

State could be incredibly, and randomly, violent" (102). Kahan's study draws richly from surviving oral histories of prisoners, administrators, and guards, whose diverse recollections and experiences help contribute to the mosaic of cultural memory of the penitentiary. His examination of ongoing experiments in prisoner-led initiatives (for example, his innovative archival use of prison bulletins) is particularly fascinating, and it allows a mediated glimpse into how prisoners experienced their time at the penitentiary.

I was struck by how defenders of the Pennsylvania system consistently refused to interrogate seriously their assumptions about crime and "idleness" and about which inmates (disproportionately poor, black, and immigrant) were most often assumed to be lacking in self control, discipline, and reformatory potential, even as these defenders showed a willingness to modify their beliefs about prison design and penal philosophy. Given the substantial racial imbalances that continue to structure American prisons, I would welcome explicit analysis of the underlying conceptions about race and class that influence "the Pennsylvania model" to see how they compare to competing models of incarceration.

Kahan eschews the sensationalist focus of numerous prison histories, with their anecdotal emphasis on infamous personalities, hairsbreadth escapes, and supernatural tales. He instead offers readers a well-researched, even-handed, and lively history of the penitentiary's origins and development across the centuries. Abundant photographs and engravings, detailed footnotes, and an introduction by Richard Fulmer provide additional perspectives and direct curious readers to other source material. Paul Kahan successfully brings Eastern State Penitentiary to life as a centuries-long experiment whose history has much to teach us about the challenges of reformatory incarceration.

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Remembering Kensington and Fishtown: Philadelphia's Riverward Neighborhoods. By KENNETH W. MILANO. (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2008. 128 pp. Illustrations, further readings. \$19.99.)

The History of the Kensington Soup Society. By KENNETH W. MILANO. (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2009. 160 pp. Illustrations. \$19.99.)

The History of Penn Treaty Park. By KENNETH W. MILANO. (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2009. 157 pp. Illustrations, further readings. \$19.99.)

In March 1876, Philadelphia's Fairmount Park was being readied for the grand Centennial celebration. Pastoral and elegant, even in early spring, the park was the perfect setting for the art galleries and exhibition halls rising along the

Schuylkill. During that same March, along the Delaware in northeast Philadelphia, the Kensington Soup Society served some 7,500 bowls of home-made soup to hungry local families and homeless men. As Kenneth W. Milano explains in *The History of the Kensington Soup Society*, there were eight such societies operating in Philadelphia during the 1860s and '70s. Dominated by sawmills, shipyards, textile mills, and carpet factories, industrial Kensington could be hard on the laboring poor, where anonymous bodies washed up too often among treeless wharves, and there was neither pastoral park nor government safety net.

While the story of the Centennial in Fairmount Park has been told many times, the same cannot be said of the parks and people of Kensington. But now, thanks to the neighborhood's own Ken Milano, three new books go far to rectify the difference. Milano writes a history column for the *Kensington Sun*, and his first book, *Remembering Kensington and Fishtown*, gathers together forty of his columns under such headings as "Olden Days," "Early Industry," "Recreations," "Biographies," and "Vignettes." His histories of the Kensington Soup Society and Penn Treaty Park are more sustained accounts, based on unique neighborhood archives spanning several centuries. Highly readable and beautifully illustrated, all three books are published by The History Press, which advertises its specialty as "community histories that national houses and university presses too often ignore." If the rapid growth of The History Press since 2004 is any indication, the idea seems to have found an audience.

