



INTRODUCTION



For the past decade, I have spent time working on issues related to labor, immigration, and race in the anthracite coal region of north-eastern Pennsylvania. The experience has been somewhat transformative for me when I think about how this region is remembered. Descendants often reminisce about getting by, and the official public memory often emphasizes the important role anthracite coal played in the development of the Industrial Revolution. Both perspectives of the past are real. The anthracite coal industry began in the late eighteenth century and developed into a commercial success before the middle of the nineteenth century, and by the turn of the twentieth century, the industry employed about 180,000 workers who extracted over 100 million tons of coal per year. However, generations of new immigrants were subjected to some of the worst working and living conditions in the United States. The extraction of coal came at a huge cost to human lives and had one of the highest occupational mortality rates in the United States. Men were often killed or injured without consequence, and families often lived on the brink of starvation. Some deaths were caused by major tragedies, like the Avondale mine disaster of 1869 (Wolensky and Keating 2008) or the 1959 Knox mine disaster (Wolensky et al. 2005), to name only a few. Other deaths were caused by frequent cave-ins or explosions, maiming and killing a few and sometimes dozens of men at a time. The victims were anonymous, and the tragedies not recognized by the coal company. The workers were seen by the coal operators as interchangeable and easily replaced with unemployed new immigrants. Stronger mining regulations were legislated after the 1869 Avondale mine disaster, although 32,000 men were killed by mining-related accidents in the anthracite region after this date (Richards 2002, 7).

While the region is finding ways to celebrate a heroic past, it must also deal with the long-term impact of environmental degradation related to

the coal industry. The anthracite region is the most disturbed rural landscape in Pennsylvania. Diverse hardwood forests filled with wildlife have been replaced with a lunar-like landscape, absent of vegetation, with only unstable, acidic, black shale to punctuate the terrain. While many of the industrial structures, like coal breakers, have vanished from the landscape, culm banks, which are the waste by-products of mining, remain. They can be over one hundred feet high and seen from many miles away (Conlogue 2013). Peter Goin and Elizabeth Raymond (2004, 39) note that the culm banks scattered throughout the landscape are viewed by some of the miners and descendants of the miners as monuments to the hard work performed by numerous anonymous new immigrants who toiled and survived in this dangerous industry. They are a reminder of the inhumane exploitation that former generations endured and survived. These features have become part of the vernacular landscape.

I first became interested in the anthracite region when I read about one of the largest labor massacres in US history in the patch town of Lattimer Mines, near Hazleton, Pennsylvania. As an attempt to control immigration, the Pennsylvania state legislators passed the Campbell Act in 1897, which was supported by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). The act stated that coal operators would be taxed three cents a day for each non-US citizen employed in the collieries. The coal operators passed this tax along to their non-naturalized employees. The miners of the Hazleton district, the majority of whom were not naturalized, went on strike, and in doing so challenged the meaning of citizenship and labor practices. Were immigrants and wage workers equal citizens in a democratic republic, or were they a subaltern class subject to the whims and wills of their employers and more advantaged local citizens? The miners went on strike in mid-August 1897. On 10 September, they marched with the American flag, a symbol of both democracy and the protection of their rights under US law. As they approached Lattimer Mines with the goal of closing the colliery, the strikers were gunned down by the sheriff's posse and members of the Coal and Iron Police, and many were shot in their backs as they fled. Nineteen men died at the site as a result of their confrontation with the sheriff and his supporting law enforcement (Novak 1978). What is fascinating to me is that while Lattimer is considered one of the largest labor massacres in US history, it is not part of the national public memory, while other labor tragedies are, such as conflicts at Haymarket, Homestead, and Ludlow (Zinn 2003). Lattimer is not mentioned in any of the major labor history chronicles, and it is not part of the Pennsylvania state curriculum. I became interested in how memory, or in this case, amnesia, could occur and erase the event from our national memory (Shackel 2018a). It also became clear that even when we become more knowledge-

able about these past tragic events related to industry, work, and labor, these tragedies still occur, although outside of our national borders and often in developing nations. We are often unaware of the continuation of the exploitation by and horrific consequences of unchecked industrial capitalism in other parts of the world as American industries continue to purchase products created in harsh, exploitative environments. So, that is the challenge set in this book: providing historical and archaeological documentation in a local context (here in the United States), examining the consequences of unchecked capitalism, and then connecting these same issues to contemporary industrial practices in the developing world.

