strikes, job-related accidents, and deaths and crime as well as all the other urban pathologies noted by historians of the nineteenth-century city seemed to have escaped the notice of these suburban families. . . . An almost painful naivete, by today's standards, permeates the book (pp. xix-xx).

Such conclusions may not be fair about a text that concentrates wonderfully well on a child's nurture on a particular corner in Pittsburgh.

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**Anthracite People:** *Families, Unions and Work, 1900-1940.* By **John Bodnar.** (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1983. Pp. 100. Acknowledgments, introduction, illustrations. $3.50, paper.)

By now John Bodnar, formerly of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and currently a member of the history department at Indiana University (Bloomington), has become one of the most prolific practitioners of oral history in the country. In the past few years, for instance, he has authored or coauthored several outstanding books using oral history to help describe the lives of Pennsylvania industrial workers during the first half of the twentieth century. Compared to these earlier volumes his present contribution is a modest effort, though a useful one.

*Anthracite People* consists of a fifteen-page introduction followed by excerpts from sixteen interviews conducted by Bodnar and others with members of mining families of the Nanticoke area and the Wyoming Valley. No basic questionnaire is provided the reader, and there is no explanation as to the inclusion of these interviews over others from the more than thirty-five cited in the backnotes to the introduction. Perhaps the author selected those that would give the greatest thrust to his thesis.

And Bodnar's central thesis here is about the same that he has developed in his other books dealing with Pennsylvania industrial workers: basically conservative, pragmatic, and nonideologically motivated, the economically distressed anthracite miners were not wild-eyed radicals out to overthrow the American system, but rather they sought social and economic betterment through the integrity of their religious, ethnic, and community kinships. In the midst of the
rapidly declining anthracite industry, Bodnar writes, the miners and their families survived the economic and social ordeal by constructing a “system of family groupings and communities, incorporating values and behavior patterns shaped by that industry’s economy and dependent upon its good health and continued existence” (p. 1).

At the time that good health depended upon the widest possible availability of jobs. Consequently, job equalization became the primary objective of anthracite miners as hard times worsened with the Great Depression. As the miners expected, the companies opposed job equalization. When the former then turned to their traditional union, the United Mine Workers of America, the union appeared disinterested, leading anthracite miners to form a dual union, the United Anthracite Miners of Pennsylvania, a short-lived movement that did nothing to improve the miners’ lot. Ironically, this occurred just as the UMWA was emerging from the doldrums of the twenties into the heady years of the thirties and its successes with the New Deal.

While the anthracite miners rejoined the rejuvenated union, this was not the most essential element in their eventual survival. The really significant feature of their struggle, Bodnar asserts, was “the powerful statement they made about life’s priorities” (p. 15). Not merely preoccupied with the rewards and hazards of the workplace nor merely dependent upon the help of a paternal government, these miners looked to those loving concerns that joined family and neighborhood for social and spiritual fulfillment.

The interviews included in this volume describe the European origins of the anthracite miners, working conditions in the pits, company policies, and family and community life. They record lives of shared obligations and mutual assistance that nurtured and sustained mining families through the economic hardships of a steadily declining industry.

This little book is the first published of three oral history studies of the effects of industrialization on Pennsylvania communities conducted by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the other two being on the towns of Cornwall and Monessen. All three volumes promise to help us understand the social and economic forces that forged the industrialization of the Keystone State in the twentieth century.

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