

Phyllis Cancilla Martinelli. *Undermining Race: Ethnic Identities in Arizona Copper Camps, 1880-1920*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009; 225 pp., 12 b&w photos, map, tab., notes, bib., ind., cloth, \$50. ISBN: 9780816527458

Many years ago, I visited the coal mining camp of Hanna, Wyoming, which was founded in 1889 by the Union Pacific Coal Company. The company brought in Finnish, Italian, and Japanese immigrant labor, thinking that these different ethnic groups would not get along or organize. My guide, born in Hanna to a Finnish father and an Italian mother, exemplified how well that strategy worked.

Hanna, Wyoming, is a good example of what Phyllis Martinelli calls a racial microsystem, where racial tensions are transformed by local circumstances and local choices into a unique pecking order. Despite the intentions of management, the Finns and Italians in Hanna found a way to get along; the Japanese, however, drifted away, and all that remains of their neighborhood are foundations and exotic Japanese plants. Using a broad range of contemporary sources and statistics, Martinelli reconstructs the racial microclimate of three leading Arizona copper camps, Bisbee, Globe, and Morenci, through the experience of Italian immigrants.

During the 1880s, the development of large-scale mining in these Arizona camps led to rapid population growth, with an influx of quite diverse ethnic groups and races. Each camp developed its own particular racial microsystem. Martinelli sets the stage for her analysis of the camps with a review of the development of mining in southeastern Arizona Territory and of the three waves of Italian immigration to the Southwest. Particularly interesting is her description of contemporary Italian perceptions of Arizona, and of the chain migration that brought immigrants from a small region or village in Italy to a particular mining

camp in Arizona.

Martinelli first explores the place of Italians in the local racial hierarchy through a review of overt violence against minorities in Arizona, especially Italians. A detailed exposition of three local racial microsystems follows: Globe, with its "Little Italy;" Bisbee, where Mexicans were excluded from the mines and Italians occupied the lowest rung of the mine labor force; and Morenci, where a pan-Latin identity arose among the Mexican, Spanish, and Italian populations. These varied situations are drawn together into a final analysis of the Italian experience in southeastern Arizona mining camps.

Italians occupied an ambiguous position in camp society between whites and Mexicans. As Latins, Italians and Mexicans got along quite well, even as they clustered in separate neighborhoods. Italians were almost never regarded as fully white, but how much better they were treated than Mexicans depended on the local racial microsystem. Globe and Bisbee were "white man's camps" which excluded Asians, held Italians and Mexicans to the least attractive positions, and paid them less than whites for the same work. Morenci maintained racially-defined wages, but was overwhelmingly a Mexican camp with a small Italian contingent.

Martinelli explores these complex micro systems, illuminating the "in between" role held by Italians. That role may or may not have served as a buffer between whites and Mexicans, but does demonstrate that the transition from Italian to "fully white" was a lengthy one for Italians. Moreover, Martinelli shows that the binary model of white and "other" is too simple to understand the complex and evolving racial characteristics of these mining camps.

The book does much to inform us about the Italian immigrant experience in Arizona, one of the many destinations of the great Italian diaspora of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many of these immigrants returned to Italy, but many stayed and

made numerous and varied contributions to their adopted home. Martinelli, one of their descendants, has made yet another contribution. This work is a pioneering study of a poorly understood aspect of the history of Arizona and its copper industry.

Keith R. Long
Marana, Arizona



The Hotel Meade, Bannack, Montana. Built in 1875 as the county courthouse, the building fell into disuse when the Beaverhead County seat relocated to Dillon in 1881. Dr. John Meade purchased the building circa 1890 and his hotel operated intermittently into the 1940s. (Editor's photo.)