

the War of 1812 that kicks things off, specifically the Battle of New Orleans. Contrasting the roles played by western riflemen and the artillery in the victory over the British, Howe sets up his major themes. Would America's future lay "With the individualistic, expansionist values exemplified by frontier marksmen? Or with the industrial-technological values exemplified by the artillery?" (18). In the years following the battle, it was the celebrated "Hunters of Kentucky," not the professional soldiers and New Orleanians who manned the cannons, who received the lion's share of glory. And it was those frontiersmen's champion, Andrew Jackson, who laid claim to the decades that followed the battle, marking them, in the eyes of many historians, as his "age."

Howe is intent on correcting that tendency, and he does so in two primary ways. First, he exposes the racist and imperialistic underpinnings of a Jacksonian egalitarianism built on the dispossession of Indian land and the expansion of slavery. Second, he elevates the Whiggish world of reform, religion, education, and economic diversification—one that offered an alternative path and at times stood in opposition to Democratic expansionism—to a central place within the story of America's nineteenth-century transformation. It was that "Whig vision" of improvement and modernization that eventually prevailed, Howe argues, "but only after Abraham Lincoln had vindicated it in the bloodiest of American wars" (853).

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

DANIEL DUPRE

Tragedy at Avondale: The Causes, Consequences, and Legacy of the Pennsylvania Anthracite Coal Industry's Most Deadly Mining Disaster, September 6, 1869. By ROBERT P. WOLENSKY and JOSEPH M. KEATING. (Easton, PA: Canal History and Technology Press, 2008. xvi, 191 pp. Illustrations, appendices, references, notes, index. \$19.95.)

The 1869 Avondale disaster was Pennsylvania's deadliest and most influential mining tragedy. Robert Wolensky, of the University of Wisconsin, and the late John Keating provide a fresh look at the fire that killed 108 workers, most of whom were Welsh, and spurred Pennsylvania's first statewide mining legislation.

On the morning of September 6, 1869, fire burst from the shaft of the Avondale colliery, igniting the breaker that stood directly above the mine shaft. The breaker collapsed into the shaft, trapping the workers, and most died from asphyxiation. A coroner's jury declared the event an accident, accepting the explanation promoted by the Workingmen's Benevolent Association (WBA) that sparks traveling over three hundred feet, horizontally through a brick flue and vertically up a wooden shaft, ignited the shaft at an intersecting mine tunnel forty feet below the surface. Some inquest witnesses presented a competing

hypothesis, however, observing that anthracite fires do not emit sparks. Men worked in the flue without concern about sparks, and the yellow pine used in the shaft would not ignite easily. Charring from the fire was minimal in the lower shaft but substantial above the tunnel intersection. Pro-mine owner witnesses argued that an arsonist used an incendiary to ignite the shaft at the intersection, claiming that a spark-caused fire could not evolve from ignition to erupting blaze without being noticed. The official version of the inquest downplayed the arson evidence, but journalists printed the full arson testimony and opined strongly in its favor. Nonetheless, the arson hypothesis was slowly forgotten.

What would be the motive for starting such a fire, and why would an inquest whitewash the disaster? The authors perceptively discuss the labor and social environment in which the tragedy occurred and provide possible scenarios for the arson theory. Four days prior to the disaster, and against the wishes of the WBA, Scranton-based Welsh miners returned to work at Avondale after ending a strike. Tensions between Welsh miners and Irish laborers had long been a problem. Most of the Irish workers were away from the mine attending a funeral on September 6. Consequently, the authors suggest that it is possible that a disgruntled striker took revenge upon the strike-breaking miners. The authors are careful not to blame the Irish directly, but they imply that the inquest settled on the accident theory partly to avoid the ethnic conflict that an arson verdict might provoke.

The authors convincingly raise questions about the accident verdict. They clearly state that the case for arson rested on circumstantial evidence, but did the authors think of soliciting an opinion from an arson investigator? The well-illustrated volume contains a glossary, a time line, and an appendix of Avondale ballads. The references are thorough, and the endnotes are substantive, with the majority providing additional detail. The authors succeed in returning the Avondale mine disaster to the realm of historical debate by turning what was long considered a settled historical incident back into a "cold case" rather than a "closed case" (95). They conclude that further research might be able to answer some of the questions they have raised.

University of Scranton

MICHAEL KNIES

The Pennsylvania Anthracite Coal Industry, 1860–1902: Economic Cycles, Business Decision Making, and Regional Dynamics. By RICHARD G. HEALEY. (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2008. xviii, 512 pp. Maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$60.)

Much of the historiography of the Pennsylvania anthracite coal industry focuses on its social history and is rich with people-related stories. Thus, issues