

was mostly in the form of state paper probably acquired at deep discount.³

All in all, for the bankers concerned, one more cost of doing business.

The underlying problem, Rowlands argues, was that the state needed the financiers to provide vast amounts of short-term credit and quickly, but neither Louis XIV nor his successors could keep them in check, thereby incurring “astronomical liabilities in the process,” a failure that would eventually bring down the monarchy (p. 164). Rowlands finishes with a summary of the Regent’s attempts to fix the state’s finances using Law’s schemes, their failure, and the consequences for France down to the Revolution.

While putting plenty of blame on the bankers for the mess in 1715, he also faults many of the state officials of the period, especially Michel Chamillart, minister of finance and of war, as well as Louis XIV’s own dynastic ambitions, the reason so many costs were incurred in the first place. As he notes, “even when bankers tried to behave in a relatively honorable manner they still had to be highly manipulative to protect themselves from a crisis of liquidity” (p. 183). Perhaps the bankers were simply being bankers. To use an old bankers’ joke: “We know what we are, the only question is price.”

This is an impressive, thoroughly researched work, and will add to Guy Rowlands’s reputation as a leading historian of Louis XIV’s reign.

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Sean Patrick Adams, ed. *The American Coal Industry, 1790–1902*, 3 vols. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014. 1,200 pp. ISBN 9781138757646, 9781138757653, 9781138757660, \$545.00 (cloth).

Sean Patrick Adams’s three-volume documentary history, *The American Coal Industry*, tells the history of coal’s long nineteenth century. Bringing together an assortment of corporate reports, promotional pamphlets, journalistic accounts, scientific surveys, government documents, and archival manuscripts, Adams captures coal’s industrial history as a story of conflicts: between coal canal companies that engaged in mining and those that did not, between canals and

3. Collins, *State in Early Modern France*, p. 224; Dessert, *Argent, Pouvoir, et Société au Grand Siècle*, pp. 261–276 *passim*.

railroads, between coal carriers and mines themselves, between independent mine proprietors and heavily capitalized corporations, and (especially by the late nineteenth century) between capital and labor. The result is a well-sourced introduction to the contours of the early American coal industry, with a heavy emphasis on Pennsylvania anthracite and its geography, key figures, and sites of power.

The first volume covers the years 1790 through 1835, and documents the early-nineteenth-century origins of the American coal industry. We hear first from boosters and early colliers in Virginia, New York, and Rhode Island, some of whom struggled from lack of capital and others from lack of substantial coal deposits in the places they sought to mine. The rest of the volume largely focuses on the emergence of Pennsylvania's massive anthracite coal industry and the fierce debates over how it should be organized: through the dominance of a handful of well-capitalized corporations or through competition between scores of independent mine owners. This debate, told most vividly through a series of argumentative pamphlets and a report from the state senate of Pennsylvania, highlights the vibrant anti-corporate and anti-monopoly sentiment that pervaded industrializing America.

That sentiment proved inadequate to stave off the rise of corporations, however. The second volume covers from 1835 to 1875, and traces the decisive answer to the question of coal industry organization, with the triumph of large collieries, powerful railroads, and state government support. Most dramatically, the Civil War brought price spikes for anthracite—essential for both industrial and military purposes alike—which helped stabilize producers while introducing new hardships on consumers. The war led to substantial new investments in production, new mining technology and techniques, and new legal rights that favored corporate organizations. As documented in a pamphlet of Philadelphia's Consumer's Mutual Coal Company, it also led to new attempts by consumers to organize, however ineffectually, to demand affordable access to a commodity that had quickly become essential to modern life.

The final volume covers from 1870 to 1902, and portrays the emergence of coal as the uniquely dominant fuel of industrializing America. By the mid-1880s, Americans were, for the first time, consuming more coal than any other source of power, yet increased consumption brought unprecedented corporate consolidation and labor conflict. This volume opens with the business-friendly report of an Ohio commission investigating the need for mine safety regulation—long-sought by miners but detested by mine owners. Subsequent documents trace attempts to unionize coal miners and debates over an alleged conspiracy among Chicago coal dealers. The volume concludes with an excerpt from the report of Teddy Roosevelt's Anthracite

Coal Strike Commission, which, for the first time, brought federal mediation into the coal industry in an effort to prevent a devastating shortage of heating fuel before the winter of 1903.

While many of the documents in this collection are especially valuable to scholars and students researching coal, industry, political economy, and labor in nineteenth-century America, two selections in particular would serve as ideal readings for an undergraduate course (as I anticipate using them myself). Both documents—Charles Barnard’s “From Hod to Mine” of 1874 (in volume 2) and the excerpts from Charles Miesse’s *Points on Coal and the Coal Business* of 1887 (in volume 3)—offer fascinating and accessible accounts of the coal industry from mine to market. Barnard’s article, originally printed in *American Home* magazine, presents a journey from coal production to transportation to consumption, a more recent version of which John McPhee published in his 2005 “Coal Train” articles in *The New Yorker* (the two articles would actually make a fascinating pairing to highlight the transformation of the industry over a century and a quarter).¹ Miesse’s book provides details on each stage of coal extraction, with vivid accounts in chapters titled “The Coal Breaker,” “The Slate Pickers,” and “The Coal Salesman,” among many others. The descriptions of these chapters would likely work well paired with Lewis Hine’s famous (but slightly later) National Child Labor Committee photographs from 1908 to 1911.

As with any historical work, periodization here conveys an implicit argument. By closing with the resolution to the great anthracite strike of 1902, Adams ends with the coal industry at the height of its influence over the American economy and the federal government assuming a new role, however haltingly, as an arbiter of labor disputes. Continuing the story after 1902 would offer a different narrative. Rather than tracing the simultaneous consolidation and corporatization of the coal industry, on the one hand, and the legitimation of organized labor through the United Mine Workers, on the other, the twentieth-century story of coal would reveal more clearly the triumph of capital. In this later history, continued growth and concentration among coal companies alongside technological innovations dramatically reduced the number of miners needed to fuel the ever-growing appetites of American consumers. This history would also rely more on the health and environmental costs of coal mining: cancer, black lung, poisoned water supplies, and global warming. (With hydraulic fracturing opening vast new deposits of natural gas, along with

1. John McPhee, “Coal Train–I,” *The New Yorker*, October 3, 2005, pp. 72–83, and “Coal Train–II,” *The New Yorker*, October 10, 2005, pp. 62–71.

worries over the dangers of climate change, the coal industry's twenty-first-century history has yet to be written.)

This collection belongs on the shelves of academic libraries. Yet, given the work Adams put into assembling it, I wonder if the publisher would consider launching a digitized version (by modest subscription, if necessary) that includes both the edited transcriptions printed in this volume and facsimiles of the original documents. Such a portal into the documentary history of coal in America might also be expandable over time, and certainly allow greater numbers of students and scholars to benefit from these often-obscure primary sources helpfully collected in one place.

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