

following the demise of Ephrata. He also adds tables in an appendix which highlight some important aspects of various communes throughout history.

Though Alderfer is not the first to tell Beissel's and the commune's story, he rightly points out that his is the most extensively footnoted and accessible version. The author expressed his hope that the work will interest the general reader and scholars interested in the Ephrata phenomenon, the Pennsylvania German milieu, and the communal tradition. *The Ephrata Commune*, like the *Chronicon* itself, surely merits the interest of a broader range of scholars than those the author identifies (especially scholars of American religious and colonial history), but it would probably fail to hold a general reader's attention. ■

Timothy Kelly    *Department of History*  
                          *Carnegie-Mellon University*  
                          *Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

---

*The Anthracite Aristocracy: Leadership and Social Change in the Hard Coal Regions of Northeastern Pennsylvania, 1800-1930.* By Edward J. Davies II.

(DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985. Pp. xvi, 277. Acknowledgments, tables, illustrations, maps, index. \$27.00.)

Just when many social historians were beginning to believe that their history "from the bottom up" was destined to carry the day, along comes another book about economic and social elites. This one describes the evolution of an upper-class entrepreneurial elite in northeastern Pennsylvania's coal-rich Wyoming Valley. It ought to be on the shelves of all social historians, irrespective of their views as to the direction from which they might better study the social ladder.

Davies' work is part of a growing body of literature in which historians and social scientists are seeking to understand the structure and functioning of American society, and particularly part of those studies which have described the development of a business aristocracy whose decisions often determined the ultimate fate of cities and towns across the nation. By blending the models provided by scholars who have produced earlier works, Davies has not only produced a study of small city leadership but has gone beyond this urban focus to develop a regional study. Even beyond this, he has included in his

work a comparison within his regional framework of how an elite leadership made Wilkes-Barre a city of considerable success, whose upper class expanded its influence throughout the northern anthracite area. Meanwhile, a less stable but more socially dynamic Pottsville (to the south) enjoyed much less business success.

In Wilkes-Barre, Davies found a relatively small group of men who formed a hegemonic social class and came to dominate the major economic institutions, politics, and society of the entire region. Bourgeois in character, Wilkes-Barre's business leadership included men of varying ages who valued above all else hard work, marital fidelity, family loyalty, and class consciousness. Possessing both proper origins and singleness of purpose, Wilkes-Barre's business leaders were almost all born into middle- or upper-middle-class families. These families enjoyed respectable Protestant church affiliations (Episcopalian or Methodist), held memberships in exclusive social clubs and benevolent societies, and made "proper" marriages. In turn, their children were sent to the best schools and colleges and were urged to make their own proper marriages with their own kind.

While Pottsville's leaders shared much of both the background and the ambitions of Wilkes-Barre's elite, the former were never able to manifest either the business acumen or the homogeneous leadership necessary to develop and sustain entrepreneurial or social dominance over the southern anthracite region. Here, economic growth slowed earlier than in the north, out-migration developed sooner and increased faster, and corporate decisions made in Philadelphia adversely affected the region's economy.

A native of Wilkes-Barre and professor of history at the University of Utah, Davies has amply illustrated his text with charts and tables throughout. Eighty pages of sources, footnotes, and bibliography attest to the volume's scholarship. In presenting his study in a clear and literate style, Davies supports it through extensive use of business records, newspapers, city telephone directories, regional censuses, local and county histories, family wills, genealogical studies, and even social club records.

In his brief biographical sketches of business leaders in both regions, Davies reveals considerable admiration for their ambition and qualities of leadership. However, there is little of the sense of elitism that marred earlier studies of business aristocracies. Nevertheless, Davies apparently believes that the common people of his own Wilkes-Barre showed good sense in placing their well-being in the hands of people of high status and noble purpose, men willing to guide their

fellows wisely, and in the process do well by themselves and their families. On the other hand, it seems that John O'Hara's Pottsville chose the wrong crowd.

In any event, by the time of the Great Depression, Wilkes-Barre's domination of the northern anthracite region was in swift decline. Not only did the economic collapse of those years break the city's economic hold over the region, but competition from new fuels further undermined anthracite, and then new patterns of industry finished the job. A similar collapse in the bituminous coal region of Western Pennsylvania left considerable desolation in its wake. Professor Davies does not tell us what was left in the East. ■

Thomas H. Coode *Department of History and Urban Affairs*  
*California University of Pennsylvania*  
*California, Pennsylvania*

---

*The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Immigrant Radicals, 1880-1920.* By Gerald Sorin.

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, Pp. x, 211.  
 Preface, notes, bibliography, index, illustrations. \$24.95.)

In 1984 Jewish voters chose Fritz Mondale over Ronald Reagan by a two-to-one margin.<sup>1</sup> This result was all the more remarkable since Jews are now the most prosperous major religious group in America.<sup>2</sup> If Jews had behaved like other Americans of comparable economic status, their votes would have gone more than two-to-one for the Republicans. For years, some social commentators have predicted that Jewish economic success would eventually stimulate a marked ideological shift of Jews to the right. While the visibility of a number of prominent ex-leftist Jewish intellectuals among the leadership of so-called neoconservatives appears to give credibility to that argument, it has not happened at a mass level. Jews rejected Ronald Reagan in 1984 even more decisively than they had in 1980.<sup>3</sup>

American Jews have always been disproportionately associated with liberal causes and radical movements. Of all of the ethnic groups in America in the early 1900s, only Finns (a numerically insignificant group from a national perspective) had a greater propensity than Jews to support the Socialist Party. The Jewish Lower East Side in New York was one of two congressional districts in the entire country to