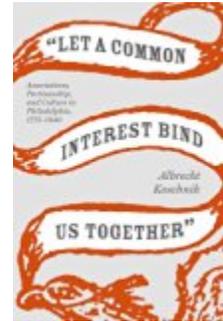


Albrecht Koschnik. *"Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together": Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775-1840*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2007. xii + 351 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8139-2648-3.

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New Directions in the Study of Voluntary Associations

Voluntary associations provoke fights. From denunciations of social control to celebrations of social capital, historians have battled over the impetus behind and effects of civil society organizations. In the early Republic, Americans sparred for control of African American churches, questioned the propriety of women's charities, debated the purposes of benevolent organizations, and clashed over the legitimacy of partisan political groups. In *"Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together,"* Albrecht Koschnik takes up the struggles to find acceptable forms for partisan organizing and the related division between political and cultural life in the City of Brotherly Love.

Koschnik's work grew out of discontent with Alexis de Tocqueville's portrayal of American voluntary associations, as well as from an interest in studies of the Habermasian public sphere. In place of Tocqueville's "static image of associational activities," Koschnik stresses conflict and dynamism (p. 2). Because factional divisions were seen as harmful in the early Republic, Americans sought forms for political activism that would meet public approval. After having condemned the Democratic-Republican societies of 1793 and 1794 as illegitimate, Federalists led the way in political associating by setting up militia companies and other societies. Republicans emulated and eventually outdid Federalists in forming partisan groups and, more important, in winning elections. By the 1810s, Federalists had mainly ceded office to the Republicans, but they wielded power in the cultural sphere. Federalists took the organizational know-

how they had gained in militias and the like, Koschnik argues, and applied it to creating cultural institutions, which helped keep Federalism alive. He thus credits innovations in Philadelphia's associational life to the experiences of men, especially Federalists, in partisan groups.

Before Philadelphia's Federalists generally stopped looking for renown through politics, they and Republicans wrestled for power in government from the 1790s to the mid-1810s. The intensity of partisan strife during the period, as the French Revolution and war in Europe pushed Americans into bitterly opposed camps, sparked fears of civil war in the fledging Republic. Koschnik highlights well the anxiety and acrimony in the forging of civic culture as he explores, over three chapters, an array of organizations from the repudiated Democratic-Republican societies and the hounded American Society of United Irishmen to the more effective Saint Tammany and Washington Benevolent societies to the most successful organizations, the volunteer militias. These groups schooled men politically, provided structures for the nascent parties, and, he also argues, taught members to form and run voluntary associations.

How much credit can we give to partisan bodies for that last function? Koschnik probes the "origins of voluntary action" in the early Republic (p. 2). Yet, while he does refer briefly to organizations in colonial Philadelphia and to the growing number of charities (including women's groups) after the Revolution, he does not really