

tory of alternatives to the fossil fuels—chiefly hydroelectricity, nuclear power, and geothermal energy. The criticisms above are trivial, however, when compared to Scamehorn's successes. Within the limits of a survey history of a broad subject, *High Altitude Energy* could hardly be better.

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Duane A. Smith. *San Juan Gold: A Mining Engineer's Adventures, 1879-1881*. Montrose, CO: Western Reflections Publishing Co., 2003; 135 pp., maps, illus., photo essay, ind., paper, \$12.95.

Eben Erskine Olcott, a mining engineer graduated from Columbia University in 1874, had varied experiences in his chosen profession, a small facet of which is described by Duane Smith in *San Juan Gold*. Olcott's employment began immediately after his graduation, first with the Ore Knob Copper Co. in North Carolina, then with the Pennsylvania Lead Co., followed by a job as superintendent of a Venezuelan gold mine. With this experience behind him, he returned to the States to consult on western mines.

Fortunately for us, Olcott was a prolific letter writer and Smith has used these letters to follow the mining engineer in his travels around the mining West, with the book principally describing Olcott's experiences in the rugged San Juan Mountains of Colorado. Smith wisely chooses to quote directly from Olcott's letters, providing just enough background to clarify the quotations and place them in context. Too many authors today seem prone to present diaries and letters entirely as vehicles for presenting their own perceptions of what the written record has stated.

Following his return from Venezuela, Olcott met a representative of the Phelps Dodge Mining Co., who hired Olcott to inspect mines in Utah, Nevada, Colorado, and particularly the operations of the Crooke brothers, including their smelter. The

Crookes must have been quite impressed with Olcott, for they hired him to run their North Star Mine at 12,800 feet on King Solomon Mountain, not far from Silverton, Colorado.

Olcott's letters, written to his family on the East Coast, provide fascinating descriptions of the trials and tribulations he endured both at the North Star and in traveling to evaluate other mines in the West. The well-written letters give a vivid picture of stage travel in the early days of the West. Olcott's misadventures included missing an outgoing stage due to the delay of an incoming one, having to climb out of a stage coach after it turned over, and even walking in front of a slow-moving stage not only to lighten its load but to escape the tightly-packed, smoke-filled carriage. He had to have been in excellent physical condition! Olcott often wrote of his attendance at church services, when available, commenting most often on the sermon, either well rendered or quite poor. An acute observer of nature and his surroundings, Olcott also described to his family the wildlife, weather (delightful or frustrating), and the beauty of the San Juan Mountains (in glowing terms).

Olcott was very disappointed when the Crooke brothers promised to build a smelter in the valley below the North Star, but then constructed it twenty miles away over a high ridge in Lake City. This required additional, expensive transportation by horse and wagon to process the North Star's ore. At the end of his two-year contract, Olcott left the San Juans to work in Mexico. His departure appeared to be sudden, but Smith's extensive research failed to reveal the circumstances of his leaving. However, that research discovered that Olcott did continue his mine consulting work, even after taking over his family's business of managing the Hudson River Day Line, a fleet of ships serving the Hudson River in New York.

San Juan Gold is a fascinating book, revealing the thoughts of a mining engineer taking on a job in a rough, remote area, one to which the telegraph had come, but

in which the telephone made but rare appearances and rail transportation was still only a promise. Mails were being hijacked and stage travel was beset by accidents and heavy snows. The logistical problems of operating in that high and remote location were severe during the summer, but deep snows made it impossible to continue mining through the winter. Yet through all of this, Olcott retained his enthusiasm for the harsh but magnificent area in which he worked. In a November 1978 letter to his sister Katherine, Olcott wrote: "Sometimes I have wished that I had selected a different occupation, but then look what I would have missed."

Both mining and non-mining readers will enjoy this book. The only disappointment came from not learning more about the actual challenges of mining the North Star. Perhaps in a sequel volume Smith will grab his hard hat, buckle on his lamp belt, and mine out any of Olcott's letters that describe those details.

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Stephen B. Castor and Gregory C. Fendock. *Minerals of Nevada*. Reno: University of Nevada Press (Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, Special Publication 31), 2003; 560pp., cloth, \$75.

Francis Bacon put it best: "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."

Regional mineralogies fit into the first and last categories. Usually one does not simply sit down and read one from cover to cover. They are meant to be used as reference books to which one refers for specific information. Need it be said that reference reading is an activity of diligence? That said, I wish it weren't so. As a nearly fanatical young mineral collector, I do have fond

memories of reading Ed Eckel's *Minerals of Colorado* from cover to cover.

It is not, however, my intention to pan *Minerals of Nevada*—I mean to praise it! It serves Bacon's purposes admirably and will serve yours if you need a good reference to the minerals of the Silver State. And since no truly comprehensive state mineralogy had ever been published before *Minerals of Nevada*, you do need it if you are a student of geology, mines, mining history, and minerals. Nevada is acknowledged by all as one of the nation's most important mining states, so this book will be a welcome and useful addition to many a library.

The book is easy to use, as all of the species are listed alphabetically. As with all such works, the bulk of the information is in the form of a catalog of articles on the mineral species found in the state. The articles consist of a discussion of color, crystal habit, crystal size, mode of occurrence, associated minerals, and other items of interest for that species as found at that locality. Each locality at which a species is found is listed according to the appropriate county in which that locality is situated. The sources for information are cited in standard scientific format, and a complete bibliography is included. There is a good index for most of the "other" subjects brought up in the text.

The species-by-species presentation doesn't stray into the more technical mineralogical data that is easily obtained elsewhere. There is a short paragraph at the start of each article that provides a good introduction to the species. Sometimes I found myself wishing that a little more had been included in that paragraph. And I certainly wish that more information had been included in the discussions of the various districts, but sometimes authors have to limit things.

There are several succinct introductory chapters containing information on various aspects of the history and nature of mining the minerals of the state. Again, I often wanted more information, but the purpose of these chapters is to introduce the context of the mineralogy, not to tell everything