

While the collection might have been more balanced, and might have gone further in innovative directions, this is a handsome volume that will be of use to scholars interested in a variety of aspects of Anglo-Dutch relations, and the way that they were influenced by—and influenced—a wider world. Business historians are probably not its primary audience, and I am sure that my own research interests have colored my perception of this book. Diplomatic, military, naval, or political historians may have a different view.

*SIOBHAN TALBOTT, Reader in Early Modern History, Keele University, Keele, UK*

*Dr. Talbott is the author of the article “What cannot be helped must be indured’: Coping with obstacles to business during the Anglo-Dutch Wars, 1652–1674” in Enterprise & Society (2022). Her first monograph, Conflict, Commerce and Franco-Scottish Relations, 1560–1713 (2014) was awarded the Senior Hume Brown prize.*

. . .

Swansea Copper: A Global History. *By Chris Evans and Louise Miskell.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020. 242 pp. Hardcover, \$57.00. ISBN: 978-1-4214-3911-2.

doi:10.1017/S0007680523000545

Reviewed by Espen Storli

As Chris Evans and Louise Miskell argue in this fascinating book, Swansea was to copper what Manchester was to cotton or Detroit to the automobile. After 1750, the Swansea district on the south coast of Wales became a dominant global center for copper smelting; and between the 1770s and the 1840s, the area routinely produced a third or more of the world’s smelted copper. Swansea’s hegemony was founded on a revolutionary new method for producing the metal. The Welsh Process, as it became known, used mineral coal as a source of energy to smelt copper ores in reverberatory furnaces. However, it was not only the smelting method that was revolutionary. For the first time in history, the copper mines feeding the copper smelters were geographically separated. While Swansea was home to abundant deposits of high-quality coal, the area did not have any copper mines, so the copper ores had to be imported. At first, copper was mostly sourced in Cornwall but, by the end of the 1820s, the Swansea furnaces were smelting ores from faraway places such as Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Australia, and New Zealand.

*Swansea Copper* investigates the rise of Swansea as a major copper-producing center in the eighteenth century and explains why the region became the dominant copper center of the world by the early nineteenth century. However, during the second half of the century, Swansea was overtaken by new regions, and the book also charts the stagnation and eventual demise of metal production in the Swansea area in the twentieth century, eventually leaving derelict buildings and a “blighted, toxic landscape” (p. 166). The central concept that runs through the analysis is what Evans and Miskell call Swansea Copper (with a capital C). The concept denotes a specific mode of metal production that includes how capital, labor, and technology were mobilized, and the maritime links that connected the district to distant mines. The concept is very useful in explaining how Swansea grew to become a global hub for copper production, and the impact that the industry had not only on the Swansea district but also on the other parts of the commodity chain.

The subtitle of the book signals that one of the main ambitions of the authors is to place the history of Swansea copper within its global context, and in this way contribute to scholarship on global history. Evans and Miskell argue very convincingly that the history of metals is an especially suitable starting point for investigating global entanglements, and the book shows the potential of such an approach. The book represents what the authors fittingly characterize as a material turn in the global history literature, and it combines a focus on a traditional heavy industry key to the industrialization of Britain with a global perspective. The emphasis in the narrative is on the production processes, including issues of labor, technology, logistics, and financial arrangements as well as on how the finished copper products found new markets. From the start of the industry, the Swansea copper production was linked to global markets. In the late seventeenth century, demand was especially connected to the expansion of the Caribbean sugar industry, which needed large copper pans for refining sugar; and starting in the 1730s, India became a growing market. From the 1770s, copper sheathing for naval and merchant vessels, especially those sailing in warm waters, was the big new growth market. Throughout the eighteenth century and until the British abolition of slavery in 1807, copper rods, often produced in Swansea, were used as a currency in West African slave markets. Perhaps not surprisingly, Swansea’s success was thus founded on growth in demand that was colonial or military in character.

The book is based on extensive archival research and organized chronologically, with seven chapters dealing with different periods, in addition to an extensive introduction that presents the main concepts and key themes. As the book shows, despite its centrality to the history

of industrialization, the Swansea copper history is little known. The authors argue that this is in part because of the complexity of its corporate history. Throughout its time as a copper center, Swansea was host to a large number of different corporate entities and partnerships, many of them ephemeral, but the book manages to guide the reader through this complexity with a deft hand. The perspective shifts effortlessly between the internal organization of the work processes and the technology in the Swansea smelters; the social impact of the industry on the local community; the role of merchant capitalists in organizing the value chain; and the export of copper wares, technology, and know-how in the form of miners and engineers from South Wales and Cornwall to Latin America, Africa, and the Pacific in the nineteenth century.

Overall, this well-written and deeply researched book is highly recommended. *Swansea Copper* makes important contributions to diverse fields such as the history of globalization, industrialization, technology, labor, and capitalism. The book masterfully combines a focus on the local history of the Swansea copper industry with its role within the international commodity chain, and the result is a nuanced and powerful history that is a novel contribution to the global history literature.

*ESPEN STORLI, Professor of Modern History, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway*

*Professor Storli is a co-editor of The Political Economy of Resource Regulation: An International and Comparative History, 1850–2015 (2019).*

. . .

The Overseers of Early American Slavery: Supervisors, Enslaved Labourers, and the Plantation Enterprise. *By Laura R. Sandy.* New York: Routledge, 2020. 412 pp., 8 B/W illus. Paperback, \$42.36. ISBN: 978-1-03-223707-7. doi:10.1017/S0007680523000600

Reviewed by Jennifer Oast

“[L]ike one of the patriarchs, I have my flocks and my herds, my bond-men and bond-women, and every soart [*sic*] of trade amongst my own servants, so that I live in a kind of independence on every one, but Providence” (William Byrd II, Virginia planter, 1726).

As much as colonial American slave owners like William Byrd II loved to imagine themselves as the patriarchs of old, ruling benignly over a small kingdom of their own making, today historians well understand that plantation slavery was a capitalist enterprise poorly dressed in a paternalist guise. While historians such as Eric Williams led the