

American Artisans

AMERICAN ARTISANS *Crafting Social Identity, 1750–1850*



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Given the fundamental changes that transformed American society in the years between Benjamin Franklin's apprenticeship in a printer's shop and mid-19th-century efforts to organize labouring men and women, no social group offers a more interesting spectacle than skilled tradesmen or artisans. They came from various ethnic backgrounds (some worked in slavery), took their religion and politics seriously, lived mostly in cities but also in the countryside, and in many cases became pillars of their communities. This book examines the role of artisans in the American economy and society in the 18th and 19th centuries. Going beyond the traditional story of the decline of journeyman status, it explores a variety of themes loosely centred around opportunities in the developing economy. Indeed, many of these essays explore entrepreneurial ideals among many artisans competing in the marketplace. This collection also examines the interaction of race and the artisan economy in southern cities. It traces the economic relationships from father to son or between merchant and artisan, and explores the culture and politics of artisans, including religion, third-party politics, and the interaction of gender and reform.

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