

Several of the essays also bring out another essential variable in understanding the evolution of political economy, namely, the outsized influence of federal spending. Mark Wilson suggests that scholars have not paid enough attention to the military-industrial complex since the intense debates spurred by the Vietnam War. His contribution and others highlight a more general proposition that the reality of a large federal budget in and of itself influenced the behavior of businessmen, who were eager to direct these funds in ways from which they could most benefit. As the state grew, even as many businessmen chafed under its regulations, the mixed economy of the twentieth century provided stability, growth, and subsidies. As John sums up nicely in the introduction, capital gained not only from favorable laws and regulations but also because the state became a major source of funds, or what Cebul labels “supply-side liberalism” (p. 17).

Capital Gains offers an accessible set of essays that takes readers through the rise of corporate capitalism, the shift to a mixed economy, and the return to a neoliberal deregulatory world. With a helpful framing, the essays will stimulate discussion about the intersection of business and politics in the twentieth century, suggesting that scholars have much more work to do as they seek to understand how the presence of a large regulatory regime combined with a growing federal budget influenced practices, investment decisions, and outlooks of American businessmen and how these leaders in turn molded the modern state.

Meg Jacobs is a senior research scholar in the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University. She is the author of Panic at the Pump: The Energy Crisis and the Transformation of American Politics in the 1970s (2016) and is currently writing a book about the New Deal and World War II.

. . .

The Lowells of Massachusetts: An American Family. *By Nina Sankovitch.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017. xii + 382 pp. Notes, bibliography, photographs, index. Cloth, \$27.99. ISBN: 978-1-250-06920-7.

doi:10.1017/S0007680517001490

Reviewed by Shaun S. Nichols

As an elite family in a fledgling nation, the Lowells became an almost omnipresent force in many of America's foundational events. The Puritan migrations to colonial New England; the First Great Awakening; the American Revolution; the rise of abolitionism; the battle between the Federalists and the Republicans; the Industrial Revolution; the Civil War; the rise of the “social housekeeping movement” and municipal

reform; early-twentieth-century repressions (and expressions) of homosexuality; and the creation of the “modern,” research-oriented American university—in short, almost all the major “textbook American history” events from the colonial era to the early twentieth century—were marked, in some way, with the fingerprints of some member of the Lowell clan.

This is the essence of what makes Nina Sankovitch’s book so effective. As basically a more “literary” take on the narrative presented in historian, journalist, and editor Ferris Greenslet’s *The Lowells and Their Seven Worlds* (1946), Sankovitch’s work is not likely to offer interested scholars any groundbreaking new interpretation or intervention. Instead, relying on a palpable love for letter reading and the liberal use of historical novelization, Sankovitch uses the story of the Lowells to “personalize” some of the most important moments in American history—drawing readers into the stories of how seemingly abstract American events were shaped and experienced by an interlinked set of highly developed and relatable characters.

As any objective university or high school educator will readily admit, most students enthusiastically prefer reading novels over so-called history books. Thus, I expect many instructors will find that Sankovitch’s story—a sort of novelized nonfiction—presents many of the benefits of a novel without the obvious drawback of offering only restricted chronological utility in the classroom. Others, I equally expect, will be turned off by her lack of argument, imaginative (i.e., semi-fictional) reconstructions, and occasionally thin research.

Occasionem cognosce (“seize the opportunity”), the Lowell family motto, is a constant refrain in the book. It is also Sankovitch’s implicit thesis: the story of the Lowells’ success is a story of their hard work and entrepreneurial spirit: “Generation after generation of Lowells. They came to New England, planted and harvested, sowed and reaped” (p. 325). The first “Lowles” in America, arriving in 1639, were farmers and modest artisans. The Reverend John Lowell (1704–1767), however, became the first Lowell to attend Harvard University, catapulting him from his father’s status as a cordwainer to a higher calling as Newburyport’s first minister. His son John “the Old Judge” Lowell (1743–1802) also attended Harvard, and went on to a career as a prominent lawyer, a member of the Massachusetts constitutional convention, and a federal judge. And, of course, perhaps most familiar to readers of this journal, his son Francis Cabot Lowell (1775–1817) was in 1813 a key founder of the Boston Manufacturing Company, the first integrated spinning and weaving textile factory in the United States.

