

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.

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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

of ethnicity, labor-management conflict, class struggle, disasters, strikes, and unionization are well represented in the literature. Professor Richard Healey, while highly mindful of the people's history, provides a heretofore underutilized approach to studying the anthracite coal region. His highly detailed analysis focuses on business and investment decisions, land acquisition, capital speculation, cyclical capital investments, supply and demand, and other business-related factors central to the industry's development. As such, this work is largely a coal industry history, and Professor Healey's sweeping examination of the business of anthracite coal from 1860 to 1902 comprises a very significant contribution to American industrial history as a whole.

A geographer who has dedicated the better part of his professional career to anthracite scholarship, Healey also identifies the centrality of regional geography—mainly in anthracite's northern and southern fields—as concomitant with business and investment decisions. In some instances, the book challenges accepted analyses related to anthracite history. For example, traditional theory posited that the Delaware and Hudson Company was the main initiator of mass coal-land acquisition in the post-Civil War era. However, more detailed investigation reveals that the Lackawanna Railroad and its business interests led the way in acquiring coal lands during and immediately following the Civil War. Lackawanna did so through mergers, acquisitions, and, not surprisingly, direct influence on public policy at the state level to ensure that coal companies legally secured acquisition authority.

Similarly, Healey's work evaluates the not-insignificant levels of investment by mining companies in both acquiring coal lands and in constructing and developing new mines. Both individual coal operators and large mining/railroad companies invested large sums in the late nineteenth century, expected attractive returns, and, as a result, drove regional economies and dictated demands for labor. *The Pennsylvania Anthracite Coal Industry* is replete with detailed charts and tables depicting coal production, sales, shipments, work days, mining costs, mine ownership statistics, and similar data. Its examination of individual railroads and their coal company subsidiaries reveals the level to which the author has studied various archival collections. Stunning period photographs of coal breakers and mine workings add to the book's richness. Indeed, there are few questions about the business of anthracite from 1860 to 1902 that this volume cannot address, and the space allowed for this review cannot do justice to the comprehensive nature of Healey's study.

The volume does bring to light a few questions worthy of further probing, however. For instance, given the cartel that major railroad-affiliated anthracite producers had formed by 1900, could they have foreseen or projected the downward spiral in demand for hard coal that occurred by the early twentieth century? What indications might exist in individual corporate records or in industry trends that demonstrate that competition from oil, for example, influenced

investment decisions and, thus, the nature of the anthracite cartel by 1902, when oil had been successfully established as an alternative fossil fuel to coal? The author observes that the “wide range of interacting decision-making, investment, and productive processes constituted the complex driving mechanism for the economic development of the Anthracite coal regions” (417). What does the data show with regard to interacting business decisions—and their timing—that resulted in eventual disinvestment by coal operators? Were such decisions evident as early as 1902? Healey notes that “in a market where the long-term trend was clearly upwards, the downside of an industry . . . was too often ignored,” suggesting that speculative gains overshadowed the real possibility of long-term loss (438). Moreover, he argues that “long term vision and strategic thinking had an important part to play” in business and regional economic development (441). It would be interesting to note what, if any, long-term vision and strategic thinking was evident in disinvestment decisions in the anthracite industry, especially as such decisions must have been present in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The Pennsylvania Anthracite Coal Industry is not always an easy read, due, in large part, to its heavy reliance on technical business language. At times, frankly, the reader can get disoriented in technical jargon. The book, however, is a most significant addition to a growing body of literature on the Pennsylvania anthracite region, and it substantiates the claim that business decisions are central to regional economies. Moreover, it is the major contribution, to date, to the business history of the anthracite industry and adds another chapter to American industrial history.

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission KENNETH C. WOLENSKY

Black Philosopher, White Academy: The Career of William Fontaine. By BRUCE KUKLICK. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. 192 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography of the writings of William Fontaine, sources, index. \$30.)

Historian Bruce Kuklick's unsentimental account of the life of William Fontaine—the University of Pennsylvania's first African American philosophy professor—should be read by anyone intending to pursue a doctorate and teaching career in philosophy. It is a vivid, surprisingly gripping account (given the subject matter) of the life of someone who paid a price for *almost* making the big time in a lily white corner of the Ivy League.

Born in 1909, William Fontaine grew up in an ordinary family in Chester, Pennsylvania. He attended Lincoln University, a school near Philadelphia founded on the Princeton model, but with the aim of educating an elite corps of black