

Book Reviews

Ed Raines. *Historic Photos of Colorado Mining*. Nashville, TN: Turner Publishing Co., 2009; 206 pp., 195 b&w photos, text, map, notes, cloth, \$40. ISBN: 9781596525351

In two hundred pages, with one image per page, Ed Raines attempts to distill the history of Colorado mining's development through 1920 in photographs, certainly no easy task. Raines sees his book as "an introduction to Colorado mining history told through photographs," but the work will probably be appreciated better by intermediate readers with at least some knowledge of the basics of the industry.

Raines divides the work into six chapters, each with a one-page general introduction, with much additional commentary in the captions accompanying the photographs. The chapters cover the gold rush from 1859 to 1895, silver mining from 1867 to 1895, the San Juans from 1871 to 1920, and Creede and Cripple Creek from 1889 to 1920. The final chapter, covering industrial mining in the era from 1893 to 1920, makes some mention of developments into the 1980s.

The highlight of the book, however, is the chapter on hardrock mining up to 1920, with its outstanding underground photographs and images of surface works such as assay offices, mill interiors, and shops. Some of the remarkable views of underground operations were certainly staged by those photographers of long ago for purposes illustrative or promotional, but convey important information and retain considerable power nonetheless.

The photographs of exterior, interior, and underground scenes are almost universally handsomely reproduced throughout the volume, some-

thing worth noting in this era of budget books. Tone and contrast are usually excellent, and one can linger for many moments enjoying a particular scene. A couple of the images have been reproduced perhaps a shade too dark, but, as the author notes, we are beholden to both the artistic and technical limits of the photography of a century and more ago. The 196 images used include 5 from the Library of Congress, 10 from the author's collection, 25 from the Colorado Historical Society, and the remaining 156 from the Denver Public Library's impressive holdings.

That this is largely a collection of townscapes and industrial scenes is unsurprising, considering that such views were often commissioned as promotional material by investment-hungry mining companies. Raines sustains this approach in his captions. Worker discontents appear occasionally, especially in regard to the Cripple Creek strike of 1904, but the dangerous working conditions which helped rouse such dissatisfaction go unnoticed in the text, though they are certainly visible in the photographs. The author also does not mention the environmental ramifications of mining in Colorado, some of which are also evident in the images. The social life of the mining towns appears occasionally in images of boomtown streets or dance hall girls.

Raines, understandably, sometimes uses his captions to discuss subjects not appearing in the images themselves, but occasionally a little more detail about the subject itself might have been helpful—the mention of a date, or even a decade, here; the positive identification of a location or a structure there. That said, it is impossible to cover everything in captions, which comprise the bulk of the text, and there is much treasure to treasure

in *Historic Photos of Colorado Mining*. Coloradans, or anyone interested in the legendary history of mining in the Centennial State, will certainly enjoy this book.

Eric Clements

Southeast Missouri State University

Alan Murray. *Holding the Line: A Narrative History of Australian Coal Miners and their Union in the 1980s*. Sydney: CFMEU Mining and Energy Division, 2009, 370 pp., photos, cloth, available online for AU\$24 at www.cfm.com.au.

The 1980s stand out as one of the most difficult and complicated periods for Australian coal miners. The rise of conservative politics, free market ideology, and international competition all worked against a stable work environment and secure mining families and communities. Notwithstanding the New Right's criticism of their opponents' use of class warfare tactics, the era's mix of deregulatory politics and old-time capitalism amounted to a war on the working class. In this new order, Australia's miners suffered, endured, and fought nearly as much as any occupational group.

Alan Murray's intent in *Holding the Line* is to tell the story of the decade both from the mineworkers' perspective and through the lens of their union, the Miners' Federation, founded in 1915 as the Australasian Coal and Shale Employees' Federation. Murray writes that "the miners' union in Australia has always drawn its strength from its ideological convictions." The convictions and intelligence of both union and worker were severely tested in the 1980s, and Murray succeeds remarkably well in scrutinizing and interpreting the decade's events in order to convey an important story to a wide audience.

The book paints a complete yet nuanced picture that encompasses a cavalcade of personalities, disasters, strikes, betrayals, failures, and triumphs.

Through a carefully-crafted, witty, and sometime biting narrative, the decade comes alive and the reader is transported back to the beginning of what economist Paul Krugman has called "the great unraveling" in describing similar trends in the U.S. It is a saga that will resonate with mineworkers in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere, as the "world taken for granted" was about to change in ways not thought possible.

Holding the Line is a strong example of miners' history, as distinct from mining history. In a most obvious sense, the volume documents a seemingly never-ending series of confrontations between labor and management over work rules, hours, wages, pit openings and closings, and other issues. However, the story is more deeply told, for Australian coal companies have always wanted to lower costs, reduce regulations, and protect interests. What changed domestically in the 1980s was the deregulatory and other supports that state and national governments, both Conservative and Labor, gave to the multi-national coal corporations that controlled the industry. In many ways, *Holding the Line* is as much a political history as a labor history.

Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke comes in for some extra thrashing. The Federation believed that the Labor Party's top leader should have known better. However much they tried, the organization and its members could not stop Hawke's—or Queensland's or New South Wales'—deregulatory train. Moreover, the union's proposals to systematically manage the national coal resource in order to protect jobs, mining skills, and the environment received no hearing. The free market approach yielded instability, layoffs, and pit closings for the workers while yielding record profits for "the cowboys themselves." Still, the miners carried on and celebrated their successes when they occurred—and there were many.

The book also offers a vital historical lesson composed of one part theory and one part practice. The theory relates to how sweeping changes