ing interest in historic preservation as one of the most powerful eco-
nomic and social forces affecting modern perceptions of the landscape.
Spurred by the Historic Preservation Act of 1966, preservationists aim to identify and evaluate all his-
torical resources and to preserve histori-
cally significant ones. With a $17 million annual budget, America’s Industrial Heritage Project, for in-
stance, seeks to turn a nine county region of south-central Pennsyl-
vania into a national park based upon industrial heritage. It has become a major U.S. National Park Service preservation project. Francaviglia, suspicious of such efforts, argues that in most cases

preservation has been a selective (and subjective) process that fa-
vors properties that are attrac-
tive, desirable, or marketable —
those historical properties that
the Culture feels are worthy of
preservation. This selective pres-
ervation has resulted in the sav-
ing of certain residential and
commercial properties, while many
industrial features owned by the
mining interests have vanished.
Included in the latter are build-
ings, headframes, flumes, and
other structures. Therefore, pre-
served mining landscapes are usu-
ally lopsided assemblages of gen-
tleel buildings — not the gritty
landscape of everyday industrial
life that characterized the mining
district during during its active
period(s).(180)

Whether the industrial heritage project in central Pennsylvania fol-

follows the narrow selection processes that Francaviglia criticizes or de-
velops broader interpretations remains to be seen. Developing a holistic perspective of today’s mining land-
scape depends on how well one uti-

lizes all available clues, including
topography, the nature of the ex-
traction process, weather

conditions, and re-vegetation, among
numerous other considerations.

Hard Places is a good place to start for those interested in an intro-
duction to America’s mining land-
scapes or in finding out how to
begin to make sense of the country’s
heritage (including Western Pennsyl-
vania). Professionals and aca-
demics — archaeologists, architec-
tors, mining engineers, geographers, his-
torians, and others — will find Fran-
caviglia’s effort useful to their work
and a source for linking with other
disciplines.

Hard Places is not without its
shortcomings. The author does add-
ress the role of the operator and
mine worker, but the discussion is
often overwhelmed and lost in the
description of the physical structures.
It is equally important to remember
that although these communities and
areas were hard places to live, they
were decided upon, invested in,
planned, and maintained by human
beings, a point Francaviglia does not seem especially interested in. The
stories of mine workers and their
families, which unfolded through-
out the 19th and 20th centuries, still
affect us today. Understanding how
resources were developed in our
country may help us gain more in-
sight into what it takes to develop
resources on a much larger scale in
the modern global economy.

Jim Dougherty
America’s Industrial Heritage
Project/Indiana University of Pennsyl-

vania’s Documentation Center of
Coal Mining

News from the Land of
Freedom: German
Immigrants Write Home
Edited by Walter D. Kamphoefner,
Wolfgang Helbich, and Ulrike
Sommer
Part of the Documents in American Social
History, series editors Nick Salvatore and
Kerby Miller.
Pg. ix, 645. Preface, introduction, appendix,
sources cited, index. $35

THIS volume, which presents
a selection of immigrant
writings to friends and fam-
ily in Germany, is part of Cornell
Press’ series originally published in
German. It draws on the Bochum
Immigrant Letter Collection, which
is housed at Ruhr University-Bochum.
The editors undertook the daunting task of selecting, introduc-
ing, and abridging entries from the
nearly 5,000 letters in the Bochum
collection to “present a work that
would meet the highest scholarly
standards of documentation and
authenticity, that would make a sol-
id contribution to research in social
history, but that at the same time
would provide to general readers
with historical, political, or social
interests an informative and even
exciting piece of literature.”(pg. viii)

With such an ambitious goal, it is
remarkable how well they have suc-
ceded.

The book’s extensive introduc-
tion places the letters in the context
of German immigration, and offers a
trenchant discussion of demograph-
ic, migratory, and settlement pat-
terns. The introductory section also
touches on other issues necessary for
an understanding of the letters’ con-
tent and meaning: nativism, politics,
ethnicity, German language instruc-
tion in schools, the German lan-
guage press, and the impact of World
War I on German-American life. In
addition, the editors evaluate the
general status and usefulness of let-
ters as historical documents, and
describe their criteria and methods
for selecting and abridging the letter
series included in the volume.

