

I enjoyed reading this book. But then I already have a sense of wonder, etc., about our past. I hope this book will be successful in conveying it to high school students. As someone who's been reading, writing, and teaching history for some twenty-five years now, I both have trouble understanding why the wonder is not there automatically for all upon exposure to the incredible human past, and in knowing best how to stimulate it in those who don't have it. These days, reading more and more in Will and Ariel Durant's *Story of Civilization* and Page Smith's *People's History of the United States*, I am inclined to think big, broad, narrative history in the grand classic tradition might have the most potential--at all levels.

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Robert F. Dalzell, Jr. *Enterprising Elite: The Boston Associates and the World They Made.* Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1987. Pp. xviii, 298. Cloth, \$27.50.

In this fine collective biography of the merchants-turned-industrialists who developed the famed Waltham-Lowell system of textile manufacture, Robert F. Dalzell has produced a book of considerable importance in the history of American industrialization, entrepreneurship, and philanthropy. Dalzell presents a well-researched and lucid study of this wealthy, closely knit group of businessmen, a study that appropriately places these men and their activities in the broad socio-cultural setting. The Boston Associates, according to Dalzell, were industrial pioneers who introduced integrated innovations on a hitherto unparalleled scale, but whose motivation was essentially conservative.

In the first three chapters, which account for about one-third of the book, Dalzell traces the origins, beginnings, and expansion of the Waltham-Lowell system. The success that the associates enjoyed in textile manufacturing and the demands of that enterprise itself led these entrepreneurs to expand their efforts to transportation, banking, and insurance. Dalzell deftly presents these interrelated developments in the fourth chapter. He demonstrates that, while the associates introduced an impressive range of structural innovations in these fields, their central objectives in such endeavors were the protection and development of the textile industry and the preservation of their traditional family interests. The final two chapters are devoted to the associates' philanthropic and political activities. In philanthropy and politics alike, their objectives centered on supporting and developing social and political harmony.

By the early 1840s the Boston Associates' influence was broad indeed, affecting not only diverse elements of the economy but social, cultural, and political institutions as well. The world that these enterprising elite had made seemed secure. In the ensuing years, however, much of this world disintegrated. Although fortunes that the associates had secured for their children were not lost, the control that this innovative but conservative group exercised in the economic, social, and political order waned. They were no more able to control the changing social and political realities than they were to prevent overproduction in the textile industry. By the time of the Civil War, the world envisioned by the founders of the Waltham-Lowell system was gone. Nevertheless, as Dalzell points out in the epilogue, the associates had demonstrated the value of the corporate form and had secured for their families "a remarkably durable position at the top of the social order."

This book is well-organized and gracefully written. The first three chapters (on the rise of the Waltham-Lowell system) are organized essentially chronologically. The rest of the book is organized topically, but with sufficient referencing between topics to tell the story clearly. Dalzell has included excellent illustrations supporting the text. The diverse but interconnected economic interests of almost eighty associates are clearly presented in a useful appendix.

Enterprising Elite is an important book that should be included at least as suggested reading in coursework on the social and economic history of the United States in the nineteenth century. Those teaching specialized courses in the business history of the period may well wish to include it as required reading, not only because of its important content but also as a model of excellent work in business history.

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