Anthropologists have debated whether practitioners should be advocates for the communities they are studying and researching (Scheper-Hughes 1995) or not (Hastrup and Elsass 1990). There is growing momentum among researchers who believe that scholars do have a responsibility to become involved in a form of advocacy for the oppressed (see, e.g., De León 2012). Historical archaeology, the discipline that uses above- and belowground material culture, ethnography, oral histories, and documentation, may be a vehicle to enlighten and challenge the consequences of unchecked capitalism (McGuire 2008). As Shannon Dawdy (2010, 769) writes, "Historical archaeology has a tenuous epistemological and disciplinary position in the wider field: it uncovers things not yet forgotten. But it could do even more dangerous and productive work . . . by uncovering things thought best forgotten, such as the failures of state projects and the paths of destruction wrought by high capitalism."

While we struggle to remember America's industrial past, it appears as though much of the struggle between labor and capital has been slowly, methodically, and almost completely erased from much of the global north landscapes, with only a few exceptions. Recovering these reminders of labor history is imperative and not only reveals the injustices of the past, but also connects these conditions to the present. If we do make this connection between the past and the present, it becomes clear that many of the exploitive conditions that existed in the past have been exported to similar industries in developing countries. Therefore, this chronicle of the history and conditions of the anthracite region lays the foundation for connecting to contemporary industry and mining circumstances in other parts of the world. Connecting the tragedies of the historic anthracite mining region of northeastern Pennsylvania to the developing world allows us to observe some of the very same conditions industrializing communities face in the twenty-first century. These work conditions have not necessarily changed for the better. In fact, many of the modern labor conditions in the developing world are, to some degree, a reflection of the conditions found in US industry about a century ago (Shackel 2009, 2016).

Heritage work in communities and regions is a vehicle to connect the past with the present and address some of the pressing social justice issues facing contemporary local and global communities. The Lattimer massacre, which occurred in a remote community in northeastern Pennsylvania, seems like an isolated incident with no connection to the present. In reality, it serves as a touchstone, connecting the history and heritage of the anthracite coal miners in northeastern Pennsylvania to the exploited laborers in today's global economy. To make these connections is a powerful vehicle to use heritage to confront inequalities and promote social justice issues as well as to explore history, heritage, and memory making. While the historical records and the archaeological materials provide a framework for the past, it is important to use these examples and think about how our studies in labor are meaningful and related to us today.

If we want to create a socially and economically just present, we need to think critically about how the past is created and challenge the long-held assumption that the past is past. In other words, the past is present, and we need to dismantle the blinders that prevent us from connecting difficult histories to the present (Little and Shackel 2014; Shackel and Roller 2012). For instance, in 1978, Michael Novak of the American Enterprise Institute published a historical novel that focused on the tragedy of the Lattimer massacre. He wrote about the substandard working and living conditions found in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania, as well as the racism toward new immigrants during the late nineteenth century. The *Wall Street Journal* reviewed Novak's book, *The Guns of Lattimer*. The reviewer questioned the value of the novel, saying, "It is tempting to ask Mr. Novak why we really need the book. The incident occurred more than 80 years ago. It sounds like a unique event that would best be forgotten. Besides, American society has changed; American bosses don't act that way toward blue-collar workers anymore" (Wysocki 1978, 24).

It is a common strategy in a system of unchecked capitalism to take tragic episodes in labor history, think of them as lessons of the past, and not consider how inequalities and labor injustices continue to play out in the world today. The reviewer in the *Wall Street Journal* clearly did not want to address the realities of the social consequences of unchecked capitalism. It is important to move out of our comfort zone and connect these historical issues of labor injustice to the present, even when it becomes politically dangerous to do so, as we confront the hidden realities of a global economy (see Shackel 2018a).

An archaeology of unchecked capitalism can be about working with abandoned, ruined places, which allows us to reflect upon the meaning of these places. The remaining rubble is not shapeless, worthless debris;

rather, it needs to be explored as textured matter that has meaning to all living places. What gives rubble meaning is the awareness of the forces that created this rubble (Gordillo 2014, 5, 8). Alfredo González-Ruibal (2008, 248) sees the study of contemporary destruction as the archaeology of us, or an archaeology of supermodernity, which documents trauma, emotion, and intimate involvement. While most of archaeology focuses on production and consumption, an archaeology of supermodernity is characterized by focusing on destruction as much as on production or consumption. After all, the destruction of the world is rampant, and as some point out, supermodern daily life brings more damage to the world than several world wars (Serres 2000).