Milano sometimes appears troubled by the politics of exclusion and vagaries of class and capitalism that have shaped Kensington. The neighborhood was a self-governing district until 1854, when it was incorporated with Philadelphia. Milano writes with the ambivalence of an outsider about a city whose cultural elites have variously neglected, aided, annoyed, and invaded his neighborhood, right up until the present. The history of Penn Treaty Park is a case in point. In the mid-nineteenth century, the famous treaty elm marking the site of William Penn's legendary meeting with the Lenni-Lenape in 1682 had long since blown down, its limbs scavenged for snuff boxes and parlor whatnots. But, as Milano's research reveals, a small treaty monument remained, down by the river past the Beach Street railroad—beside Neafi's shipyard and VanDusen's sawmill, buried beneath piles of lumber, and surrounded by tumbledown buildings—"to carry the great lesson of history ennobled by art into the hearts and homes of the toiling masses of Kensington" (78). Installed in 1824 by well-meaning members of the American Philosophical and Penn Societies, the monument had become a target for stone-throwing boys and "local toughs." It would not be rehabilitated until 1893, when Penn Treaty Park was established through the joint efforts of Kensington businessmen, the Philadelphia City Council, and leaders of the Fairmount Park Commission and small parks (or "fresh air") movement.

By 1910, the park was already in decay. Neglected by the "downtown elites"

who had resurrected it in 1893, the treaty site passed “into the hands of the local Kensingtonians” for good (59). When the federal government tried to establish an immigrant station beside the park in 1910 it was met with fierce resistance, in a recurrence of the anti-immigrant nativism that had fueled anti-Catholic riots in Kensington in 1844. There was less resistance when the Pennsylvania Electric Company built an enormous coal-burning plant on the park’s north side. But by the 1940s, locals had begun to call again for the park’s rehabilitation. The Fairmount Park Commission resumed control of the grounds and regular patrols were started.

The park was neglected once again in the 1960s, when Interstate 95 was bulldozed through Kensington. It would not be until 1982, the tercentennial of Penn’s landing at Shackamaxon, that the Treaty Park came into its own, undergoing a major, multiacre expansion (with the addition of two monuments) through the activism of local historians, caretakers, and community leaders.

Milano’s books each track a recurrent cycle of institutional decay, followed by revitalization movements spearheaded by local residents—most of them of European descent. He makes no mention of African American families in Kensington, or of racial conflict after the Civil War, when Camden and Philadelphia both experienced race riots and related violence. His Kensington is implicitly a white, ethnic, working-class neighborhood shaped by, what Philip Scranton has called, “proprietary capitalism,” a peculiarly intimate form of community-, church-, and family-based industrial development.

Even if Milano is disinclined to talk explicitly about race and class, his books are a rich reflection upon the ironies of industrial and postindustrial “development.” Born in Kensington, where he lives today, he pauses repeatedly over the commercial processes of gentrification that have erased, or thoughtlessly revised, the historical boundaries of a Euro-American community dating to the seventeenth century. As a boy, Milano witnessed the bulldozing of Interstate 95 and the decay of the Treaty Park. He encountered the damaged treaty monument with its hopeful and intensely ironic motto: *Unbroken Faith*. More recently, Milano has been planning a 2010 Treaty Park ceremony on the bicentennial of the treaty elm—which fell in March 1810. He has also joined the debate about the Sugar House Casino presently being built next to Penn Treaty Park. Along with other members of the Kensington History Project (Torbin Jenk, Rich Remer, John Connor), he has criticized the casino archaeologists for an inadequate analysis of a Kensington site, which contains the remains of a Jack Frost sugar refinery; a Paleolithic fishing village; a loyalist fort of Revolutionary War vintage; and a whale oil factory owned by the family of Lucretia Mott. While Milano claims he is neither for nor against casinos per se, he is clearly on the side of historic preservation.

Scholarly readers will be frustrated with the lack of footnotes in Milano’s books. Environmental historians will want to know about the destruction of

Kensington's Cohocksink Creek and Gunnar's Run. And there is much more to say about the anti-Catholic nativists who founded the Kensington Soup Society. In the end, however, Milano's histories participate openly in the resourceful, sustaining, and contradictory character of their subject. They are on my shelf next to Scranton's *Proprietary Capitalism* (1983) as a valuable corrective to studies of Philadelphia that, written far from the scene, cite neighborhoods only in passing.

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