

anthracite, and, indeed, their dignity at work, and we come to empathize with mineworkers' sustained militancy shaped by local concerns, their wild-cat strikes, dissatisfactions with the United Mine Workers, and creations of alternative union movements, in their attempts to resolve their grievances. Yet, as the authors conclude, those systems of tenancy became so pervasive, so entrenched, "it can be argued that subcontracting and leasing themselves constituted a type of *organized* criminal activity. Legal (and ethical) principles were systematically violated by companies, tenants, union leaders, and, in some cases, workers" (189).

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Cheryl Janifer LaRoche. *Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad: The Geography of Resistance* (University of Illinois Press, 2014). Pp. 232. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth \$85.00.

A number of studies have appeared over the last few years that have expanded our appreciation of the range and complexity of the Underground Railroad (UGRR). LaRoche adds her voice to those who insist that more attention has to be placed on the pivotal role played by northern free black communities in the movement to undermine slavery. Hers is mainly a study of three black rural settlements, Rocky Fork and Miller Grove in Illinois, Lick Creek in Indiana, and Poke Patch in Ohio. It also has a wider frame of reference, taking in some of the many other black rural settlements (as well as a few of the urban communities) that were pivotal to what she inventively calls the "geography of resistance." Rocky Fork stood on 300 acres three miles west of Alton and was the first port of call for those fleeing slavery along the Missouri River and from southwest Missouri. Established in 1844, Miller Grove, which was settled by freed families from Tennessee, was a beacon for slaves escaping from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri. Lick Creek, located in a remote area southeast of Paoli, Orange County, seventeen miles from the Ohio River, was settled in 1817 by freeborn African Americans. By 1855 the settlement occupied 1,500 acres. Poke Patch in western Gallia County was settled in an area whose economy relied heavily on iron-ore furnaces. Situated where they were, these settlements were usually the first stop on the line to freedom.

LaRoche is also committed to expanding existing knowledge of what she insists is a much more complex and developed system of “pathways to freedom” than historians of the movement have acknowledged (84). This rather limited approach, she argues, has underestimated the number and variety of avenues of escape developed to ferry fugitives to safety. There were, among others, caves in which they hid, waterways along which they traveled, and iron furnaces, especially those in southern Ohio, where they found refuge and temporary employment. Together they formed what she calls the “landscape of freedom” (90).

LaRoche also sets out to demonstrate the pivotal role played by the black church, particularly the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church that, she argues, was the backbone of these communities. They were beacons of freedom attracting slaves on the run. It is this institution and the ministers who led them, she insists, rather than the popular and largely unproven claims of hidden tunnels, passageways, and closets, that should be the focus of examinations of the UGRR. She also insists that more attention should be paid to black fraternal societies, although given the nature of these organizations it is almost impossible to discern what role they actually played. Together these institution and societies, established and sustained by African Americans, both protected and sustained the fleeing slave and provided vital links to the world beyond slavery. “The first stops out of slavery,” she observes, “frequently consisted of internal, church-based paths to freedom and salvation” (3). While she does draw on traditional sources, she insists that these need to be supplemented by oral histories, archeological explorations and landscape studies if we are ever to arrive at a fuller understanding of the movement’s complex history and the role it played in undermining slavery.

Her approach produces some genuinely original insights into the workings of the movement, such as her exploration of the activities of antislavery missionaries from the American Missionary Association in and around Miller Grove in the 1850s, which provide invaluable information on the effort to undermine support for slavery in an area notoriously hostile to abolition. They not only sold Bibles, they also clandestinely distributed copies of Frederick Douglass’s newspaper, the *North Star*, as well as antislavery books and pamphlets, all the while working closely with the black community to protect fugitives. But there are other sections of the book that leave many assertions unanswered. She frequently asserts, as she does in the discussion of the Lick Creek settlement, that the church, the institutional center of the settlement, became the “consistent site” of refuge for escaping slaves.