Kamphoefner, Helbich, and Som-
mer divided the letters into three
broad categories which reflect the
occupation of the writer: farmer,
worker, or domestic servant. Intro-
ductory essays on the experiences
and circumstances of each occupa-
tional group open the three sec-
tions, and relevant information also
prefaces each of the 20 series of
letters contained in the volume. The
editors deserve praise for this thor-
ough introductory work, for with-
out it, fully appreciating the letters
would be difficult indeed. Equally
commendable is the meticulous and
extensive documentation which
characterizes an entire volume. The editors consulted an incredible number of sources — census reports, church records, city directories, immigration and passenger lists, to name only a few — on both sides of the Atlantic to trace not only the writers and their families, but also to authenticate statements, dates, and places mentioned in the letters. The volume, which includes helpful maps, a useful appendix of weight, measure, and currency equivalents, and a detailed index, deserves high marks for design, production, and translation.

The letters themselves reveal a number of common themes. Nearly all demonstrate the importance of continuing ties to Germany. Immigrant letters were catalysts in promoting or discouraging chain migration, and the letters detail the filial, cultural, and financial dynamics which influenced Germans on both sides of the Atlantic. Many immigrant correspondents also remarked on other shared experiences and perceptions: the difficulty of communicating in an English-speaking country, the high prices of food and clothing compared to Germany; and differing cultural practices. One example is the divergent styles of American and German celebrations of the Christian Sabbath. “You also have to get used to doing without Sunday revels,” Matthias Dorgathen wrote to his family from Masillon, Ohio in 1881, “because Sundays everything’s shut, saloons and businesses in general.... Here Saturday night is Sunday, on Sundays there’s nothing going on,” (428, 430).

Difficulty becoming acculturated was another common theme, though the writers demonstrated a variety of experiences. Some immigrants saw few differences in their new circumstances. Heinrich Moller, for instance, frequently remarked in letters to German relatives written from Cumberland, Maryland, during the 1860s and 1870s, that “In America everything is just the same as it is in Germany.” (211) Most, however, agreed with Engel Winkelmeier, a domestic servant who wrote to her parents from Brooklyn, New York, in 1867 that “it’s a different world here.” (575) At their best, the letters reveal much about this different world, shedding light on both the immigrants’ attempts to adjust to their new lives and the society which they confronted. Many writers commented on new and unaccustomed opportunities for economic and social advancement. Writing to family and friends in 1882, Pittsburgh laborer Christian Kirst, for instance, compared Germany to his new home:

Things here are quite different from over there, here it doesn’t matter who you are, here the banker knows the beggar, even our Peter has the son of a banker as a friend ... If a man comes here who has some means he can do a good business, here it isn’t like over there, here you can do what you want, here it is a free country, here is the land of Canaan where milk and honey flow! ... I’ve already saved more here and lead a better life with my family than even the best is able to over there... (476, 478)

Regrettably, not all of the letters in the collection are as stirring or revealing as Kirst’s. This is probably the volume’s one major flaw: in attempting to address both a general and a scholarly audience, the editors wound up pleasing neither completely. General readers will find the introduction lengthy and overly technical. Many of the letter series also will not enthral non-specialists, as the entries tend to be tedious rather than “entertaining, perhaps even gripping,” (45) as the editors had hoped.

Different problems lessen the volume’s appeal to scholars. In addition to focusing on emigration and adaptation, the editors intended to make “a contribution to the history of the inarticulate, history from the bottom up, the history of everyday life.” (30) In general, they succeed admirably in this, but their editorial policy of abridging letters by editing such things as “long lists of prices, ...ritualized pious reflections, ...[and] endless lists of persons to whom the letter-writer wishes to send his or her best regards” (46) diminishes the volume’s usefulness to anyone interested in using the letters for further research. Much of what was eliminated, it would seem from their brief summaries of elisions, is the material necessary for writing systematic social history. Obviously, difficult editorial decisions had to be made to keep the volume readable and at a manageable length. For social historians investigating religion, gender, kinship networks, patterns of consumption, and other topics of current interest, however, the editors’ choices often prove exasperating. These reservations must be tempered, though, by acknowledging the wealth of material which they did manage to include. While they could not, to paraphrase an American president popular among German immigrants, please all of the people all of the time, Kamphoefner, Helbich, and Sommer have made an important and impressive contribution to our understanding of immigration and German-American culture with News from the Land of Freedom. ■

Scott C. Martin
University of California, Riverside

Sternwheelers on the Great Kanawha River
By Gerald W. Sutphin and Richard A. Andre

STEAMBOAT enthusiasts are a special breed of old-time transportation fanatics, needing to be blessed with good imaginations. Railroad, automobile, and even airplane buffs can view the objects of their affection in museums, and ride in surviving relics, now mostly tourist attractions like the Strasburg Rail-