Review of *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England.* Susannah R. Ottaway. Reviewed by John M. Herrick.

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Part 3, Title II issues, includes three separate areas: Kriegel and Hockenberry take us for a walk and a ride, respectively, in New York, followed by an interesting presentation of the legal issues in regard to mass transit and curb cuts; Tollifson shares her experiences with getting a driver's license, which is followed by a discussion about testing and disability which challenges readers to explore their own beliefs - should people with disabilities be tested differently than people without disabilities? Stewart shares her experiences in trying to get a deaf interpreter for her daughter in an ER, while O'Brien shares frustrations over a copy machine, followed by a complex discussion of the impact of the new federalism on the Supreme Court on the enforcement of ADA provisions.

Part 4, which relates a frustrating if wryly amusing story about handicapped parking places on private property, includes an insightful analysis of the complexities of enforcing Title III of the ADA: the lack of direction of responsibility leaves everyone - police, mayor's office, government officials - unsure and unwilling to ensure this code is followed.

This book is a "good read", and it presents a great deal of useful legal information in a very accessible manner by connecting the personal to the legal spheres in a very immediate sense. Concerned first about the person in the narrative, the reader eagerly peruses and absorbs the applicable sections of law and the challenges that directly impact each individual's life.

<div style="text-align:right">Juliet C. Rothman
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Susannah R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004. $70.00 cloth

Susannah Ottaway, a professor of history at Carlton College, Minnesota, has written an important monograph that is one of books in the Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time. It examines provision for the elderly in eighteenth-century England, a time of population growth and the beginnings of the industrial revolution. The well-being of the elderly, generally seen as those over the age of sixty, was

determined not simply by such obvious factors as personal health, but by the intersection of custom, tradition, community values, social class, gender and changing social conditions. Primary sources—eighteenth century correspondence, memoirs, wills, diaries, parish and administrative relief records—reveal socially constructed meanings of old age and document care for the dependent elderly in the parishes of Terling, Essex; Puddleton, Dorset; and the township of Ovenden, Halifax parish, West Yorkshire.

Throughout the 18th century, most of the elderly did not need public relief under the Old Poor Law, indicating the strength of community and family values to provide support for the aged. Early in the century, no more than ten percent of the elderly received relief under the Poor Laws. The elderly most often wanted to remain independent and self-reliant as long as possible. They did not want to burden their families. When they could no longer care for themselves or depend on family support, they turned to the community for assistance. Parish officials determined eligibility and awarded relief that attempted to match individual needs. In-kind "outdoor relief" such food, fuel, clothing and medical care were often given to the elderly in their homes. Parish owned housing was used to provide shelter. At times, the elderly were expected to work in return for assistance if they were able to do so. Over the course of the century, the ability of families to care for elderly members declined in hard economic times, forcing the elderly to turn to the community for relief. Quantitative data drawn from extant relief records reveal the "Old-old", those over the age of seventy, received more relief than the "young-old", those between sixty and seventy, reflecting community commitment to support those with the greatest need.

As the 18th century progressed, the ages of relief recipients were more frequently listed in parish records, indicating increasing awareness that old age was as a unique stage of life when dependency could be anticipated. While some scholars have characterized relief to the poor in this period as residual, especially for the able-bodied, the author argues that for much of the century the elderly poor could reasonably expect long-term support from the community if needed. Relief functioned, in effect, as a safety net for the "deserving" elderly. Contrary to the assertions of some

historians that relief shifted from the old to the young over the century, the number of elderly relief recipients increased in the parishes of Terling and Puddleton. Towards the end of the century, when more elderly needed public relief, parish relief funds could not keep up with demand resulting in the decreasing value of relief awards. This meant that the quality of care for the indigent elderly diminished. The poor became stigmatized and feared and their care was perceived as a community burden.

In the mid-eighteenth century, workhouses provided relief to the middle aged and even to children. Able-bodied workhouse inmates were expected to work in return for care. Parish relief officials supplemented outdoor relief with indoor relief in work-houses, a portent of the Poor Law reforms of 1834. By the end of the century, workhouses had become, in effect, poorhouses for the elderly. Appropriate care of the indigent elderly was debated by social reformers. Some argued against sending the elderly to workhouses, fearing removing them from their homes and families would be harmful. Others believed relief could be provided most efficiently and parsimoniously in the tightly con-trolled workhouse setting.

The author provides a detailed analysis and description of parish workhouses. The inventory of the Ovenden workhouse listed stocks and thumbscrews suggesting punishments were used to enforce rules and conformity. The elderly poor often resisted being sent to the workhouse, evidence that it represented a loss of independence and carried social stigma. Parish data show that age and gender influenced relief awards. Generally, more elderly men than elderly women received relief in Terling and Puddleton although women received support at earlier ages than men. Women were generally expected to work in the home in keeping with community values, although evidence shows many worked outside the home. Inheritance laws and social class often determined whether or not women could maintain independence as they aged. The author concludes with a call for recognition that "old age" is an important and neglected construct for studying the early modern period and that it deserves more attention from scholars. Her book is an important contribution to our understanding of the development of societal attitudes towards the poor and elderly in the Anglo-American world. Its

careful use of quantitative and qualitative research techniques is a model of innovative social history.

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Bruce Sinclair (Ed.), *Technology and the African American Experience: Needs and Opportunities for Study.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004. $35.00 hardcover.

Technology has always been a central aspect of the American cultural ethos toward progress and innovation. The ideas of Yankee Ingenuity and American Inventiveness are among the United States most cherished cultural images. This raises the question of both the accuracy and completeness of our understanding of the role of technology in the evolution of both America's culture and its place in the world. Bruce Sinclair and his colleagues question if historical accounts of technology fairly treat African Americans and what impacts this has had on the quality of the history of American technology. These essays examine the role of African Americans in how technology developed and how racism affected not only their contribution but the ways that historians have chronicled their involvement with technology.

The book begins with an essay by Judith Carney on the role of slaves in transferring rice growing technology from West Africa to Georgia and South Carolina. She argues that Africans learned the technology in their homeland and brought it to the American South, training their owners to use the techniques. Portia James then reviews the role of African Americans in the growth of technology. Particularly interesting is her discussion of the role of patent law in enforcing racist understandings of the technological competence of nonwhites. Sinclair then offers a brief examination of attempts to change the prevailing historical view of African American contributions to technology via newspaper comics.

Nina Lerman provides an excellent discussion of the industrial education movement and its impact on African Americans. This is an extremely rich discussion, full of subtle but profound insights. Barbara Garrity-Blake then provides an examination of work songs of African American fishermen. This is a fascinating