

headlong rush for riches with the thus-far successful efforts of wilderness groups to kill development of a surface gold mine along the Blackfoot River in Montana. She posits that American values are moving away from the nineteenth century's culture of gold, and suggests that we can simply choose to adopt new cultural values that will hold pristine environment in higher esteem than gold. A ticklish problem, that, if we intend to continue to write our book manuscripts and reviews using computers made of petrochemicals, copper, silver, silica, lead—and of gold.

Eric L. Clements

Southeast Missouri State University

Liston E. Leyendecker. *The Griffith Family and the Founding of Georgetown*. Boulder: The University Press of Colorado, 2001; 106 pp., ill., app., gloss., bib., ind., cloth, \$45.00.

Liston Leyendecker tells the fascinating story of the Griffith family and their three and a half year struggle to develop the Griffith Mining District and establish the camp of Georgetown, Colorado. Jefferson and Sidney Griffith, along with their children, were land speculators and pioneer farmers who moved from Kentucky to Indiana, Missouri, and then to Nebraska. In 1858, George, the second eldest son and a veteran of the California gold rush, and his brothers, John and David, decided to participate in the Colorado gold rush. A year later, George discovered gold along South Clear Creek near the future location of Georgetown.

After leaving for the winter, George and his brothers returned with several other members of their family. By May 1861, the Griffiths had used their expertise gained in other frontier areas to establish a small but functioning mining camp. They built a toll road from Central City with their own money to bring in supplies, and surveyed the district's boundaries. With this done, they were able to preempt a large number of claims,

operate several mines, and bring one of the first stamp mills to the district. Leyendecker thinks it was striking how the Griffiths attempted to set up a small family empire along South Clear Creek.

However, one of the Griffiths' most important accomplishments was to formulate up-to-date laws that stated how their community and mining district should function. The Griffiths used their expertise in mining, farming, surveying, and law (at least two of the sons were lawyers) to write and revise the early laws of the Griffith Mining District. Samuel Cushman, an early historian of Colorado, believed that these laws were probably the most complete set of laws adopted in any district in the territory. According to Leyendecker, the major legacy of the Griffith family may have been their very complete set of mining laws for the Griffith district.

Leyendecker has done us a great service by painstakingly transcribing the handwritten laws of the Griffith Mining District from the two original manuscripts held at the Clear Creek County, Colorado, archives. This transcription takes up about half of this small publication, and, along with the background history of the family, makes this work truly important. The only criticism is that this book is only available in hardcover and is relatively expensive for its size.

The Griffiths' family legacy lives on in Georgetown's name (after George F. Griffith), in the early mining laws they established, and in this new book.

Mark Vendl

LaGrange Park, Illinois

Robert A. Trennert. *Riding the High Wire: Aerial Mine Tramways in the West*. Boulder: The University Press of Colorado, 2001; 140 pp., ill., notes, gloss., bib., ind., paper, \$19.95.

Robert Trennert's latest book fills a large gap in the history of mining engineering. It not only explains the science behind aerial mine tram-

ways, but also summarizes the history of their development and use in the U.S. and Canada.

The book begins by explaining in clear detail how aerial tramways worked, and how they filled a great need in transporting ore to mills and supplies to mines. In some areas of rugged terrain, roads and railroads were impractical or impossible or too expensive to build and use. Technology using "wire rope" was known by the 1860s, and it was through the foresightedness of people like Andrew Hallidie, Charles Huson, and Adolf Bleichert that this technology was applied to the mining industry.

As early single-rope mine tramways evolved to double-rope tramways by 1890, tramways became state-of-the-art technology in many mining districts in the western U.S. and Canada. Trennert aptly describes the difficulties with constructing and maintaining aerial mine tramway systems at high altitudes, along shear rock faces, and during severe winters, with their ever-present threat of avalanches.

The heyday of the aerial mine tramway was from 1890 to the 1920s. As mining shifted

to lower-grade, high-tonnage workings, aerial tramway systems could not compete. They became outmoded with the development of open pit mines, long-distance conveyors, and high-capacity trucks. By the end of World War II, aerial mine tramways were all but obsolete. As brief as their existence was, Trennert's book presents a thorough history of the development of aerial mine tramways, and includes examples. Some of the greatest tramways ever constructed in western American and Canadian mining districts are described and displayed. The author uses both historical and present-day photographs to give the reader a birds-eye view of these heroic engineering feats in mining technology.

Trennert zeros in on the historical significance of aerial tramways to the development of western mining, so whether you are a student of the history of mining technology or a general mining historian, this book must be on your bookshelf.

Karen Vendl

LaGrange Park, Illinois