and will profit from the experience. It is a welcome addition to the
literature on the American War for Independence.

Kane, Pennsylvania

JAMES D. ANDERSON

Success at Oil Creek, August 27, 1859. (Washington, D. C.: Depart-

On August 27, 1976, the Department of the Interior brought
forth this pamphlet telling about the world’s first successful oil well,
drilled by Edwin L. Drake near Titusville, Pennsylvania, and which
started to produce on August 27, 1859.

It is indeed unfortunate that the department has stated that it
had an excellent general response to this pamphlet, because it includes
a considerable number of historical inaccuracies, and therefore it must
be used with considerable care by students, researchers, and the
general interested public. How such a booklet on such a well-known
and well-documented event ever got past the writer, the proofreader,
and others, is a mystery indeed.

Some of the more glaring errors are worthy of note. For example
(p. 2), the picture caption, “Drake Well in 1859,” is really the Drake
Well in 1875, decrepit and in very poor condition. It was subsequently
taken down and shipped to the Philadelphia Exposition and never did
come back to Titusville. On page six is a photograph showing
“Titusville’s Danforth House,” which is strange inasmuch as the
Danforth House was located at famous Pithole City, Pennsylvania,
another oil boom town. Another photograph (p. 11) is captioned
“First U. S. oil field developed at Titusville in 1860.” This actually
shows a group of very shallow wells just east of the Titusville town
line which were drilled in the spring and summer of 1877 and lasted
only a few months. Then on page five a map of the oil regions has
misspelled both Tidioute and Siverlyville.

All the errors are not confined to the photographs either. The
text (p. 2) mentions Dr. Paul H. Giddens’s book, The Early
Petroleum Industry. Actually there is no such volume. A concern
called Porcupine Press, in Philadelphia, borrowed and reprinted with-
out permission Giddens’s The Birth of the Oil Industry (Macmillan,
1938) and his The Beginnings of the Petroleum Industry: Sources
and Bibliography (1941) and titled the combination The Early
Petroleum Industry. At this writing, Giddens is considering legal
action.
It is most regrettable that these errors are being fed to the public as accurate history.

Warren, Pennsylvania

Ernest C. Miller


A series of explosions in 1907, climaxd by one in West Virginia that took 361 lives, provided the major impetus for a concerted effort to promote safeguards against accidents in the coal mines of the United States. Within three years, a coalition of operators, miners, state inspectors, bureaucrats, and conservationists succeeded in winning congressional approval for a Bureau of Mines. In its attempts to curb or eliminate injuries and losses of lives, that agency, lacking coercive powers, had to gain the cooperation of employees and employers in the industry. This effort was undertaken at a time when many, if not most, Americans persisted in the notion that industrial accidents were a necessary adjunct of economic progress.

William Graebner’s study, winner of the Organization of American Historians’ Frederick Jackson Turner Award for 1975, analyzes and evaluates the movement for safety in coal mines during the progressive era. The author focuses on the origin and evolution of the agitation for safer mining operations, the events leading to the creation of the United States Bureau of Mines, and its efforts to reduce or eliminate industrial accidents in coal mines. The driving force behind the safety movement was Joseph Austin Holmes, chief of the Technologic Branch, United States Geological Survey, and the man President William Howard Taft appointed in 1910 as the first director of the Bureau of Mines.

The federal agency failed to reduce significantly injuries and losses of lives in coal mines during the progressive era. Failure, Graebner contends, must be attributed to several factors. Operators, employees, and union officials were reluctant for a variety of reasons to enforce safety regulations. However, the bureau’s lack of success was due mainly to its inability “to bring cohesion into a fragmented and archaic political system.” At all levels of government, men entrusted with implementing safety rules could not resolve “the con-