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Richard J. Cox

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# Lester J. Cappon, Scholarly Publishing, and the *Atlas of Early American History*, 1957–1976

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RICHARD J. COX

The *Atlas of Early American History: The Revolutionary Era 1760–1790*, published in 1976, remains one of the lasting legacies of the US Bicentennial. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and a variety of private foundations, the publication was only incidentally a product of the celebration of the birth of a nation. The *Atlas* was the product of twenty years of effort by Lester J. Cappon—historian, archivist, and documentary editor—and because of his commitment to maintaining his own personal archives, we can learn more about this scholarly publishing venture than most. His rich diaries, personal papers, and *Atlas* archives enable us to follow the trials and tribulations of this publishing venture. We also learn that the kinds of issues facing scholarly publishing today, with a few differences (such as e-publishing), are not unique at all from those of half a century ago.

*Keywords:* atlas, scholarly publishing, documentary editing, Newberry Library, Institute of Early American History and Culture

It is hard to read a newspaper, review a journal or magazine, or go to a conference without encountering some dire predictions about the future of scholarly publishing and printed books. Some have countered by observing that more is being published than ever before.<sup>1</sup> Others worry that scholarly publishers and authors have lost sight of their audience. The loss of the public as the audience has led to highly technical, opaque writing, or, to put it another way, has shrunk the audience of many academics to small groups of their colleagues or their tenure and promotion committees.<sup>2</sup> Many writers are today sounding the death knell of scholarly publishing as part of the academy or as a contributor to public knowledge. However, individuals writing about scholarly publishing have always

tended to see it as a troubled industry, in terms of both its mission and its financial stability.<sup>3</sup> Lester J. Cappon (1900–1981)—long-time historian, archivist, and documentary editor<sup>4</sup>—was involved with scholarly publishing when university presses were becoming more business-like, professional operations.<sup>5</sup> The records of Cappon’s work serve as reminders that the issues in scholarly publishing a half century ago were just as troublesome and problematic as the ones we are facing today (the debate and dissension about electronic versus print publication going on today just provide a somewhat different flavor). Examining Cappon’s work and records gives us a window into how historians and their humanist colleagues were approaching the issues of publication. Margaret Stieg Dalton, in her examination of historians and publishing, concludes that, despite historians’ considerable self-reflection on their research and scholarly activities, they ‘have had relatively little to say about the publishing process.’<sup>6</sup> Cappon, at least, throws open a window on what historians were thinking about publishing in the mid-twentieth century. He has a lot to say.

Cappon, as is evident by his long career with the Institute of Early American History and Culture directing scholarly publishing and as an astute reviewer of publications, was a firm believer in publishing serious historical research pertinent to both scholarly and public audiences. The implication is that Cappon was interested in reaching far beyond the rarified ranks of the scholarly circles. What did he mean by ‘the public’? In one of his last reviews, considering a volume on Northern Virginia cartography, Cappon writes that the volume ‘will appeal to the cultural geographer and the historian, to the scholar and the intelligent layman.’<sup>7</sup> The notion of the intelligent layperson is what Cappon meant by the idea of ‘the public.’ Cappon discussed the state of scholarly publishing whenever the opportunity occurred. While academic publishing has always been more art than science, more professional pursuit than business, Cappon was committed to the importance of university presses for contributing both to scholarship and to the careers of young historians.

That Cappon was dedicated to quality in scholarly publishing and concerned about the general state of publishing in the history field is evident by the scholarly publishing workshop he designed with the Institute staff (specifically, Bill Towner, James Morton Smith, and Wilcomb Washburn) and offered at different venues, such as the University of

Virginia, in the mid-1950s. In this seminar, Cappon discussed the Institute and the needs of getting young scholars published, Smith reviewed the general statistics of book publishing in history and the role of the university press, Towner described publishing in journals such as the *William and Mary Quarterly*, and Washburn reviewed the nature of documentary editing (16 Nov. 1955).<sup>8</sup> His commitment to the issue of quality led Cappon to be involved in the publication of books deemed important even if the prospects of sales were low.

#### BANKROLLING SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

Much of Cappon's time at the Institute of Early American History and Culture involved finding subsidies to offset potential poor sales, a practice still common in scholarly publishing today. He recognized that scholarly merit had little to do with potential sales.

The issue of subsidies was something that would preoccupy Cappon for much of his time at the Institute; he was always keeping an eye on the sales potential of any given work, searching for subsidies, and approaching foundations. The need for subsidies was great enough that Cappon sometimes shopped around for better deals with university presses, playing one off of another. From time to time, the publication of a particular book raised issues about how the publication costs were handled. Occasionally, Cappon didn't have to shop around; instead, the offers came to him and the Institute, but this didn't happen often enough for Cappon to rest too easy. He labored in trying to build a stronger financial base for the Institute's publishing program. In late 1956, he began a series of meetings to prepare a proposal for an endowment. The Institute was at a considerable disadvantage in this pursuit because of its close connection with Colonial Williamsburg (CW) and the Rockefellers and their foundations. Cappon approached half a dozen foundations initially with no success or encouragement. He did, however, receive from the Lilly Foundation \$20,000 a year for publishing for the next three years. 'It will doubtless make some of our local worthies sit up and take note of the Institute,' Cappon confided to his diary (20 Apr. 1957), but this success did not pan out as he had hoped. Cappon failed to get the Rockefeller Foundation to match the funds (20 Feb. 1958), and his efforts to realize a multi-year plan for Institute publications—which would require \$300,000 for book production, research, editorial work, a series on original narratives in early American history, and an

atlas of early American history (the latter to become, much later, the focus of Cappon's career) (25 May 1960)—led to another series of foundation rejections.

When other opportunities arose for new venues for scholarly publishing, such as the creation of the University of Virginia Press in the early 1960s, Cappon always was prone to participate in order to establish something that would work for his interests and those of the Institute. Cappon never pulled his punches, however, when sharing his opinions on what he thought were ill-conceived publishing ventures.

#### AUDIENCE AND SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

What often animated Cappon in his various scholarly publishing enterprises was the possibility of acquiring a popular audience. Cappon was not interested in shepherding publications on extremely narrow topics. What Cappon wanted were works that provided solid scholarship with relevance to current issues. When sending the Robert Rutland book on the history of the American Bill of Rights to the publisher, Cappon lamented that it could not have been ready in 1954 in order to deal with Senator Joe McCarthy's 'fearmongering; however, he may bellow again' (17 Jan. 1955).<sup>9</sup> While Cappon wished to gain larger reading audiences, he also regretted what he saw as the 'commercialization of scholarship,' where publishers seemed interested only in the marketplace (6 Nov. 1961).

Cappon's quest to serve the public interest motivated him to be a stickler for both well-written and well-designed publications, a quality he reveals in his book reviews over the years as well as in various other jottings in his diary. Cappon desired for historians to write clearly and to refrain from poor or sloppy research. Informed by his own experiences and interests in book collecting, Cappon also believed that the careful design and production of a book were as important as any other element in scholarly publishing. Cappon maintained a bibliophile's sensitivity, and it revealed itself in his reviews and writings. Today, of course, except for reviews in the rare book or special collection, or on the topic of the history of printing, it is unlikely that we see such references to design and aesthetic elements; if we do, the comments are generally in the context of digital or e-book publications, where they address different issues and have different meanings. Cappon's sensibilities about editing, design, and audience prepared him for the greatest scholarly achievement of his career, *The Atlas of Early American History*.

