the relatively inexperienced Forbes soon ran into serious difficulties, some of his own making. But to the author’s credit, she skillfully dispels the conventional view that his conduct was criminal. In the process, she sheds new and important light on the Harding administration and 1920s America.

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Merchants and Ministers: A History of Businesspeople and Clergy in the United States. By Kevin Schmiesing. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2017. ix + 249 pp. Bibliography, index. Cloth, \$105.00; e-book, \$99.00. ISBN: cloth, 978-1-4985-3924-1; e-book, 978-1-4985-3925-8.

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Reviewed by Elizabeth Fones-Wolf

In *Merchants and Ministers*, Kevin Schmiesing has bitten off a large and complex topic: the relationship of Christianity and commerce from America’s colonial roots to the present. The emphasis of this wide-sweeping survey is on clergy and theologians’ interaction with business leaders. A research fellow at the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, Schmiesing has touched on this subject in earlier works on