

end, Ragosta concludes that Henry believed that the sentiments of early 1776 were not appropriate to early 1799 (208).

For the People, For the Country is an illuminating book on how the rhetoric of the 1770s fit into the politics of the 1790s. However, it is also a frustrating book. At the same time, there is not enough and too much of Henry. There is not enough partially because of the lack of available evidence, which is not the author's fault. The two key events, Henry's rejection of a radical opposition to the ratified Constitution his campaign speech in March 1799, are thinly sourced, forcing the author into extended speculations. Furthermore, Henry disappears for large parts of the book. There is a chapter on the Alien and Sedition Acts in which Henry does not appear. There is too much Henry, in the sense that the "Trumpet of the Revolution" was not the only former revolutionary to grapple with the question of how opposition ideology could be fashioned into a governing ideology. A broader context would be helpful. Objections aside, this is an able study that makes a valuable contribution to scholarship on the politics of the 1790s.

ROBERT W. SMITH is a professor of history at Worcester State University. He is the author of *Keeping the Republic: Ideology and Early American Foreign Policy* (DeKalb, IL, 2004) and *Amid a Warring World: American Foreign Relations, 1775–1815* (Washington, DC, 2012), as well as several articles. He is currently researching Virginia's foreign policy interests and the ratification of the Constitution.

Accommodating the Republic: Taverns in the Early United States. By Kirsten E. Wood. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina University Press, 2023. Pp. 352. Cloth, \$99.00, paper, \$32.95.)

Reviewed by Camden Burd

It was a common sight in New York City: a group of rowdy white men making their way to a nearby bar. They were men of means and made the most of their economic situation. Some nights they went "clubbing"—a practice of pooling their funds to buy and share particularly expensive spirits. Perhaps they were celebrating some recent professional success? A major client? Profits realized? Regardless, the other patrons took note of the activities. Observing their dress, drink choice, and brash conversation, onlookers knew something of these men and their position.

But these boisterous few were not finance bros—at least not in the modern sense. No, these were nineteenth-century gentleman. Dressed in fine suits (unlike the contemporary Patagonia fleece vests), these men of stature used an ever-important gathering place to signal to onlookers, and each other, something about their place in American society—the tavern.

The American tavern and its economic, social, culture, and political importance are the subject of Kirsten E. Wood’s latest work. In *Accommodating the Republic: Taverns in the Early United States*, Wood historicizes the ways that Americans made use, and sense, of taverns in the decades after the American Revolution. They were sites of gathering, commerce, political formulation, and social meaning. More than just a bar, the tavern in the early United States was a formative part of American commercial and social life. Wood argues that “taverns were both vectors and theaters for American pursuits of mobility, economic opportunity, and republican self-rule” (2). More than a destination for rest or drink, the tavern in the decades after the American Revolution transformed to reflect the developing delineations of United States society while also serving as a space where Americans learned the vernaculars of citizenship (2).

Wood is not the first historian to recognize the importance of taverns in early American history. Scholars have long acknowledged the importance of these venues for the development of social movements and political ideas.¹ Consider David W. Conroy’s *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts*. Conroy’s research demonstrates the centrality of taverns in developing unique political culture in New England. In Massachusetts, Conroy argues, “taverns became a public stage upon which colonists resisted, initiated, and addressed changes in their society.”² By the time of the American Revolution, taverns became a space where patrons challenged authority and exchanged ideas that would fuel a Revolutionary spirit. Taverns at the end of the eighteenth century offered a space for the broad public (mostly white and

1. Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore, 2004); Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1998); Julia Roberts, *In Mixed Company: Taverns and Public Life in Upper Canada* (Vancouver, 2009).

2. David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995), 11.

male) to “hear and see itself.”³ Conroy ultimately finds that New England taverns were the venues of “an emerging egalitarian alternative to hierarchy itself.”⁴ Imbibing, sharing, and discussing the world outside, patrons fomented the politics of revolution.

Whereas Conroy found a spirit of egalitarianism (among white men) in New England taverns, Wood argues that American taverns were places of ever-increasing social stratification in the decades following the Revolution. Wood demonstrates notes that while taverns were instrumental in shaping many of the contours of society, they often reflected and reinforced particular hierarchies. Take mobility and economic opportunity, for instance. As Wood demonstrates, taverns served as important hubs of travel, accommodation, commerce, and communication during a period of tremendous geographic and economic growth. Americans bought and sold goods (in addition to alcohol), made deals, and established partnerships at taverns. But these were not egalitarian spaces. Anxieties about the place of women in these institutions as well as the pervasive threat of violence toward African Americans demonstrated that taverns reflected and reinforced the racialized and gendered hierarchies in the early United States. Class stratification, too. In metropolitan areas, tavern-keepers began to “improve” accommodations and amenities. Specialized rooms took on social and cultural meaning. Porches, barrooms, and dining rooms were designated for specific activities and specific people. The tavern became a microcosm of American society—where class, race, and gender were displayed and fortified with every beverage served.

The space also operated like a spittoon of democratic activities—a splashing mix of collective projects, local association meetings, and national political activity. It was there where, as Wood notes, “habits of tavern-going and ideas about those habits contributed to a wholesale expansion in what it meant to be politically active from the 1790s through the early 1850s” (175). As such, taverns often hosted meetings and were, for many, the most common spaces of everyday democratic activity. Freemasons, secret societies, and political parties understood that taverns were important spaces for organizing and governing. By the presidential election of 1828, Wood notes, that many of Andrew Jackson’s supporters chose taverns as sites for mobilization and meetings. Even advocates of temperance understood the power of taverns and often attempting to

3. *Ibid.*, 187.

4. *Ibid.*, 186.

open “temperance taverns” in the hopes of bending the institution toward their own goals. Overall, Wood argues, taverns “contributed to the dramatic increase in Americans’ participation in collective action organized on representative principles” (212). The tavern was a workshop for discovering, debating, and defining the contours of vernacular democratic participation.

Wood’s *Accommodating the Republic: Taverns in the Early United* sheds new light on a period of rapid change. As early-nineteenth-century Americans sought to understand that change, they often found answers a nearby tavern. That is where business deals were made; gender was defined; racist systems were reinforced; class distinctions were solidified; and political movements germinated. Wood demonstrates that we would be wise to pay attention to taverns. If we look past the clubbing financial bros (of today and yesterday) we might see something deeper and more significant at play. We come to see the contours of American economic, social, and political life and the way the tavern played a central role in each.

CAMDEN BURD is an assistant professor of history at Clemson University. His forthcoming book, *The Roots of Flower City: Horticulture, Empire, and the Remaking of Rochester, New York*, will be published by Cornell University Press in Fall 2024.