## THE ATLAS

Cappon, while leading the Institute of Early American History and Culture, was constantly examining or generating ideas for publications. In a brief entry in his diary in late 1957, Cappon states that he met Herman Friis of the National Archives about his research on the development of cartography in the United States since 1776 and about the idea of compiling an atlas on early American history (5 Nov. 1957).<sup>10</sup> A few months later Cappon began planning for the Institute Council to discuss the possible project, compiling information about various American atlases done in the twentieth century (31 Mar., 8 Apr. 1958). This was the beginning of a project that would extend over two decades.

One of the skills, which was based on extensive experience, that Cappon brought to the atlas project was that of organizing and shepherding scholarly publications, down to the most minute detail (from project funding and planning to the preparation of indexes). As early as late 1958, Cappon began to immerse himself in cartographic procedures as a basis for understanding what such an atlas should encompass (27 Oct. 1958). But it would be a slow process. It was not until mid-1960 that Cappon had sketched out a budget—\$75,000 over three years—for the atlas project (25 May 1960).

Much of the preparation for the atlas included discussions with various experts—such as cartographic historian Lloyd Brown; Arch Gerlach, Walter W. Ristow, and Dan Reed of the Library of Congress; and Herman Friis of the National Archives—from which Cappon came to understand that such a project would require an expert cartographer or geographer on the project staff. These meetings resulted in Cappon receiving an invitation to make a presentation about the project at the next Association of American Geographers meeting in August 1961 (13 Jun., 7 Dec. 1960).<sup>11</sup> Through the 1960s, Cappon continued the quest to get the atlas project started by taking every opportunity to interview geographic experts, which strengthened his conviction that a geographer was necessary for the project to function.

With additional input from a variety of experts, Cappon expanded the scope of the atlas project. He worked on a new budget, oversaw the establishment of a formal Institute Council committee, explored the possibilities of collaboration with the American Geographic Society and Princeton University Press, and considered funding sources (such as the National Science Foundation). By May 1962, Cappon was optimistic that

the project 'can move forward steadily now' (24 May 1962). Cappon was also hearing that other publishers were interested in the project. All the enthusiasm for the atlas project by historians, cartographers, and professional associations did not translate into funding, as potential funders, new and old, dropped by the wayside. By early 1964, Cappon opened discussions with the Old Dominion Foundation and, at the same time, increased the proposal to \$270,000 for a five-year effort (31 Jan., 5 Feb. 1964). However, this foundation's rejection disheartened Cappon about the prospects for funding the atlas; several foundations had expressed interest but then begged off due to other commitments (9 Apr. 1964).<sup>21</sup> Cappon was by now also convinced that the Institute's ties to Colonial Williamsburg and CW's support by the Rockefeller Foundation worked against the Institute's seeking such funding.

About this time, a new possibility loomed for the atlas. While at the American Historical Association meeting in late 1964, Cappon had breakfast with his former Institute staff member Bill Towner, now the director of the Newberry Library in Chicago, and Towner raised the possibility of the atlas being a joint project between the Newberry and the Institute (30 Dec. 1964). Towner thought that the Newberry's strong cartographic collection favoured its participation, so upon Cappon's return home, he sent his project proposal on the atlas to Towner (8 Jan. 1965). Towner, near the end of 1965, told Cappon that he hoped Cappon would retire to the Newberry and work on the atlas (8 Dec. 1965). In short order, Towner expanded the idea of the atlas project, as he hoped to establish a cartographical institute at the Newberry (6 Jan. 1966). When a private trust fund provided \$90,000 in start-up funds, hope for starting the project emerged, but the difficulty in finding someone to head this effort continued to impede the project.

As he delved deeper into the intricacies of this project, Cappon realized how costly and time consuming it would be. He would need to balance the costs associated with producing quality maps against the prospects of producing something that would be affordable for customers other than institutions. Cappon prepared in 1968 a sixteen-page prototype focusing on the 1740–1776 period and the economic, social, and cultural aspects of the American colonies (18 Apr., 19 Apr. 1968).<sup>12</sup> Cappon's careful, if slow, work on the atlas gained support from the Institute. The Institute approved the atlas in principle, including the proposed collaboration with the American Geographic Society (4 May 1968). But

other complications slowed the project, including Cappon's own lack of time to work on it and the fact that the promised \$90,000 from the Meigs Family Fund still had not materialized by late October 1968 (18 Oct. 1968).<sup>28</sup> Cappon sought matching funds (to those from the Meigs fund) from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) (9 Jan., 3 Mar. 1969). It was in negotiations with the NEH that the idea emerged of refocusing the atlas on the American Revolution in conjunction with the forthcoming US Bicentennial (16 Sep. 1969).<sup>13</sup> In early 1969, after being invited to give a talk at Columbia University on the atlas project, Cappon matter-of-factly notes, 'In a way, I am not eager to talk on this subject outside the Institute because the project is still only a concept and a partial plan of operation, with no money yet in hand. And I am not sure what my own connection with the project-in-operation should be.' He did not expect the project to start for another year or two (31 Jan. 1969). In the meantime, Cappon assumed that he would continue working on the atlas part-time, while the financial estimates for what he saw as a five-year project climbed.<sup>14</sup>

By early 1969, the pressure was building on Cappon to come to the Newberry, and he accepted the Newberry's fellowship position in mid-April 1969 (16 Apr. 1969). With his arrival at the Newberry, the atlas project was beginning to set sail. After meeting with Towner in October 1969, Cappon notes, 'Our plan is to engage 5 historians as assistant editors, each to be responsible for a certain segment down to the [*sic*] 1789 and have an editor-in-chief full time in the Newberry Library, the central office of the Atlas' (14 Oct. 1969). Details in the original feasibility study proposal to the NEH are illuminating about how they originally conceived the project. The October 1969 proposal asked for \$37,740.50, with equal matching funds, to plan for a three-volume publication—the first volume on the periods of settlement up to the American Revolution, the second on the Revolutionary era of 1760–1790, and the third on the aftermath of the Revolution up to 1830. The proposal emphasized that there was \$90,000 available from the Institute of Early American History and Culture, \$25,000 from the Newberry Library, and plans for raising \$207,000 for the initial two years and \$311,152 for the final three years.<sup>15</sup> What ultimately resulted was quite different from this early vision of the project.

Even though the project was not underway in any serious manner, Cappon shifted his attention to cartographic research. Cappon revised an earlier paper, first presented in 1961, about the concept of the atlas



for publication in the *William and Mary Quarterly* (12 Oct. 1970).<sup>16</sup> He wrote a 'short critique' of the Paullin and Wright 1932 *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States* 'to point out its shortcomings and thus to show why it should be replaced, in part at least, by the proposed Atlas of Early American History.' This was included in the NEH proposal (30 Oct. 1969). The NEH proposal was submitted, and it turned out to be fine except for some minor concerns (19 Jan., 20 Jan. 1970). Preparing the NEH proposal brought Cappon to the point where he had to make a decision about his role in the atlas project. He had been listed as principal investigator for the proposal, meaning he was editor-in-chief. In early February 1970, he notes in his diary, 'Some time during this month I shall probably have to come to a decision on what connection, if any, I am to have with the Atlas of Early American History.' He continues, 'Bill Towner is hoping I will take that position on a two-year basis, and I find myself inclined to do so. I composed and revised the Outline of the Atlas and I am the only person who has given time & thought to the planning and the technical problems of cartography & presentation.' But Cappon was still hoping to divide his time between Chicago and Williamsburg: 'In a sense, the Atlas is *my* project and I would like to get it off the ground and demonstrate what can be done by collaboration among several historians who would be responsible for various chronological periods & under my direction; & I would expect to be also one of the compilers' (3 Feb. 1970). On 6 February 1970 they officially received word that the NEH had funded the atlas project for one year, and Cappon recorded in his diary, 'At last we can move forward on this long-delayed project.' A couple of weeks later, Cappon, now assuming he would be the chief staff member of the project, nevertheless held out hope that someone else might take this position and he could get back to his many long-standing unfinished projects. Last efforts to find that chief editor failed, and Cappon's hopes that he could work part-time on the atlas while pursuing his many unfinished projects ended (16 Feb., 12 Mar. 1970).

