

Karen Bescherer Metheny. *From the Miners' Doublehouse: Archaeology and Landscape in a Pennsylvania Coal Company Town*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007; 306 pp., b&w illus., maps, append., notes, ref., ind., cloth, \$45. ISBN: 1572334959

Based on a doctoral dissertation, *From the Miners' Doublehouse* combines traditional historical research, archeology, and oral history to examine the interactions between residents of a Pennsylvania company town and the mining company, and their effects upon the landscape. The author conducted broad and thorough research on Helvetia, Pennsylvania, a Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal Company town active during the first half of the twentieth century. Helvetia's houses were mainly of the duplex style common in the coal towns of western Pennsylvania, known as the "doublehouse," which provided neat and orderly housing for two families on narrow lots. This book is clearly an academic study, not light reading for the casual mining historian.

Following an introduction explaining anthropological terminology, each chapter helps to build a framework for understanding the premise the author is presenting. This includes some background history of corporate paternalism and the rise of company towns—in other industries and then in the coal patches—a general history of the Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal Company, as well as an examination of the ethnic makeup of the town. Moderate ethnic divisions existed within the town and the mining company, and gaps in the data are acknowledged and limits on conclusions are reasonably drawn.

Archeological study of the former town site confirmed evidence of the impact of its residents upon the landscape primarily from what was not found. The company established regular trash pickup and minimum community standards during the 1930s, so few artifacts were recovered from the miners' doublehouse lot chosen for archeological investigation in the defunct town. Those ar-

tifacts recovered came from an earlier time period and reinforced much of what was known about coal town practices from the historical research. For example, children's toys, such as marbles, had fallen through the cracks in earlier wooden front porches where families socialized. The archeological investigation was obviously constrained by lost evidence, since the company sold the town in 1947, the mine closed in 1954, and the remaining houses were demolished by the early 1990s to permit strip mining of the remaining coal reserves.

The author's positive descriptions of the gardening competitions sponsored by the company, the company baseball team, and maintenance and improvements provided by the company, reinforce the opinions gleaned from the oral history accounts and reflected in the pride of former Helvetia residents. Mining families dealt with the hardships of life in their time—some exacerbated by the industry or location, and some universal to the era—by supplementing their wages with homegrown food, keeping some livestock, and boarding other residents. These activities helped to create the sense of place for them.

One weakness of this book is the author's lack of understanding of coal mining technology and methods. One example of this is a description of a fire boss using the behavior of the open flame of a head lamp, rather than a hand-held safety lamp, to detect gas in the mine in the 1930s. Some of these types of errors may be due to an over-reliance on the oral history narratives of a few miner-residents from rather late in the town's history, and the relatively few contemporary accounts.

The study also reflects a strong pro-labor and anti-company bias. In the framework of corporate paternalism, each topic is introduced with stereotypes of the typical abusive coal company, terrible living and working conditions, and the infamous company store. These opinions were garnered in references to studies of other companies in other areas. The evidence from the varied research methods the author employed regarding the practices of the Rochester and Pittsburgh

Coal Company, and where possible in the subject town, tends to undermine these stereotypes.

The author concludes that Helvetia's company store was not generally seen as unfair in its dealings. Furthermore, the company did install concrete sidewalks and running water in the 1930s, pretty much at the same time as many rural routes and urban communities received these amenities. Residents received electricity from the company's power plant prior to much rural electrification across the nation. These improvements were not a reflection of control and abuse by a mining company, rather of improving living conditions at the same time in many places across America as the country worked through the Depression. The same might be said of topics such as women's daily chores or the lack of refrigeration.

A number of the company's rules for mine safety and the town's residents, presented negatively as examples of company control, have since been codified in the Federal Coal Mine Safety Law, or in local zoning regulations or homeowners' agreements in many communities. Why does the author present as bad a company's rules against smoking underground, drinking with respect to mining, or to require minimum aesthetic standards for the housing it provides for its workers?

The point is that the landscape of the town improved over time, both from the mining company's investment of resources and maintenance and from the sweat equity residents applied to their living spaces. This latter was made possible by increased disposable income and leisure time from the early 1900s through the 1940s. Residents added amenities and personal touches, housing additions, flowerbeds, and more sidewalks. Those who worked hard and applied themselves benefitted, and the company allowed them to do so. Other miners and their families were not able to function as well in the mine or community and moved on to other places.

This eastern coal mining town is difficult to compare with many western metal mining towns unless one considers the life of the extractive re-

source. It would be informative to compare this study with similar studies that might be conducted in other mining company towns, East or West. Nevertheless, Helvetia's residents clearly had a positive impact on the landscape of their town, in some sense negotiating with the company as they established their sense of place. Because it appears to have been one of the better coal mining towns in which to live, this negotiation was evidently more of a dialogue than a discourse of resistance or violence.

From the Miners' Doublehouse is well organized, with plenty of illustrations, figures, and tables that add to the reader's comprehension. Albeit printed in a small font and seemingly repetitive or redundant, this work is unique in its combined approach and subject matter and may provide a model for other researchers to follow.

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Doug Brugge, Timothy Benally, and Esther Yazzie-Lewis (eds.). *The Navajo People and Uranium Mining*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006; 210 pp., 13 photos, 1 map, cloth, \$29.95. ISBN: 0826337783.

The Navajo People and Uranium Mining is a book with the explicit, activist goal to raise awareness of the legacy of uranium mining among the Navajo people, who mined in the American Southwest beginning in the 1950s. While the uranium industry created new financial opportunities for the Navajo, many miners were exposed to high levels of radiation in poorly ventilated or unventilated mines and later developed a range of pulmonary pathologies, including in some cases fatal lung cancers. In addition to these health outcomes, uranium mining's adverse environmental impact on Navajo land was significant.

Framed by an emotional foreword by Stewart Udall, former secretary of the Interior and the primary attorney in the uranium miners' long legal