Such a collection of seemingly prosaic interviews might seem at first glance to be of interest to only the most ardent of Updike scholars. The selections, however, were originally created for a popular audience and are by turns eminently readable, fun and profound. Plath mostly—and smartly—stays out of the way, allowing Updike to speak eloquently for himself. But Plath's editorial choices, the context he does provide and his introduction all work to turn these seemingly random articles and interviews into a cohesive whole. The selections are chronological, allowing us to choose the period (or Updike novel) we are most interested in exploring through his interviews. More powerfully, however, we can follow Updike's life and career as it moved, from local boy who "made good," through his apparent literary attempts to leave Pennsylvannia behind, to his final explorations of the meaning of home and nostalgia themselves. The pieces allow an arc that takes us from a young, somewhat nervous writer trying to escape to an older, more accomplished writer at ease with who he is and whence he came.

After all, as Updike notes in the first piece, a Reading Times article in which he visits his high school some 18 years after moving, "you never know until you leave a town what was special about it."

— James Spees
Lehigh University

BOATHOUSE ROW
WAVES OF CHANGE IN THE BIRTHPLACE OF AMERICAN ROWING
by Dotty Brown
Temple University Press,
273 pages, cloth $35

Mention "Pennsylvania" and "navy" in a game of word association, and history-minded folks might mention U.S. Brig Niagara, Oliver Hazard Perry's War of 1812 flagship that fought in the Battle of Lake Erie. Another guess might be the USS Olympia, George Dewey's flagship at the Battle of Manila, which rests at anchor on the Delaware at Philadelphia's Independence Seaport Museum. But anyone who has driven the Schuylkill Expressway portion of I-76, particularly through the Conshohocken Curve, knows well that Philadelphia has its very own fleet—of racing boats, shells, sculls and sweeps—down on the Schuylkill River. The sight of their beautifully lit boathouses provides drivers a welcome respite from grim traffic every morning and evening.

The story of these boathouses, the racers that they send forth, and the visionaries and athletes who put together and crew this "Schuylkill Navy" constitute the subject of Dotty Brown's superb new book. Brown turns out to be the perfect author for a work that will surely satisfy anyone who has ever wondered about this colorful aspect of Philadelphia sports history, as well as any reader who ever coxed, or raced, or has a friend or family member who dipped an oar. Not only is Brown a longstanding member of the Vesper Boat Club, she is a former editor at The Philadelphia Inquirer, and her editorial skills allow her to master a prodigious amount of source material, including abundant findings from the boathouse archives, as she traces the story from its beginnings in 1835 to today, when the otherwise modest Schuylkill remains one of the leading racing sites in the world.

Along the way, Brown reveals numerous charismatic and talented personalities, tells a slew of frequently amusing and inspiring stories, and leaves the lucky reader understanding one of the prouder aspects of Philadelphia sports and recreational culture. Beautifully illustrated, this is the rare volume that both serves as a handsome coffee table book and as a first-rate read. It fills a gap in the literature and should remain the standard work on boat racing's own Philadelphia story for decades to come. Any rowers landlocked by inclement weather will be sure to appreciate the chance to relive past glories while they wait for the chance to get back on the water. With this book in mind, they are sure to row harder and faster as they seek to live up to the countless champions and heroes who went down to the Schuylkill in search of speed and victory.

— Charles Kupfer
Penn State Harrisburg

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