#### CAPPON IN CHARGE: THE ATLAS PROJECT UNDERWAY

By the end of 1970, Cappon, as editor-in-chief, was engaged in reorganizing various research files that had accumulated over the past decade (2 Nov. 1970).<sup>17</sup> He set up a bibliographical file of three-by-five-inch note cards, acquired an IBM electric typewriter, and set up a dictaphone

(17 Nov., 18 Nov. 1970). By mid-May 1971, Cappon had finished the basic arrangement for research files, which was intended to provide long-range support of the project (19 May 1971). Other than the setting up of the office, Cappon's activities continued pretty much as they had for the past couple of years; that is, interviewing experts and gathering cartographic examples. Cappon realized that preparing the maps would require special expertise, and, fortunately, he hired Barbara Bartz (who married and changed her name to Petchenik midway through the project) on the staff to advise and pursue leads.<sup>18</sup> In addition to pursuing such opportunities to get valuable advice, Cappon continued to outline a plan for the atlas, mostly focusing on the number of base maps needed.<sup>19</sup> His immediate challenge was in adapting his earlier work on the Early American period to that of the American Revolution (21 Nov. 1970).<sup>20</sup> Cappon proposed to Towner that 'we restrict our plan to a 2-vol. work to 1789 or 1800; that our first objective be a bound vol. on the period after 1760, a work designed primarily for scholars but useful also for teaching; and that we ought to get a further commitment or at least assurance, if possible, from the Nat'l Endowment for the Humanities of funds for the second year & put the budget on the academic year, Sept-Aug' (17 Dec. 1970).

Cappon threw himself into determining how to staff the atlas project. He quickly wrote to sixty historians specializing in early American history to get recommendations for research assistants for the project, and he began hiring these assistants so that there was little need to rely on outside contributions (9 Nov., 18 Dec. 1970). In early 1971, Cappon began hiring research assistant positions (5 Jan., 11 Jan., 10 May 1971) and drafting research procedures for work on the atlas (15 Jun. 1971). With the first research assistant on board, Cappon began working out specifics of what would be in the atlas and a timetable for completion (4 Feb., 18 Feb., 23 Feb., 4 Mar. 1971). As formal research processes were set up, Cappon received offers from some historians to assign their students projects on the atlas, but after a few mishaps in which work was completed by students in a timely fashion (25 May, 10 Jun., 17 Sep. 1971; 1 Mar. 1972), Cappon concluded that he would not 'farm out' any other maps to be done, except in unusual cases' (16 Mar. 1972). Cappon continued to immerse himself into the history of American cartography in order to best understand the atlas project, using the rich resources of the Newberry to prepare a background paper on American cartography

for the American Antiquarian Society (8 Jan., 19 Jun. 1971).<sup>21</sup> In March 1971, the Newberry Library announced that it was establishing a Center for the History of Cartography, thanks to a gift of \$600,000, strengthening the resources for supporting the atlas project and Cappon's own personal interests in maps and mapping (15 Mar. 1971).

Almost from the start of the atlas project at the Newberry, Cappon and Petchenik began to meet with potential publishers. In January 1971, there were meetings with both Harvard's and Princeton's presses, with Harvard's seeming the most interested (11 Jan. 1971).<sup>22</sup> Over time, other presses, such as Yale's, Johns Hopkins's, and North Carolina's, joined the list of those with preliminary interest in publishing the atlas (5 Mar. 1971). Additional presses, such as Athenaeum, expressed interest but pulled out for one reason or another.<sup>23</sup> The atlas team learned, to their surprise, that Rand McNally was also interested, primarily because the company wanted to repurpose the maps for use in its other educational products (15 Apr. 1971). By June 1971, after Johns Hopkins had submitted a proposal, Cappon thought that they needed to narrow the publishers down to two or three (11 Jun. 1971). In mid-September 1971 they selected Princeton University Press to be the publisher (3 Sept. 1971).<sup>24</sup> Two months later, meeting with the director of this press, they agreed to have all the copy in by the fall of 1974 and that final publication would happen in the fall of 1975 (1 Nov. 1971).

The archives of the atlas project at the Newberry Library also provide insights into the interior workings of the project. A substantial part of these files concerns details about the challenges in producing publishable maps, which were mostly generated by Petchenik. When she joined the project, she was a staff consultant in research and design at Field Enterprises Educational Corporation; from 1964 to 1967, she had been a cartographic editor at the same company. She also brought her expertise developed during her pursuit of her academic degrees. It is clear that Petchenik was delegated the responsibilities for the technical work on the cartographic features of the atlas work. For example, there is a detailed letter from her to the director of Princeton University Press outlining the 'design and production' of the atlas. The letter provides information concerning printing, inks, and signatures, as well as commentary on general design goals, page allocation, colour plans, paper selection, type, location grid, index, and page design.<sup>25</sup> In a later letter, she described herself as the 'Chief Designer and Production Director' under the title of

cartographic editor.<sup>26</sup> There is no question that she played a crucial role in getting the atlas done. In the Newberry files there is an array of her memos to various atlas staff, Cappon, Towner, and others. They are mostly about trying to turn Cappon's original ideas for the atlas into a cartographic reality, her efforts to translate historical research into images, and her advice on how the researchers should proceed. Early in the project, Petchenik also wrote a memo on the atlas design, a memo she described as 'a kind of philosophical approach concerning elements of the Atlas that should influence design of the book.' Cappon summarized in his diary the nature of her memorandum, expressing his hope 'that it will contain some cartographic innovation, some bold presentation of appropriate subject matter. . . . This offers quite a challenge in book-making' (12 May 1971). And making books was a task that Cappon had been doing very well for decades.

A lot can be learned about Cappon's attitudes toward both the atlas project and scholarly publishing by reading his diary entries. Cappon's focus was consistently on 'high quality production, not royalties' (23 Jun. 1971), which is especially clear in his descriptions of a marathon of daylong meetings with various university presses (24 Jun., 29 Jun., 6 Jul., 7 Jul., 8 Jul. 1971).<sup>27</sup> The possibilities for atlas spin-off products emerged from these meetings. From the meeting with the Johns Hopkins representative, Cappon was told that this press believed there were 'wide opportunities for selling rights & permissions for reputable by-products of the Atlas, related to the Revolution Bicentennial, e.g. a volume of selected maps in *News Week's* projection of a series of pictorial books on the Founding Fathers' (8 Jul. 1971). Cappon kept his focus on the idea that 'Quality is the first objective, profit second' (9 Jul. 1971). However, this focus on quality also contributed to a slower than expected production rate. In fact, there was considerable internal fussing about the production pace of the maps,<sup>28</sup> the use and quality of inks (reflecting both experimentation and frustration with the results),<sup>29</sup> the final completion date,<sup>30</sup> and the amount of research needed to finish the project.<sup>31</sup> Petchenik's perspective changed as the pressure built for the completion of the maps, and a rare instance of criticism of Cappon crept into the project. In a private memorandum to Towner in early 1975, the cartographic editor fusses, 'Lester is, quite naturally, caught up in general editorial problems, indexing, text reading, etc., etc. Yet he is responsible as the researcher on badly needed, far behind material. His work is not

of the highest quality in many respects, so Nancy and I usually have a hard road ahead when we get what should be a “final” ms. map from him.<sup>32</sup> So, quality had a price.

