

Over the Alleghenies: Early Canals and Railroads of Pennsylvania. By ROBERT J. KAPSCH. (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2013. 452 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.99.)

In *Over the Alleghenies*, Robert Kapsch has produced a detailed narrative history of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's internal improvement program between 1826 and 1858. During these years, Pennsylvania struggled to construct, maintain, and operate a technologically sophisticated but financially precarious system of canals, railroads, and improved river navigation that reached into all corners of the state. The impetus for the system came from Pennsylvania boosters' desires to compete with New York's Erie Canal for the trade of the Great Lakes and Ohio River valley in the 1820s, but the political exigencies of constructing the Main Line between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh required the simultaneous construction of branch lines along the Susquehanna, the Delaware, and other smaller streams. The system was ultimately unsuccessful in fulfilling its original mission because it was too technically, financially, and politically precarious to beat the Erie at its own game. But, as Kapsch points out, the Pennsylvania system pioneered a number of important technologies, particularly in railroad construction and operation, and many of its branches played locally important economic roles. The history of such a system represents an important contribution to our understanding of nineteenth-century Pennsylvania.

Kapsch structures his account geographically, with individual chapters on each division of the Pennsylvania system. This organizational choice offers benefits and presents problems. It allows Kapsch to tell the story of each segment's construction in loving detail. *Over the Alleghenies* excels in this respect, because each chapter provides a thorough discussion of the political, financial, and engineering issues relevant to its division. Each account is also superbly sourced; Kapsch provides extensive quotations and has thoughtfully illustrated his narrative with period images and newspaper clippings arranged in the margins. This thoroughness is clearly the result of an impressive research effort.

The geographical organization imposes some compromises on the book, however. It makes the tight and rapid chronology of the overall internal improvement program difficult to follow, which matters because much of Kapsch's argument about the system's successes and failure relies on chronology. From its late start date, after the Erie Canal was already completed and opened, to the fateful decision to construct the branches at the same time as (or even before) the main line, to the disastrous timing of the Panic of 1837, the overall timeline of Pennsylvania's program is critical to Kapsch's analysis of its successes and failures. Other analytical themes similarly get lost in the book's tight geographical focus. For example, Kapsch describes repeated decisions by canal commissioners and engineers to use cheaper and less durable wood construction techniques for locks, bridges, and aqueducts rather than more expensive and durable masonry. This decision was

generally justified by the expectation that the system would be so profitable upon opening that it would support higher future maintenance costs and the eventual replacement of wooden structures with masonry ones. In the meantime, the cheapness of wood would allow the system to get up and running more quickly. In most cases, revenue never met projections, and the cheaply built infrastructure became a drag on the system's operation and finances. It's not that these chronological and analytical threads are absent from Kapsch's work, but the geographical structure of the book makes their treatment repetitive and less deeply explored than they otherwise might be.

The level of detail evident Kapsch's research, as well as the high quality of *Over the Alleghenies's* production, make this book valuable for readers interested in early national transportation and nineteenth-century Pennsylvania, though the book gets frustratingly close to some very interesting arguments about the successes and failures of the commonwealth's internal improvements program, which a different organizational structure might have allowed to shine.

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Keystone State in Crisis: The Civil War in Pennsylvania. By JUDITH GIESBERG. (Mansfield, PA: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 2013. 96 pp. Illustrations, notes. Paper, \$14.95.)

This short study attempts something unusual by essentially ignoring the Gettysburg campaign and almost anything to do with actual combat in a concise analysis of Civil War-era Pennsylvania. It would seem to be almost self-defeating to write about the conflict in a key Northern state and yet to slight the war's biggest battle (fought within its borders, no less) and spend only a minimal amount of space conveying the actual experiences of hundreds of thousands of its residents in uniform. Yet Giesberg's compact volume does offer real value for anyone teaching or studying this period. It succeeds in rendering some of the excellent social and political scholarship on the wartime North (including the author's own notable work) into an easily digestible format.

The study follows a broad chronology, but the five main chapters are essentially topical in nature and jump around quite liberally. Chapter 1 focuses on antebellum politics and the election of 1860. Giesberg uses a variety of evidence to argue that the Republican hold on the Keystone State was surprisingly precarious and always bitterly contested by Democrats. The second chapter casts the classic subject of "Mobilizing for War" in creative terms by focusing on some of the persistent debates about that mobilization. In this vein, Giesberg begins by highlighting Quaker abolitionist Lucretia Mott's pacifistic ambivalence about the brutal conflict. She also explores wartime labor strife, draft resistance, and the