Ruins are an invention of modernity and provide a visual reminder of a break with the past (Gordillo 2014, 5, 8; Lowenthal 1985, xviii). For Walter Benjamin, ruins represent the impermanence and destructive tendencies of capitalist culture (Benjamin and Tiedemann 1999). Ruins tear into the spatiotemporal fabric through which new social forms can emerge (Dawdy 2010, 777). Benjamin sees destruction as creative progress. Making room for the future is only made by obliterating the past (Roller 2018a, 29).

The archaeology study presented here is about trauma, destruction, migration, racism, and industrial disasters, all products of unchecked capitalism. González-Ruibal (2008, 260) challenges us to think differently about the recent past and think about the destruction that accompanies unchecked capitalism. Otherwise we run the risk of sanctioning what we have done to the world and ourselves: "We need to use archaeology as a tool of radical critique, opposed to ideological mechanisms for sanitizing the past" (González-Ruibal 2008, 261). Therefore, exploring difficult heritage brings to light the conditions of the past, and by connecting these issues to the present, we can make some of these difficult histories a platform from which to discuss the continued prevalence of these inequities. By illuminating and confronting difficult histories we can examine the roots of contemporary social, economic, and political injustices and provide a cause to act on these inequities today (Shackel 2013, 317).

Overview

This book begins with examples from the anthracite coal industry in northeastern Pennsylvania. In the late nineteenth century, American poet and novelist Stephen Crane provided a critique of the working conditions in the anthracite mines. He visited coal mines in the Scranton, Pennsylvania, area in 1894, and his accounts of work there provide an intriguing

description of the exploitive conditions that many of the new foreign-born mine workers faced. Those who were not considered equal and not seen as white were easily exploited. In this case it was the Eastern and Southern European immigrant workers. Crane wrote, "Man is in the implacable grasp of nature. It has only to tighten slightly, and he is crushed like a bug." He continued, "If a man escapes the gas, the floods, the 'squeezes' of falling rock, the cars shooting through the little tunnels, the precarious elevators, the hundred perils, there usually comes an attack of 'miner's asthma' that slowly racks and shakes him into the grave" (Crane, quoted in Dublin and Licht 2005, 24). While only visiting the region, Crane's writings show that he was aware of the high fatality rate and the many tragedies that the mine workers faced every day.

Many of the disasters, tragedies, and racism found over a century ago in US industries have been exported to other countries as industries have become increasingly mobile, moving offshore in order to pursue a workforce living in poverty conditions and willing to work (sometimes unwillingly, in a system of slave-like labor) in a system of unchecked capitalism. The research on the anthracite coal mining region of northeastern Pennsylvania provides some valuable information related to health, nutrition, and the everyday existence of the laborers in this industry. While the immigrants faced exploitation and unchecked capitalism, the situation motivated them to organize and protest for better pay and better working conditions. The result of this protest was a labor massacre that left nineteen men dead at the site of the confrontation with the local sheriff and his posse. Press coverage of the 1897 Lattimer massacre and subsequent trial brought the working and living conditions of the anthracite communities to a wider national audience (see Hambidge 1898; Rood 1898). However, the workers and their families received little sympathy or aid, as they were seen as immigrant invaders who were not white and not American. The sheriff and his posse were placed on trial for the killing of the miners and found innocent, marking one of the great miscarriages of the American justice system. Those miners who were associated with the incident were told that they and their family members would never work in the industry again (Novak 1978; Shackel 2018a). A type of historical amnesia fell over the event. The massacre quickly faded from the national public memory, and has disappeared from our history books. The Lattimer massacre of 1897 became known as the Lattimer riots by many after World War I as a result of the backlash against the International Workers of the World (IWW) and the Red Scare. However, in the midst of the ruined anthracite landscape, with abandoned coal breakers and deserted towns, the memory of the event stayed alive under the mainstream currents of public history (Shackel 2018a).

Our work in northeastern Pennsylvania is about understanding the heritage of the place and how people complied with or resisted industrial capitalism. The Roman Catholic Church has a strong connection to labor in the region. Many of the clergy have deep family roots in the mining communities and have experienced poverty, hunger, racism, and environmental degradation as a result of mining. At Lattimer commemorative events, which began in 1972, clergy often connect the era of the massacre to current social justice issues. For instance, at one commemorative anniversary event held at the site of the massacre, the Most Reverend Francis Di Lorenzo, auxiliary bishop of Scranton, compared the social and economic situation of the miners to the present social and economic conditions of the region. He stated, "What is apparently clear to all of us is that these men were actors in a drama which is an eternal drama—an economic drama which we are going through again. Economics was a precipitating part of this violence." He added that, "Many of our people are on the lower end of the wage structure. There is hidden poverty in our area and the distribution of wealth is still a problem" (quoted in McGlynn 1992).