After about a year of devoted focus on the atlas, Cappon needed to get an additional commitment from the NEH to continue support of the project. In June 1971, he worked on a proposal for a two-year extension, totaling \$375,000, with the goal of seeing the atlas published in the fall of 1975 (8 Jun., 9 Jun. 1971). The atlas project was becoming more ambitious: Cappon anticipated that six to eight research assistants would be involved, and Towner suggested creating an advisory board of fifteen to twenty historians and geographers. In late October 1971, the NEH approved a two-year extension of the atlas project, providing \$200,000 to be matched from other sources (26 Oct. 1971). However, Cappon also pursued additional funds from the United States Bicentennial Committee, primarily for additional cartographic work (30 May 1972). And in early 1973, Cappon and Towner began making plans to pursue a third grant from the NEH to complete volume 2 of the atlas, the volume on the Revolutionary War, and to start work on the first volume, on the colonial era (23 Jan. 1973). Another \$475,000 was secured from the NEH in May 1973, carrying the project to October 1975 and the completion of the Revolutionary War volume (30 May 1973).

Secure with a publisher on board and funding for continued work, the staff shifted focus to working out specific details for the project. The staff debated over whether to use eighteenth- or twentieth-century boundaries as a basic point of reference; they eventually determined to use modern-day boundaries (2 Nov., 3 Nov., 1971). When Cappon met with the atlas staff about boundary lines, the meeting revealed the types of challenges the atlas researchers faced: ‘It seems impossible to lay down rules of cartographic presentation that will apply without numerous exceptions; therefore we are assuming at present that we shall have to operate on *ad hoc* basis, using color shading & hachuring as effectively as possible’ (19 Nov. 1971). This is additional evidence about the new track this atlas was taking at the time. Confronting the matter of just how much original research they could accomplish, the staff also debated about the use of original maps and earlier maps compiled by historians (4 Jan. 1972; 19 Mar. 1973). In some cases where archival evidence of a particular subject was scanty, such as the confiscation of Loyalist

property, Cappon and his staff opted not to compile a map (14 Jan. 1972).<sup>33</sup>

Cappon was often stretched to find the necessary expertise to complete certain kinds of maps and charts in the atlas, such as maps depicting economic conditions, where ‘much of the data is sparse & spotty’ (28 Feb., 27 Sep. 1972). Similarly, he was unsure about how to approach military maps. When Petchenik composed a forty-three-page memo on the topic, Cappon recorded in his diary that he has ‘long been dissatisfied with the military section of my outline of contents of the Atlas as being too “traditional,” with little innovation, a re-hash of what has been done many times’ (6 Jul., 7 Jul. 1972). Cappon worried about the lack of battle maps in the atlas, but he was afraid that, if included, they would overwhelm the volume; besides, Cappon reasoned, there were plenty of such maps available in other atlases and conventional histories (25 Jan. 1973). From time to time, the atlas staff had to devise new maps, such as one showing the fourteen Western states as ‘provided for in the Ordinance of 1784. This has never been shown cartographically, to my knowledge; instead, the Jefferson-Hartley sketch has been reproduced to show TJ’s proposal to the Committee on the western territory, which is not the same as the provisions in the Ord of 1784’ (16 Jul. 1973). In such discussions, there was constant haggling about the audience for the atlas. For example, when Cappon met with some of the staff about the issue of consistency in the maps, they considered what symbol to use to show cemeteries. Cappon writes that Barbara Petchenik thought ‘that burying-grounds are not “important” enough to include; but I reminded her that some users of the *Atlas* will be genealogists!’ (14 Mar. 1974). Most importantly, Cappon understood that not all the maps could be complete, given the poor quality of the evidence from eighteenth-century sources and the unevenness of the work of previous historians. Cappon jotted observations into his diary, reminding himself that the basic reference maps can never be thought to be complete, but that ‘one must know when to stop research & put the notes to work’ (5 Oct. 1973). The atlas, as a reference work, would be a foundation to build from in new research about the Revolution.

Given such challenges, Cappon recalculated the schedule he needed to hold to in order to complete the atlas on time. In January 1972, he laid out a schedule for the next three years, determining that he must do ‘on the average, 5 maps per month’ (7 Jan., 10 Jan. 1972). But it was hard to

imagine that such a schedule could be maintained, given the depth and breadth of challenges daily emerging as the project proceeded. Even being consistent in place names required deliberate work and adopting consistency that was not always easy to achieve (7 Feb. 1972).<sup>34</sup> In late May 1972, as he focused on the regional reference maps essential for the production of other maps, he calculated that they were on target for completing the project in the fall of 1975, although he knew he would need additional staff (23 May, 25 May 1972).<sup>35</sup> The regional maps turned out to be quite a challenge, especially in terms of achieving any degree of uniformity. Cappon had each of the four research assistants write him a memorandum about their approach. Cappon found writing the text for the regional map he was working on to be 'slow-going.' 'Lean expository writing is required to explain the hows & the whys, & the reasons for certain omissions. The topics include the importance of physical features; the dot location of cities & villages; the circled dot for county seats regardless of size; areas of dispersed settlement not identified by a symbol. Thus far I proceeded today, guarding against discursiveness & holding to essentials' (10 Jul., 11 Jul. 1973). By early 1974, Cappon estimated that he was three or four months behind schedule and that final publication would probably be delayed until spring 1976 (24 Jan. 1974).<sup>95</sup>

The production of this atlas was in the days before computers were being regularly used for either design or typesetting in publishing. Determining the length of text to be used for each map was more art than science, made more complicated by the tendency of the staff historians to write longer texts for the maps than could be used in the atlas. Cappon, reflecting on how to work this out with Princeton University Press, expressed in late 1972 that an 'immediate need is a set of guidelines for our historians to follow, but such "rules" can be specific only up to a point because each map-subject presents its own peculiar problems. And in the final "round" of each text I must pass final judgment which to some extent will be *ad hoc*' (18 Oct. 1972). In other words, whatever frustration might be felt by atlas staff or supporters, the process of compiling it was a tedious and time-consuming one.

Other problems arose as the atlas project proceeded. As the project rolled into its fourth year, Cappon sought ways to make research assistant positions more attractive and to keep experienced researchers on the staff. In the spring of 1973, Cappon worked out a plan with Towner to allow for the assistants to have 'time for related research,' giving each

individual a month per year for their own research after they have worked for two years. He hoped that this would encourage the researchers to stay and would provide for a 'continuity of staff.' It was obvious that Cappon believed that the project would be continuing for a number of years beyond the completion of the volume on the Revolutionary War: 'I am very glad we have seen our way clear to launch this plan,' Cappon reflects, 'which should increase the prestige of the Atlas as a scholarly project' (23 May 1973).

