

pages of the text are devoted to personal mining experiences, although the narrator, a visitor and town lot speculator in Virginia City among a variety of other occupations, adds an anecdotal, second-hand description of the Yellow Jacket mine fire on the Comstock. But as historian Malcolm Rohrbough notes in his scholarly introduction, the importance of this short narrative rests on its rarity as one of only a handful of eyewitness accounts of the Gold Rush era written from an African-American perspective. As an artful survivor of antebellum plantation culture, Williams tells a compelling story of how a member of the social underclass struggled to overcome tremendous odds in a society built on the cultural bedrock of white supremacy. His commentary on a wide range of contemporary topics and personalities make rewarding reading for anyone interested in nineteenth-century minority studies.

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Nancy J. Taniguchi. *Castle Valley America: Hard Land, Hard-Won Home*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2004; 365pp., cloth \$45.95, paper \$24.95.

Historian Nancy Taniguchi calls Utah's Castle Valley "home," and sets out to portray it "with all its defects and wrinkles and still reveal why it's so special [viii]." She reveals that Castle Valley's specialness is a result of its unique physical geography and its intense human history. Geology plays a special role here, as the valley is flanked by rugged cliffs containing deposits of bituminous coal and other hydrocarbons. The valley's aridity made it difficult to settle, but agriculture got a start here when Mormons moved into the area in the late nineteenth century. This tension between industrial-mining history and agricultural self-sufficiency has positioned Castle Valley center stage in a drama repeated elsewhere. The recurring tension between Mormons and outside corporate interests vividly plays out in Castle Valley,

and Taniguchi portrays the drama with considerable objectivity. What makes this book so special is that it is a tribute to Castle Valley's unique local history, but reveals, at every turn, how that history was affected by broader national and international developments. This, in other words, is local history in broader context.

Readers of our *Mining History Journal* will want to know how Taniguchi treats mining history. Castle Valley's hydrocarbon deposits are covered in various chapters that are arranged chronologically. Taniguchi discusses the mining of coal from several perspectives, observing that numerous players had a role: independent and family mines, the Mormon Church, eastern mining companies, and especially the region's railroads. As with so much of mining history, transportation is a factor that can make the difference between profit and loss. She rightly notes that the valley's geographic position was extremely important, for it was once peripheral or isolated, but then boomed after the Denver & Rio Grande Western railway built through the valley on its way from the Mile High City to Salt Lake City. Taniguchi also notes that other hydrocarbons like gilsonite (a very rare, asphalt-like mineral so valuable that it was shipped in sacks rather than in bulk), oil, and natural gases (including carbon dioxide) were produced here at times. It was, however, bituminous coal that fueled most of Castle Valley's development, and coal comprises the bulk of the story.

Using a remarkably "symmetrical" outline of three sections, each consisting of four chapters, Taniguchi relates the valley's history from 1776 to 2004. Ending in 1899, the first section interprets the valley's setting, Native American, early Spanish and Mormon pioneers, and the coming of the railroad. The second section ("New People, New Ways") emphasizes the increasing ethnic diversity from 1899 to the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929. The last section addresses the theme of "Crisis and Community," showing how the Depression and the Cold War affected the valley, while more recently

historic preservation and the energy crisis have shaped the valley's character. Taniguchi places her own Japanese-American history into the valley's history, for although she was not born there, her children were, and many of her relatives still live there. This family connection gives *Castle Valley America* a very personal touch.

This review comes back to a haunting story that is suggested by this book's attractive cover. A color photograph of the stratified valley walls appears behind a historic black and white photo of the first dwelling in what would become the town of Helper—the log cabin homestead of Mormon pioneer Teancum Pratt, who lived here with his two wives until imprisoned for cohabitation. Despite owning a strategic piece of real estate and attempting to irrigate and farm a portion of the valley, Pratt's declining fortunes ultimately found him working in a coal mine in the winter of 1900, where he was killed in a cave-in. Pratt's life and death symbolize the harshness of life in Castle Valley, where utopian Mormon vision collided with corporate industrial development. For mining historians and western historians, *Castle Valley America* makes both inspirational and sobering reading.

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Raymond E. Dumett. *El Dorado in West Africa: The Gold-Mining Frontier, African Labor, and Colonial Capitalism in the Gold Coast, 1875-1900*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1998; 396pp., ill., maps, paper, \$24.95.

Raymond Dumett's *El Dorado in West Africa* is a well-written book of significance to scholars in several academic disciplines. It describes how European "industrialists" competed with African "traditionalists" to mine West African gold at the beginning of the colonial age. Although the book contains plenty of technical details about mining and geology, its focus is on people—the anony-

mous workers, assimilated Africans and European entrepreneurs who created and sustained the gold rush. The result is a view from multiple perspectives of the problems of economic development in the first decade of the "scramble for Africa."

As Dumett explains in the introduction, there were a sequence of international gold rushes in the nineteenth century that began at Sutter's Mill in 1849, and reached Russia, Australia, Mexico, South Africa, and Canada by the end of the century. Dumett's gold rush took place in southwestern Ghana, which was known at the time as the Gold Coast by Europeans. The region of Wassa is located about sixty kilometers inland from the modern port of Sekondi-Takoradi, along the railroad that leads to Kumasi, the regional capital of the north. At the time, it was outside of the area claimed by Great Britain, the sole colonial power along the coast.

Kumasi was the pre-colonial capital of the Asante federation, a centralized state based on the trade in gold mined from shallow pits and alluvial deposits as early as the fifteenth century. Reports of gold attracted Portuguese traders to the coast in the late fifteenth century, and by the eighteenth century, ships came from Sweden, Denmark, Holland, England, France, and Brandenburg. In the nineteenth century, however, the British gained a monopoly along the coast and the worsening terms of trade generated African resistance, including the Third Anglo-Asante War in 1873. After peace was restored and mining resumed, reports of African gold miners attracted the first sustained European mining interest to the region between 1876 and 1879.

In his earlier work, Dumett focused on pre-colonial West Africa, and this book shows how traditional African society responded to the arrival of industrialization. To provide context, he includes chapters on the geology of southwestern Ghana and its pre-industrial mining techniques. Other chapters cover developments in technology, relations between miners and the colonial government, and the process by which min-