Heritage workers have the power to confront inequalities today. Events of the past can be used to illuminate connections to current social, political, and economic issues. Many of the social injustices that existed in the United States over a hundred years ago still exist or have been exported to other parts of the world. Most large-scale corporations work to make labor inequity invisible, keeping workers and their concerns at the periphery of any discussion related to issues of social justice in the workplace. By bringing to light the conditions of the past and connecting these issues to the present, we can make some of these difficult histories a platform from which to discuss the continued prevalence of these inequities. If we can change the memory of an event, and discuss some of the difficult histories associated with the event, it is possible to change what is important in the public memory, as well as what is significant in contemporary conversations (Little and Shackel 2014).

This book focuses on the remains of the industrial landscape, the rubble and ruins, the casualties associated with industrial ruins. It is about understanding the destructive forces of unchecked capitalism and the forces of race and racism that are so intrinsic in much of our industrial past and present. The first part of this book focuses on the heritage and social justice issues of northeastern Pennsylvania. In the second part of the book, the noticeable link to some of the larger issues of labor exploitation in other regions of the world is discussed. The history of the anthracite coal mining industry in northeastern Pennsylvania is connected to the continuation of labor tragedies in developing countries, in particu-

lar, the textile industry in Bangladesh, and the mining industry in South Africa and Turkey.

Chapter 1 focuses on the reliance on immigrant labor in the anthracite coal industry in northeastern Pennsylvania in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Subjected to unequal treatment, relegated to subpar living conditions, and obligated to perform the most dangerous work, immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were consistently marginalized and exploited, and were the targets of prejudice and nativist sentiments. The process of racialization and the categorization of people allowed them to be designated as inferior. Racial science that developed as these immigrants arrived from Southern and Eastern Europe supported racist propaganda and nativism that led to the mistreatment of immigrants. Racial categories became part of popular culture and the scientific realm through a variety of studies that started to be published in the middle of the nineteenth century and continued to be institutionalized and reinforced with government documents, like the *Reports of the Immigration Commission* (US Senate 1911b), as well as some eugenics studies in the 1920s. Today, northeastern Pennsylvania's population consists of a well-established, traditional community of descendants of Eastern and Southern Europeans. Their ancestors were part of the last major migration to the United States before federal policies severely limited immigration in the early 1920s through a series of racist laws that were aimed at curtailing the migration from these regions. Northeastern Pennsylvania developed for several generations without any major influxes of outsiders until about 2000, when immigrants began coming to small inland cities like Hazleton, Pennsylvania (Longazel 2016).

Chapter 2 uses a combination of archival records, first-person accounts, secondary sources, and archaeology to provide an overview of the miners' living conditions, vernacular architecture, and arrangement of house and yard space in Lattimer's patch town. Excavations from several households from a coal patch town that was home to Eastern Europeans and Italians provide a micro-view of how scientific racism played out on the household level. Documentation of a congressional hearing features one of the major coal operators discussing his workers in what is now considered a patronizing tone. He bragged that several families can live in a small dwelling that comprises two rooms and a loft containing as many as twelve people. The archaeological excavations investigated the area where Italian immigrants were concentrated, known as the Italian village, and revealed that the residents were relegated to the poorest land, in low-lying areas and on hillside slopes, areas that would have easily flooded due to runoff. An 1898 *Century* magazine article described the shanty village. The original settlement building consisted of salvaged wood, and the community

lacked any formal sanitation program. The archaeological record provides important information about the miners' local and traditional practices, including food preservation, gardening, and the creation of terraces, as well as an effort to manage sewage and sanitation. By performing oral histories and archaeology in Lattimer, we are helping to awaken the working-class history of the community (Shackel 2013, 2018a; Roller 2018a).