#### CAPPON TAKES THE ATLAS INTO THE FUTURE

With more than two years of work yet ahead, Cappon was thinking about the next volume of the atlas on the colonial era. It was, after all, where he had started. In late July 1973, Herb Bailey of Princeton University Press let Cappon know he and his press were still interested in the first volume (25 Jul. 1973). Half a year later, Cappon met with Towner to discuss what would come after the Revolutionary War atlas was completed. Towner was skeptical that the NEH or the foundations supporting the atlas would commit to supporting work on the atlas documenting the colonial era before 1760. Cappon's immediate concern was holding the atlas staff together, because of 'their expertise and professional competence,' which made Cappon realize the potential for a 'series of essays on cartography and history and how an atlas should be compiled' (6 Feb. 1974). So, another project was born; as it was, Cappon had been writing, or contemplating writing, various essays about the atlas and its production.<sup>36</sup>

Reflecting on the prospects for completing the other volume of the atlas also raised another issue for Cappon. On the eve of a visit by Towner with the NEH and after a discussion with him about the possibilities for continued funding, Cappon wondered whether if it wasn't 'time for a younger editor-in-chief to take the reins?' (23 Jun. 1974).<sup>37</sup> After the meeting with the NEH, Towner told Cappon that they would ask the Endowment for a supplemental grant of \$150,000 'to cover cartographic costs beyond our allowance in the budget' out of recognition that the costs had ballooned for several reasons: the maps were more complicated than expected, base maps needed to be revised, there were a higher number of maps than had been originally planned, and the military maps were being created in an innovative way ('cartographic work more



expensive than the traditional series of campaign and battle maps'); furthermore, 'inflation' had negatively impacted their original budget (3 Aug. 1974).<sup>38</sup> None of this addressed doing another atlas volume, of course; for this they assumed the need for another grant application to the NEH and other forms of fundraising (10 Sep. 1974). Within a few months, however, Towner was less sanguine about prospects for NEH funding beyond short-term projects.<sup>39</sup> In early 1975, the NEH awarded the project an additional \$150,000 for cartographic costs not anticipated, but it was understood that this was the limit of such funding (28 Jan. 1975). This prompted some discussion among the atlas staff about whether the NEH could continue being interested in supporting atlas projects because they take so long to complete, as well as because they fall outside of the humanities.<sup>40</sup>

These discussions returned Cappon to the idea of a collection of essays about the atlas project. While working at home on a Sunday in the late summer, Cappon jotted down some ideas in his diary about this 'brainstorm,' a work that would include '8 chapters by each of the professional members, e.g. Barbara Petchenik on cartographic design; John Long on new perspective on the military; Steve Wiberley on Carto-historical editing: city plans; Bill Bedford on mapping cultural history; etc.' (8 Sep. 1974). The next day Cappon wrote a memorandum about the idea to Towner. He believed that 'for future works of this kind it should be helpful to learn how our project was carried on, its problems, procedures, achievements, and shortcomings,' and that it needed to be done 'while the staff is on the job & the information is fresh in mind' (9 Sept. 1974). Towner was 'enthusiastic' about the book proposal (10 Sep. 1974).

As they moved into the end of 1974, the pressure to complete the atlas intensified. Princeton University Press determined that it wanted to publish in the fall of 1975, since it would be 'highly advantageous' for Bicentennial sales (13 Sep., 20 Sep. 1974). Princeton subsequently moved up the date on which it would need the manuscript if it were to meet a spring 1976 publication date, and Cappon and his staff hunkered down to try to meet the tight deadline (14 Feb. 1975). Although they immediately entered into a period of 'intensive writing and editing of text,' they failed to meet the deadlines, and they quickly concluded that they would have to adjust to the 1976 publication date 'because there are too many uncertain factors to risk rushing completion for Fall '75' (1 Mar., 7 Apr. 1975).

Cappon was becoming less interested in some of the proposals for continuing the atlas project beyond the volume on the Revolutionary War, although he understood the need for such proposals in order to hold the atlas staff together.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, staff members made proposals for what a continuation of the project might entail. In early 1973, Petchenik wrote to Cappon that because they had been immersed in the current volume, they had lost sight of an idea for a third volume (although they had talked about the idea of a first volume). Petchenik noted that the Revolutionary War volume included about one-third of its space on the period 1790 to 1830 and, that, given the greater knowledge about the sources for this period, perhaps they should consider the third volume, on this period, as the next phase.<sup>42</sup>

The project was now moving into shutdown mode. Cappon dutifully followed up on requests to prepare materials that would promote the sales and use of the atlas, such as an essay on the use of the atlas in high schools (14 Apr. 1975)<sup>43</sup> and an article printed in a local history newsletter (25 Jun. 1975). Meanwhile, Cappon, in addition to trying to finish the atlas and the book about its production, was beginning to reflect about the best way to shut down the project. While the staff was proofreading the page proofs, they were also applying for jobs elsewhere. In mid-June 1975, Cappon anticipated that the project would be over by October, and he wondered about what would happen to all the project files (19 Jun. 1975). Cappon's concerns about such matters had certainly been honed by his own difficulties in finding the archives of previous atlas projects.

As the atlas moved more deeply into its final production phase, Cappon pushed harder on completing the collection of essays about the atlas. In mid-summer 1975, he drafted a rough outline of an essay on 'The Natural and the Historical Landscape,' which was his contribution to the proposed volume of essays by atlas staff members, a book 'which might be published by the Newberry Library's Center for the History of Cartography' (9 Jul. 1975). Cappon began meeting with each of the authors for this collection. Though worried about some redundancy between this volume and the atlas itself, Cappon envisioned this volume to be a new and important contribution to the record of the creation of historical atlases (25 Jul. 1975). By November 1975, he had four essays in hand for the book (4 Nov. 1975).

The final production steps were not without various bumps and problems. The staff cartographer complained about the poor quality of the maps being produced by the press that Princeton was using, expressing fear that the atlas would not be the 'distinguished product it ought to be' (18 Jul. 1975). Nevertheless, the final manuscript was dispatched to Princeton University Press in late October 1975 (22 Oct. 1975).<sup>122</sup> As the final revisions to the atlas index were made, Cappon wistfully reflected on the dispersal of the project staff (31 Oct. 1975). In the spring of 1976, Cappon wrote a final report about the atlas project for the Institute of Early American History and Culture. He noted that the project had cost \$1,600,000, the 'largest expense being the cartographic work of R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company' (11 Mar. 1976). A week later he wrote a 'brief statement' about the atlas for the Newberry's newsletter, hoping that this was the final one he would have to write about it (17 Mar. 1976). Finally, in early June 1976, parties were held at the Newberry to celebrate the publication of the atlas (1 Jun., 2 Jun. 1976). Three weeks later, Cappon brought a conclusion to the atlas, noting that he had written the final report on it for Towner and was contemplating a peaceful retirement (23 Jun. 1976).<sup>44</sup>

#### CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF THE ATLAS

The *Atlas of Early American History: The Revolutionary Era 1760–1790*, as it appeared in 1976, was, and still is, an impressive work. The 157-page, folio-sized work features 186 maps—most in colour—covering every conceivable topic related to the American Revolution. It was the product not only of Cappon and Petchenik, the two individuals most responsible for guiding it to completion, but a half-dozen staff buttressed by the advice and labour of over one hundred additional scholars and by dozens of historical manuscripts and archival repositories.<sup>45</sup> The atlas followed a chronological framework of three periods—the colonial years before 1776, the War itself, and the postwar or Confederation years—with an array of thematic maps on topics such as cities, boundaries, population, economic activity, cultural activity, and military campaigns. The volume also included an extensive interpretative text with commentary about the sources used for the construction of the maps and their historical context and meaning. The book is a wonderful reference work, although no one has done any systemic analysis of how it has been cited over the

nearly forty years of its existence (and that is beyond the scope of this study).