Although not explicitly highlighted, much of the latter half of the book is arguably centered on opportunities *provided* rather than

seized. With money no object, the Lowells increasingly moved out of fields of economic prominence—industry, law, and trade—and into areas of cultural significance: literature, the sciences, and social reform. James Russell Lowell (1819–1891), Francis Cabot’s nephew, displayed little of the hardy work ethic of his ancestors. As he reflected during his senior year at Harvard, “during Freshman year, I did nothing, during Sophomore year, I did nothing, during Junior year, I did nothing, and during Senior year I have thus far done nothing” (pp. 168–69). He was briefly expelled for his poor behavior and lack of interest in his studies. Lost for purpose, he decided to attend Harvard Law School, and then abandoned law to raise chickens and write poems.

Nonetheless, and likely thanks to his family’s money and prestige, James Lowell went on to become a famous abolitionist poet and, somewhat ironically, a Harvard professor. Indeed, the roles latter-day Lowells played in everything from astronomical discovery to high literary achievement were clearly enabled by the family’s immense wealth and fame. *The Lowells of Massachusetts* might have been equally well centered on how effortlessly wealth and status have reproduced themselves in the United States.

Sankovitch’s writing is fun, engaging, and easy to follow (though, by its nature, keeping track of the various and interrelated Lowells becomes difficult toward the end). Nevertheless, historians should be forewarned of the book’s pointed fictional bent. A creative reconstruction of Percival Lowle’s journey to the United States is actually based on an entirely different journey made by somebody else a year earlier. Quotes are creatively reappropriated and sometimes reattributed to key actors. A fictionalized argument between John “the Old Judge” Lowell and Jonathan Jackson in 1765 portrays Lowell as a red-blooded revolutionary; later evidence suggests he was much more ambivalent about the idea of American independence and likely maintained loyalist sympathies up to the end of 1774. In light of these sorts of narrative choices, I suspect many scholars will cavil with the imagined details Sankovitch uses to liven up her tale.

I was also disappointed to see the book suddenly end, with no real conclusion, in 1922. One cannot help but wonder if the choice had something to do with the fact that Greenslet’s 1946 narrative—an obvious anchor for Sankovitch—also winds down in this era. Regardless, I would have loved to hear more about how these scions of New England aristocracy navigated the twentieth century. The 1922 end date, for instance, omits people like Joan Lowell (1902–1967), an investigative journalist, silent film star, and publisher of a bestselling autobiography that was quickly exposed as an utter fabrication. Perhaps the Lowells themselves bridge the nineteenth-century pursuit of elite

cultural achievement and the twentieth-century aspiration for mere celebrity?

For those open to the author's forays into the imagination, however, Sankovitch's book will likely make an engaging means for students to see the American past through the eyes of a family whose personal history is deeply enmeshed with the nation's political, business, and cultural development.

Shaun S. Nichols is a College Fellow and lecturer in history at Harvard University. Starting in the fall of 2018, he will be an assistant professor of history at Boise State University. His current manuscript project, based on his dissertation, is entitled Crisis Capital: Industrial Massachusetts and the Making of Global Capitalism, 1813–Present.

. . . .

Brahmin Capitalism: Frontiers of Wealth and Populism in America's First Gilded Age. *By Noam Maggor.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017. xii + 284 pp. Figures, tables, notes, index. Cloth, \$39.95. ISBN: 978-0-674-97146-2.

doi:10.1017/S0007680517001507

Reviewed by Sharon Ann Murphy

In this well-written, highly readable examination of Boston's Gilded Age elites, Noam Maggor asks an important yet often overlooked question: "How did a slave-owning, cotton-exporting republic become a hegemonic industrial nation in the span of less than four decades?" (p. ix). The answer, he argues, is that "the migration of wealth from Boston and other old cities in the East toward bold new investment frontiers in the West financed railroads, mines, farms, stockyards, and many other business ventures" (p. xi). Yet, somewhat oddly, supporting the intriguing argument of how and why this transition occurred becomes a secondary concern of the book. Instead, the heart of the book is a fascinating urban history of Boston itself. In alternating chapters, the author vacillates between these two competing themes, making little effort to demonstrate to the reader how they are connected—beyond their common Boston elite protagonists. Maggor has essentially taken two separate yet equally worthwhile research projects and shuffled them together into one book.

Despite the emphasis of the title and preface, the more developed of the two stories involves the growing pains of a modernizing Boston, as the elites attempted to defend their historic political and economic power from the forces of democratization. Maggor illustrates this