While there is no doubt that the church was a (if not *the*) “focal point” of the settlement, she provides little evidence, save what she draws from the oral testimony of descendants of the first settlers, to show that the church was the protective mechanism that ensured the safety of those in flight (63). Her mapping does substantiate the connections between known sites of the UGRR and these settlements and churches. But her proof of the exact role of the church rest on repetitions of the claim exclusive of any hard evidence. Not that she is unaware of the problem or the need for nuance. At one point she writes that, before 1850, churches in these settlements were limited in what they could do by larger political pressures and so tended to focus mainly on administering to the spiritual needs of their flocks. After 1850 and the growing popular resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law, however, the church, she admits, found its political voice (139). If this is so, then the changing political climate provided the church with breathing room to act.

There is one omission that is surprising. The UGRR, as her subtitle (“The Geography of Resistance”) acknowledges, was, at its core, a political movement. Resistance by its very nature is political. Yet LaRoche makes little effort, with the possible exception of her discussion of activities of the missionaries at Miller Grove in the 1850s, to assess the political significance, local or otherwise, of these activities. There are also a few nagging errors that anyone familiar with antebellum African American history and the UGRR should have spotted. Let me point to a couple. She says that Calvin Fairbank, the Oberlin-trained minister, died in the Kentucky penitentiary serving a seventeen-year sentence for helping a slave to escape (50). Fairbanks had two brushes with the law, the first when he and Dalia Webster helped to get Lewis Hayden and his wife out of slavery, for which he was sentenced to fifteen years but was freed after serving four. The second involved the escape of Tamar, a Louisville slave in 1851, for which he was sentenced to the penitentiary and remained there until pardoned in 1864. Another involved he statement that Paul Cuffe, the Massachusetts sea captain, “transported several black families to Liberia” (108). Cuffe settled the families in Sierra Leone, not Liberia. She also claims that in the 1850s Martin Delany “preferred Liberia” as a point of settlement for African Americans (109). Delany would be surprised to hear that. She also asserts that Henry Highland Garnet “chose to settle permanently in Jamaica” after migrating first to Great Britain and Canada (121). Garnet spent a few years in Britain at the invitation of the Free Produce Movement before going to Jamaica as a missionary of the Scottish Presbyterian Church. He was back in the United States by 1855.

While these errors and shortcomings mar her analysis, they do not detract from her call for a more expansive approach to the study of the UGRR—one that recognizes the centrality of black rural (and urban) settlements. Churches undoubtedly were at the heart of these settlements but how one determines their actual role in the movement remains largely unanswered. It very well may be that, given the paucity of evidence, we can get no nearer to the “truth” than LaRoche has.

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Cooper H. Wingert. *Harrisburg and the Civil War: Defending the Keystone of the Union* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013). Pp. 11, 126, notes, bibliography, index, author biography. Paper \$19.99.

Reviewing a book written by a fourteen-year-old young person, which, according to the series editor, is his sixth published work, is a difficult task if for no other reason than it is difficult to imagine having had the fortitude at that age to sit down and research and write a book. So regardless of what the remainder of the review notes, the beginning should indicate that for a fourteen-year-old, Cooper H. Wingert has done a fine job of researching and writing this thin volume. Likely, it fortells a bright future for this energetic and careful researcher.

Harrisburg and the Civil War: Defending the Keystone of the Union is one of a series of books published by the History Press that document American cities during the political and military conflict of the 1860s. Other Pennsylvania-focused editions describe this period in Germantown, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia. Readers interested in the mid-nineteenth-century history of Pennsylvania's capital or local impacts of the US Civil War alike will find this volume of popular history helpful. The book is comprised of seven chapters. Chapter 1 sets the scene in Harrisburg in 1861, beginning with a brief review of the history of this city hard on the eastern bank of the Susquehanna River. Wingert very briefly describes the history of the city, focusing particularly on Harrisburg's importance as a railroad and transport hub. A map of Harrisburg's situation along the Susquehanna and the local region, including major rail lines, is included and provides a basic geographic context