Anyone using the atlas realizes that it is a reference work. It is difficult to handle unless you have a good-sized library table. Sales of the atlas were robust: 1,718 copies were sold by the end of September 1976.<sup>46</sup> The sales were doubtless greatly assisted by the excellent publicity materials produced by Princeton University Press<sup>47</sup> and by the many favourable reviews. Garry Wills, in his *New York Times* column, identified it as one of the three most notable achievements of the American Bicentennial (the other two being the tall-ships festival in New York Harbor and the revival of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*), something that Cappon accepted with some pride (5 Jan. 1977).<sup>48</sup> Reviewers generally focused on the fact that the atlas was based on an exhaustive use of original sources that put the Revolution in its social, political, economic, and cultural contexts. Reviews described the atlas as a 'contribution to knowledge of the American people that merits a major award in the world of books'<sup>49</sup> and 'an extraordinary, magnificent achievement' that was 'likely to endure as the definitive cartographic statement for three particularly crucial decades in our nation's history.'<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere, it was predicted that the atlas 'will know a lasting value and eminence.'<sup>51</sup> William P. Cumming thought it would not be surpassed: 'No other atlas approaches it for comprehensiveness, care, skill, and accuracy for that period, nor for that matter for any other period in American history. It will be an indispensable reference tool for writer, student, teacher, and historian of the Revolutionary era, in its examination of social, religious, political, economic, cultural, demographic, and military factors.'<sup>52</sup> And he was right; the atlas has not been surpassed, even if its scholarship is now dated.

Anyone who has ever had a book reviewed knows how rare it is to have such consistently glowing assessments. In every review of the atlas that pinpoints a problem or argues for more content, there is always an accompanying apology for quibbling about such an outstanding piece of scholarship. What must have been particularly pleasant for Cappon to read were the reviews discussing how the atlas had potential use beyond just scholarly circles. Gary B. Nash, for example, wrote, 'Apart from their immense value to scholars, these maps, easily reproducible in slide or transparency form, will provide thousands of high school and college instructors who teach early American history the means for breaking

through the geographical and conceptual confusion of students, who, even in this widely traveled society, have difficulty visualizing that the west coast of South America is east of much of the North American seaboard, that the distance from Jamaica to Virginia was greater than from Virginia to the Great Plains, or even that New York is west of Massachusetts.' Nash complained about some 'research errors' and 'narrowness of conception,' but he still wished for a second volume on the 1790-to-1830 period.<sup>53</sup> The cost of the atlas (\$125 when it appeared) worked against some of the claims for its use by local students of history, as Richard Judd lamented in his review: 'This book will furnish a lifetime of pleasure to the private student who is rich or extravagant enough to buy it. It is an essential purchase for public libraries in larger towns, state and regional libraries, colleges, and universities. Since it is not attuned to the detailed study of state or local history, smaller town libraries and local historical societies may justly deem it a non-essential luxury.'<sup>54</sup> Such comments on price serve as a reminder about how the costs of books have always been related to ensuring good readership or adoption as texts for courses; little really has changed. When Cappon read some of the reviews citing particular problems in research, scope, or design of the atlas, he must have been hopeful for additional work on such atlas production. Cappon, a stickler for clear expository writing and accurate detail, must have been chafing at the bit to get back into the project when reviewers offered specific examples of omissions or errors.

The atlas continues to be cited, and it is readily available via used book channels, selling for about the same price as it was when first published. Jeremy Black, in his international survey of historical atlases, only made a passing reference to the atlas for its use of isolines to depict the timeframe of information exchange.<sup>55</sup> In an earlier essay, Black cited the Cappon volume as an example of the enormous amount of time and costs required for producing maps when there are limitations in the availability of original maps and in the textual information provided by scholarly work.<sup>56</sup> Given Cappon's interest in his atlas as a teaching tool, it is useful to note Black's conclusion in this latter essay: 'Unless the historical atlas adapts to new possibilities and challenges, its value as a teaching and research tool will be overlooked, especially at the non-specialist level, and it will appear increasingly redundant, particularly to those concerned with local and social history. Equally, unless atlases are

used, students will become increasingly spatially illiterate and geographically ignorant and this will seriously affect their knowledge and understanding of the past.<sup>57</sup> This assessment is certainly relevant today, and it may explain why we don't see more references to Cappon's work.

Later references to Cappon's atlas often note it either as a stunning example of the historical atlas as form or as a benchmark. Steven Hoelscher's 2001 review of historical atlases starts with Barbara Bartz Petchenik, the cartographic editor involved with Cappon's project, and her assertion that this atlas represents the end of 'scholarly historical atlases' because of new computer technologies<sup>58</sup> (something Cappon himself both feared and lamented by the end of the project). Indeed, the more recent reliance on digital approaches has generated greater interest in the reliability of maps and, interestingly, an article on this subject uses one of the maps in the Cappon atlas as an example. Timothy R. Wallace and Charles van den Heuvel referenced the decision of the atlas staff to remove the temporary gun placements from an eighteenth-century map of Boston to create a basic reference map for this city. These authors saw this as an 'example of how maps are sometimes stripped of functional argument or embellished for aesthetic reasons with immense consequences for the concept of truth and historical evidence.'<sup>59</sup> Such references to the Cappon atlas indicate that the work has maintained longevity in historical scholarship that, while not unique, is not common. Of course, occasionally there are subsequent references that pose continuing questions about the legacy of the atlas. Leonard Levy's intimate account of the deliberations for the Pulitzer Prize in American history indicates that while the atlas was considered, Levy himself had concerns: 'I seriously studied the *Atlas*, which previously I merely had admired, and found to my surprise that the beautiful cartographical work was based on too many secondary sources that were questionable. . . . When Kammen next reported in, he too had done his homework on the *Atlas* and found it wanting: he had also located an expert cartographer's review supporting our suspicions.'<sup>60</sup> In hindsight, given the nature of historical scholarship on early America at the time and the immense challenges in assembling any kind of data for such an atlas, this assessment seems a bit harsh. What is probably most relevant for reflecting on the legacy of the Cappon atlas is that it was even in the running for a Pulitzer and that it continues to be cited in many studies about early America and historical geography.

Its legacy might have been strengthened had the collection of essays about its making ever been completed and published, but, despite Cappon's cajoling, the volume never came together (31 May, 22 Jul. 1977; 26 May, 14 Aug., 21 Sep. 1978). When he learned that the essay Steve Wiberley had written for it (on the topic of editing historical city maps) was accepted for publication in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Cappon expressed his skepticism about the collection of essays ever being published (3 Mar. 1979).<sup>61</sup> Cappon also submitted his essay, 'The Historical Map in American Atlases,' to the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, but it was rejected because it was not concerned with methodological issues (at least that is how Cappon characterized the rejection); however, the essay was eventually accepted by the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, and, for all practical purposes, this was the end of the work on the essays about the making of the atlas (12 Feb., 17 Mar., 26 Jun. 1979).<sup>62</sup> What best represents the legacy of the atlas, as well as Cappon's career as historian, documentary editor, and archivist, is the atlas itself.

