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STRUNA, NANCY L. *People of Prowess: Sport, Leisure, and Labor in Early Anglo-America*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996. Pp. x, 271. Notes, index. \$34.95 cb., \$18.95 pb.

Most recent syntheses of early American history use regional culture as the major organizing principle: Puritan New England, Quaker Middle Colonies, and the Cavalier-honor South. Nancy Struna subordinates the impact of such regional ethical systems to issues of class and economic necessity. This strategy furnishes both the strength and weakness of the book, *People of Prowess*.

Struna argues brilliantly in the early chapters that the Cavalier ethos of the Chesapeake and the Puritan ethic of New England made little difference in sports and leisure. In both seventeenth-century societies, she argues, the colonists favored labor over traditional uses of leisure time. They tended to avoid traditional pastimes like football, dancing, and holy festivals. Wealthier seventeenth-century Virginians were interested in taking all of their servants' time to make tobacco and profits, and Virginia ex-servants were interested in economic advancement. Thus the mixed rhythms of work and leisure in England became a monotonous work song in the Chesapeake. The New Englanders were similarly laborious, she argues, as much because of a shortage of labor as because of restrictive Puritan attitudes toward sports and leisure. As Struna summarizes it: "the demands and rewards of work itself were greater in the New World" (p. 61).

Early Americans, however, did establish some leisure in their lives. Struna argues that American societies stabilized after 1680. Upper classes in all regions began to fashion an American system of work and leisure, often imitating and adapting English gentry styles to American conditions, often dramatizing their different kinds of prowess in their sports. It is here that the avoidance of regional culture becomes objectionable. Samuel Sewall, a wealthy Puritan merchant, and William Byrd II, a wealthy Virginia planter, were both upper-class Americans, but their patterns of leisure were dramatically different, as their respective diaries show. It simply does not work to argue that they really had more in common

than they did. Similarly, Struna avoids in her synthesis the intra-regional debates about leisure and sport. By the mid-eighteenth century, Puritans and Quakers were attempting to suppress burgeoning activities, while in the 1760s the Virginia elite worried over the impact of revivalist Baptists and Methodists who threatened to destroy all amusements. It is a shame to neglect such conflicts in an overview.

Struna's work is well-informed insofar as it is supported by interesting and telling details. The footnotes reveal a wealth of sources and the author's hard work Struna uses a lot of colonial diaries but does not use them as well as she might. The book is really about how early Americans used their time, how they divided it between labor and leisure, and what they conceived both to be. Diaries are the best available evidence, for they reveal not just the sports that were played but also how exactly people used their time. Near the end of her book, Struna takes time seriously and does a careful job analyzing the diary of William Dunlap (pp. 191–95) to show how he divided work from leisure. However, there is too little of this in the book Struna cites many diaries, but she analyzes few with respect to time. Thus, she never truly establishes any regional, class, or gender patterns. She fails to adequately support too many of her assertions about what colonists thought about work and leisure.

Anyone who takes on this task of using diaries to show patterns of early American work and play will find much guidance from Struna's work Her early chapters on the laborious nature of early seventeenth-century Puritan and Chesapeake societies are a solid contribution to early American historiography.

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