Chapter 3 describes how coal mining irrevocably transformed the landscape in northeastern Pennsylvania, affecting it in mostly negative ways by contaminating the air, rivers, streams, and drinking water, and destroying vegetation. Pollution from coal mining led to environmental and health problems for local residents in the region. The combination of a toxic landscape and a lack of jobs has led to widespread depopulation in the region, lack of access to nutritious foods, and chronic poverty. Families faced these conditions for several generations, until they could escape from working underground and find steadier employment. Poor living conditions and malnutrition affected the community in the past, and it continues to impact the region today, as the general health and well-being of the northeastern Pennsylvania region still suffers, despite no longer relying on the coal industry for sustenance. Several surveys regarding the region's general health and well-being indicate that this area is the unhappiest place in the United States, a product of the region's declining employment and economic outlook, as well as its poor general health, among other factors. Studies conducted by Gallup and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention document the poor health and well-being of today's residents of northeastern Pennsylvania. These poor health outcomes could be the result of intergenerational stress that dates to the arrival of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe a century ago. Using archaeological assemblages, oral histories, cookbooks, and epigenetic studies, it appears that trauma and structural violence influence the contemporary health and well-being in the region.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how the labor history of northeastern Pennsylvania is not only one that connects history and current events, but also the local and global. Both the mill owners of the past and international corporations of the present seized the opportunity to take advantage of their workforce, paying them low wages and situating them in unsafe working conditions. This exploitation spans the globe as well. Textile mills moved to northeastern Pennsylvania and other places with unorganized labor so that they could operate at a lower cost. Because the families were always close to starvation, the textile operators found labor that was willing to work at significantly lower wages when compared to the organized workforce elsewhere. As the mining industry declined and family incomes shrank, women were willing to work at low-wage industrial jobs in order

to help sustain their families. However, as the new workforces unionized and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union became powerful, the industry migrated, initially to the American South, then to places like the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, where labels could still bear the name "Made in the USA." Until recently, US immigration laws and federal minimum wage laws did not apply to this US territory. Workers were paid subminimum wages until this matter was addressed by the US Congress. By 2009, changes to the immigration and labor laws meant higher wages. As a result, the garment industry moved off the island to other developing countries in South and Southeast Asia. There, workers' health and safety regulations are often ignored, and workers' lives are often in danger. The exploitation of labor in the context of unchecked capitalism has continued throughout history, drawing a parallel between the substandard living conditions, low pay, prohibitive contracts, labor abuses, and dangerous work environments experienced by miners in the past and industrial workers in developing countries today.

Chapter 5 discusses how the labor uprisings in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century US history were not isolated incidents; the exploitation of workers and violent repression of strikes still occur today. On the global scale, workers continue to face poor working conditions and substandard wages. There are two case studies from the twenty-first century to support this argument. First, the Lonmin Marikana platinum mine in South Africa, where striking miners were killed by the South African Police Service in three violent encounters over the course of one month in 2012. Second, in 2014, an explosion in a coal mine in Soma, Turkey, killed 301 mine workers. The push for profit and cost-cutting measures left the mine an unsafe place, which led to the disaster. The leadership of the country referred to the history of mine disasters and explained that the incident was inevitable, which enraged the country. Widespread protests and strikes brought attention to the unsafe working conditions that led to the event, but survivors and their families never received justice. There is a parallel between these modern-day events and the labor practices of nineteenth-century northeastern Pennsylvania, where a desire for greater profits led to a disregard for human life and welfare, resulting in the kinds of tragedies that occurred in each of these case studies.

Framed in the context of its role as a heritage site, the conclusion explains that northeastern Pennsylvania can make significant contributions to the discourse around labor history. As tourism becomes increasingly popular in the region, residents must grapple with the ways in which they will go about commemorating their troubled history. While a group of committed citizens have worked to ensure that the events of the Lattimer massacre do not fade from memory, there remains resistance to these

efforts. It is challenging to preserve and promote difficult histories. Rather than covering up or ignoring the decay and ugliness of an industrial landscape, we should confront and acknowledge it as a way to discuss the ugliness of history. These discussions can demonstrate the relevancy of the past—no matter how unpleasant it may be—by drawing parallels between the past and present, such as the coal mines of the nineteenth century and the sweatshops of the twenty-first century.

González-Ruibal (2008, 248) explains that there are three scenarios in which archaeology must produce alternative narratives: (1) genocides and political killing, (2) wars that leave no documentary record or of which the memories are highly contentious, and (3) the subconscious—or unconscious—in culture. In the case of this book, these categories are addressed by focusing on the war on labor and the unnecessary deaths related to those in protest, as well as the casualties related to disasters as a product of unchecked capitalism. In most of the cases outlined in this book, the subconscious and unconscious is related to the racial ideology that has left the working class, past and present, in a position of unequal power.

While the prominence of labor history has faded in the contemporary United States, it is important to rely on this history to place current labor events within the context of a long continuum of efforts for the search for social justice. Connecting the past to the present allows us to address basic human rights, issues related to race and racism, immigration, work, and human dignity and the access to basic human needs. The history of inequality continues to play out on the landscape, in the United States as well as on the global level.