RICHARD J. COX is professor, Archival Studies, at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Information Sciences. He has written extensively on archival and records management topics and has published sixteen books in this field. Dr. Cox was elected a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists in 1989.

#### NOTES

1. John B. Thompson, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, UK: Polity 2010), 21
2. Beth Luey, *Expanding the American Mind: Books and the Popularization of Knowledge* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press 2010)
3. See, for example, Ann Orlov, 'Demythologizing Scholarly Publishing,' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 421 (September 1975): 43–55.
4. Cappon received a PhD in American History at Harvard, worked as an archivist at the University of Virginia (1930–1945), with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the Institute of Early American History and Culture (1945–1969), and at the Newberry Library (1969–1981). See Richard J. Cox, *Lester J. Cappon and the Relationship of History, Archives, and Scholarship in the Golden Age of Archival Theory* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists 2004).
5. For an overview of the university press as a scholarly publisher, see Cecile M. Jagodzinski, 'The University Press in North America: A Brief History,' *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 40, 1 (October 2008): 1–20.

6. Margaret Stieg Dalton, 'The Publishing Experiences of Historians,' *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 39, 3 (April 2008): 197–240, 198
7. *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 90 (April 1982): 248–9, 249
8. All dates mentioned in parentheses refer to entries in Cappon's diaries, held in the Lester J. Cappon Papers, 90 C17, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.
9. Later, when he was putting the final touches on this book, Cappon notes, 'I hope we can afford to publish it, and do so soon, while civil liberties are in the forefront of the public mind' (25 Jan. 1955). The book in question is Robert Allen Rutland, *The Birth of the Bill of Rights 1776–1791* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1955).
10. There is a 13 May 1957 memorandum from Lawrence W. Towner to Cappon stating the reasons why doing an atlas on early American history is important and is probably feasible only if carried out by the Institute of Early American History and Culture; File 'Atlas Project, Before 1969,' Box 5, Atlas of Early American History Cartographic Files, Newberry Library.
11. This meeting helped Cappon begin to draft an outline of the contents of the atlas: 'We would exclude statistical charts & other devices of that nature and stick to cartography. The maps would be both photographic reproductions of contemporary maps (or portions of them) and new maps drawn by a professional map-maker. There would be 200 or more of the latter' (15 Jun. 1960).
12. Cappon used this dummy to shop around the atlas project, but he remained nervous that it somehow reflected his own biases rather than the best interests of the project (24 Apr., 26 Apr., 29 Apr. 1968).
13. By this time the budget had grown to \$400,000.
14. He estimated in February 1969 that it would cost \$211,000 to support a director, full-time editor-historian, and an assistant editor (21 Feb. 1969). A week later, he upped the estimate to \$300,000 (27 Feb. 1969).
15. 'Outline of Contents, Revised,' Lester J. Cappon and Lawrence W. Towner, 'A Proposal from the Institute of Early American History and Culture and the Newberry Library: The Atlas of Early American History,' 18 October 1969, Box 7, Atlas Files, Newberry Library.
16. The essay is 'The Case for a New Historical Atlas of Early America,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 28 (January 1971): 121–7.
17. The Atlas files at the Newberry Library—about a dozen cubic feet—include records extending back to around 1960 and reflecting Cappon's work on it while situated at the Institute of Early American History and Culture. In Box 3 there is a file of correspondence and other documents about the American Geographical Society and early ideas about the atlas dating back to 1961, indicating efforts to



get the project underway back as early as 1962 or so. In Box 4 there is information about saving later records of the project. It is noted that there were about ten thousand pieces—about two tons—in dead storage at the R. R. Donnelley Company and that these were mostly plastic transparencies related to the design and production of the Atlas (Ruth Hombach to Lawrence W. Towner and Joel Samuels, 21 July 1976, in file ‘Future Atlas—Projects;’ there is no evidence that any of these materials were sampled and saved). In Box 5, there is a file of older grant applications dated from 1962 through 1964.

18. Barbara Bartz received her PhD from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and served in a variety of cartographic editorships; she died in 1992. While she worked on the atlas project, she also co-authored an important study about maps with Arthur H. Robinson, *The Nature of Maps: Essays Toward Understanding Maps and Mapping* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1976). Bartz married and changed her name to Petchenik midway through the project. Hereafter, I refer to her as Petchenik in the text; however, I have used either Bartz or Petchenik in the citations to archival sources according to the way she signed her name.
19. Cappon read David Woodward’s outline on cartographic procedures and a letter by Barbara Bartz on cartographic issues (4 Nov. 1970). He finished this ‘detailed draft outline’ and started sending it out in early December (3 Dec. 1970).
20. Cappon received mostly positive feedback on his outline for the atlas (14 Jan. 1971).
21. The essay was published as ‘Geographers and Mapmakers, from about 1750 to 1789,’ *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 81, 2 (1971): 243–71.
22. He also approached the University of Chicago Press (22 Jan. 1971). Cappon assumed that Harvard and Princeton would be the main competitors (25 Feb. 1971).
23. Athenaeum pulled out, Cappon thought, because of its own financial difficulties (7 Jun. 1971).
24. A record that the contract with Princeton had been received with signatures can be found in Herbert S. Bailey, Jr., to Lawrence W. Towner, Lester J. Cappon, and Barbara Bartz, 11 November 1971, Atlas Files, Newberry Library.
25. Barbara Bartz to Herbert S. Bailey, Jr., 10 November 1971, Atlas Files, Newberry Library. Most of the archival material that relates to Princeton is from her and concerns the technical issues of design and map production.
26. Barbara B. Petchenik to Henry Koval, Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 16 November 1972, Atlas Files, Newberry Library
27. Cappon met with representatives of Harvard University Press, University of Illinois Press, Johns Hopkins University Press, and Yale University Press.

28. Herbert S. Bailey, Jr., to Barbara Petchenik, 5 November 1973, Box 1, Atlas Files, Newberry Library
29. Lawrence Towner to Herbert S. Bailey, Jr., 17 March 1975, Box 1, Atlas Files, Newberry Library, is an example that lays out various meetings, agreements, and disagreements and reasserts that the project team is interested first and foremost in ensuring quality rather than adhering to the publishing schedule.
30. Barbara Bartz to Bill Towner, 3 June 1971, Box 1, Atlas Files, Newberry Library
31. Petchenik was sceptical about the possibility of finishing the first planned volume, the original one long espoused by Cappon. She indicated that she thought that twenty to thirty years of research needed to be done on the period leading up to the American Revolution. She thought that the volume on the Revolutionary era was doable because the records and secondary research were available; Barbara B. Petchenik to Towner, 6 September 1973, Box 1, Atlas Files, Newberry Library.
32. Barbara B. Petchenik to L. W. Towner, 16 January 1975, Box 1, Atlas Files, Newberry Library
33. In some cases, they had an extraordinary amount of evidence, but it was not always very reliable, such as their evidence about silversmiths. The atlas staff member working on this, Stephen Wiberly, 'must weigh the evidence and indulge, in some instances, in limited supposition. However, his attitude is conservative in deciding on inclusion or exclusion of doubtful cases; he is a very careful researcher' (28 May 1974).
34. Cappon wrote to the Archivist of the United States, James B. Rhoads, to get a definition of an official microfilm publication (8 Feb. 1972). The place name discussion also led to a discussion about what the index would consist of, and Cappon mocked up a sample that was accepted (9 Feb. 1972).
35. Barbara Bartz followed up this meeting with a detailed memo on 'The Future,' concluding that they had three options—hiring additional clerical help, employing a managing editor, or adding more researchers to the staff. Cappon writes, 'She feels that our 3 historians, being Ph.D. candidates still working on their dissertations & having limited experience in research & writing, need more close supervision, more advice in the course of work on each map, and criticism of their writing of captions & texts. They are all conscientious scholars, working full-time on the Atlas, but likewise feeling the urge to complete their dissertations during the evening & weekend hours. How much over-time, if any, could we justly expect from them, when we feel the pressure of production & deadlines?' (24 May 1972).
36. For example, Cappon explored the possibility of writing an essay about the atlas for the popular history magazine, *American Heritage* (29 Sep., 1 Oct. 1974). This proved to be a difficult task. He heard from that magazine's editor, Oliver Jensen,

that he worried about the 'shape an article could take if it were to interest the readers of *American Heritage*. The 1973 paper you sent was interesting, of course, but extremely technical and difficult; it calls for the kind of attention that we are not likely to get from our readers.' Jensen wanted to know if the atlas project had made any kind of new discoveries; Oliver Jensen to Lester J. Cappon, 23 October 1974, Box 3, Atlas Files, Newberry Library.

37. As the discussions about the possibilities for funding of the atlas project and the collection of essays about the atlas continued, Cappon ultimately determined that he wanted to be done with it by November 1975, except in some sort of consultant role (14 Oct. 1974).
38. After a visit by NEH staff, Cappon learned that the NEH had been asked for \$220,000 (and that it would respond positively, provided the project could be completed by October 1975) and that Towner had \$50,000 of unencumbered funds to serve as a cushion (4 Sep. 1974).
39. Towner sent a memo to the atlas staff, reminding them that the project was funded through October 1975, adding, 'In the present state of NEH concerning its future funding by the Congress in this period of inflation, with a new regime (Pres. Ford) in the Gov't, NEH is unwilling to underwrite long-term projects.' Towner saw the possibility of a short-term grant into summer 1976 'if we can propose a constructive short-term project.' The staff subsequently met and determined that the two best short-term projects would be separate series of maps of counties and other local subdivisions and a volume of essays about how the atlas was done (8 Oct., 9 Oct., 11 Oct., 13 Oct., 17 Oct. 1974).
40. Petchenik, in a letter to Towner dated 13 June 1975, addressed why the NEH seems not to be interested in continuing to fund the production of atlases—perhaps because they are so costly and take so long—but she wanted a clear statement about this. David Woodward, also in a letter to Towner dated June 13, 1975, also worried about the implications of the NEH seeming to think that maps are not humanistic endeavors—specifically, the implications for the cartography unit at the Newberry; Box 1, Atlas Files, Newberry Library.
41. For example, Cappon was not interested in a project for computerizing the maps without print publication (30 Oct. 1974). The NEH awarded \$104,000 for the computerized county-boundary atlas, with David Woodward as the principal investigator (21 May 1975).
42. Barbara B. Petchenik to Lester J. Cappon, 7 January 1973, File 'AAR—Petchenik, Barbara,' Box 8, Atlas Files, Newberry Library
43. Bailey submitted the essay to the *School Library Journal* (28 Apr. 1975). Cappon was in general receptive about writing such popular pieces. In late 1972, he agreed to write a 1500-word essay about an eighteenth-century map that R. R.

- Donnelly & Sons was reproducing and would distribute to its customers to demonstrate the company's printing abilities (11 Dec. 1972).
44. Some still held out hope for securing funding for preparing an atlas for the colonial era (24 Jun. 1977).
  45. The atlas staff—William B. Bedford, Gordon DenBoer, Adele Hast, and Stephen E. Wiberly, Jr.—went on to have distinguished careers as historians, documentary editors, archivists, and librarians.
  46. Daniel G. Harvey (Princeton University Press) to Marianne [?], 30 September 1976, File 'Atlas Reviews, Notices, etc.,' Box 9, Atlas Files, Newberry Library.
  47. A copy of the brochure can be found in File 'Atlas Reviews, Notices, etc.,' Box 9, Atlas Files, Newberry Library.
  48. In the Atlas Files is a copy of this column syndicated as 'Bicentennial Prizes' *Chicago Sun Times*, 1 January 1977, Box 9.
  49. William F. Swindler, review in 'Books for Lawyers,' *American Bar Association Journal* 63 (May 1977): 623
  50. Wilbur Zelinsky, review in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 67 (September 1977): 437–40, 437
  51. Trevor Colbourn, review in *Journal of American History* 66 (December 1979): 637–8, 637
  52. William P. Cumming, review in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 84 (October 1976): 486–8, 486
  53. Gary B. Nash, review in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101 (July 1977): 388–90
  54. Richard Judd, review in *Vermont History* 45 (Fall 1977): 247–9, 249
  55. Jeremy Black, 'Historical Atlases,' *Historical Journal* 37 (September 1994): 643–67, 660
  56. Jeremy Black, 'The Historical Atlas: Teaching Tool or Coffee Table Book?' *History Teacher* 25 (August 1992): 489–512, 498 & 502
  57. *Ibid.*, 508. Cappon's atlas was listed in Lawrence B. de Graaf, 'Clio's Neglected Tools: A Taxonomy of Reference Works for American History,' *History Teacher* 25 (February 1992): 191–231, 219 for its 'detailed cartography.'
  58. Steven Hoelscher, 'Mapping the Past: Historical Atlases and the Mingling of History and Geography,' *Public Historian* 23 (Winter 2001): 75–87, 75–6
  59. Timothy R. Wallace and Charles van den Heuvel, 'Truth and Accountability in Geographic and Historical Visualizations,' *Cartographic Journal* 42 (September 2005): 178. This was a commentary on Stephen E. Wiberley, Jr., 'Editing Maps: A Method for Historical Cartography,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10 (Winter 1980): 499–510, in which they indicated that the *Atlas of Early American History* sometimes drew on original period maps to create new maps; Wiberley was on the staff of the atlas project.

60. Leonard W. Levy, 'Prize Stories,' *Reviews in American History* 8 (March 1980): 1–20, 18
61. It is possible that another cartographic publication by the Newberry might have shelved the volume Cappon wanted to edit about the atlas: J. B. Harley, Barbara Bartz Petchenik, and Lawrence W. Towner, *Mapping the American Revolutionary War*, The Kenneth Nebenzahl, Jr., Lectures in the History of Cartography at The Newberry Library (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1978). Its contents came from lectures given 11–14 November 1974 at the Newberry. Its essays focus on military cartography, which at the time was considered to be a neglected topic and was one of the more challenging aspects of the atlas. The various speakers made passing references to the atlas project. Barbara Petchenik's essay, 'The Mapping of the American Revolutionary War in the Twentieth Century,' includes a description of the 'novel approach' used in the atlas project (128) and includes a description of the atlas and the difficulties presented by the nature of the military engagements and historical sources related to these engagements (142–7).
62. 'The Historical Map in American Atlases,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69 (December 1979): 622–34