

Berkeley Pit, which has become a popular tourist destination that elicits a range of thoughts and emotions.

In the end, Leech's examination leads him to conclude: "Unless something dramatically changes, the modern world will continue to dig big holes. We should try to do so in a way that causes the least harm, while recognizing the communities that host them as more than poisoned places" (363). His assessment is spot on; mining will not disappear and doing it "right" can be done with fewer economic, social, residential, and environmental negatives. Butte, scars and all, is a testament to this western American, even global, phenomenon. MHA members who want to know more about the enthralling story that led to Leech's thoughtful conclusions are encouraged to add this pioneering study to their library.

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Tony Bamonte and Suzanne Schaeffer Bamonte. *The Coeur d'Alenes Gold Rush and Its Lasting Legacy*. Spokane, WA: Tornado Creek Publications, 2017; 512 pp., 400+ b&w illus., 30+ maps, bib., ind., cloth, \$44.95. ISBN: 9780982152959

Coeur d'Alenes Gold Rush is a sumptuous volume that encourages judging a book by its cover. Opening that attractive wrapping of an old mining camp scene reveals hundreds of reproductions of historic documents, photographs, and maps supplementing the text. The authors, Tony and Suzanne Schaeffer Bamonte, also serve as the editors and publishers and thus deserve credit for each element from content to design. Through their Spokane-based Tornado Creek Publications, founded in 1995, the couple has made available more than a score of books, most histories they also wrote, such as of Spokane's Davenport Hotel or of the nearby town of Newport, Washington.

Although they originally planned to review

the history of the entire Coeur d'Alene mining region in Idaho's panhandle, the Bamontes narrowed their scope to the northern reaches in what some refer to as the Murray Gold Belt. Most learn about this mining region through the tales of the Hercules silver bonanza or the exploits of the Hecla and Bunker Hill companies. But preceding the discovery of the silver-lead-zinc ores along the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River, gold beckoned five thousand prospectors to the North Fork in the early 1880s.

This work begins with that sourdough saga, about which railroad publicist Eugene Smalley wrote in 1884: "Of all the stampedes in old times or in recent years, the Great Coeur d'Alene stampede of the winter and spring of 1884 was probably the most remarkable." Such hyperbole attaches to many mining districts. This book not only unmask the truth behind the boasts, but also follows the fortunes of those living along the creeks and mountainsides of the North Fork watershed from the nineteenth into the twenty-first century.

Because the South Fork's mining operations and ore production overwhelm the North Fork's, most studies offer but a few pages on the earlier gold rush before devoting themselves to South Fork developments. *Coeur d'Alenes Gold Rush* reasserts the North Fork's contribution. Albeit mining ventures dominate, the logging industry's expansion, transportation improvements, activities of the U.S. Forest Service and Civilian Conservation Corps, and recreation opportunities receive attention too. Insights gained from the authors' familiarity with the locale and profiles of North Fork families animate the narrative. Those personal connections gave the authors access to many private photographic collections, and thus the reader to images not seen elsewhere.

To substantiate the "lasting legacy" of the title, the Bamontes describe how the early gold rush resulted in prospectors exploring throughout the area to discover the spectacularly rich ore bodies

in the South Fork basin. They then extend the North Fork's mining legacy to the present, with assessments of the long-term environmental repercussions and of the New Jersey Mining Company's current operations to extract gold from lode deposits. Besides mining, they also document the history of other ways of making a living on the North Fork, including today's recreation and tourism industries, with updates on popular attractions such as Murray's Sprag Pole restaurant and museum and the Enaville Resort, also known as the Snake Pit.

Each of the richly illustrated chapters intersperses text with quotations, some pages long, alongside sidebar vignettes. That decision to insert many quoted passages rests on the authors' desire to make accessible hard-to-locate historic documents, including newspaper articles, railroad publications, and a few holographic reproductions, such as original mine claim records. The quotations vividly portray, for example, the early frenzy that accompanies a gold discovery.

Paired with the sidebars, though, the long quotations interrupt and at times unravel the narrative thread. In fact, the structure of this lengthy book often resembles the most complex of underground mines with its adits, shafts, drifts, cross-cuts, raises, and winzes. That complexity begins in the first two chapters, as every claim, competing account, trail to the diggings, and even a loyal dog command coverage. Those expecting synoptic interpretation must, however, look elsewhere.

Because *Coeur d'Alenes Gold Rush* focuses so intently on the North Fork, it rarely looks up to present broader views, such as of mining technology, regional development, and ethnic diversity. Rather than address technology separately, the book embeds within its inspection of each mining camp significant changes in mining technologies. Dredges revolutionized placer mining. From 1917 to 1926 the Guggenheim-controlled Yukon Gold Company operated a dredge near Murray, the oldest extant town in the basin. There the

dredge's insatiable bucket line consumed streets and a century later leaves a landscape still scarred by the giant earthworm trails of tailings. Those interested in the technology and the significance of dredging operations within the state may turn to Clark Spence's 2016 study *A History of Gold Dredging in Idaho* (reviewed in the 2017 *Mining History Journal*).

While the authors restore the North Fork's importance, those less familiar with the Inland Northwest—the southern interior of British Columbia, eastern Oregon and Washington, and western Montana, and Idaho—miss an explanation of how the 1880s ore discoveries at last opened Idaho to nationwide transportation networks, and how emigrants primarily from other parts of the West, rather than the East, settled the state. The Coeur d'Alene mining region contributed substantially to regional development, especially to the growth of the city of Spokane.

Although people of the North Fork dominate the narrative, their different ethnicities are implied rather than analyzed. Particularly noteworthy, given the authors' extensive research, is no evidence of Chinese working the North Fork placer deposits. Studies by Liping Zhu, Sue Fawn Chung, and Priscilla Wegars highlight Chinese activities in the Inland Northwest. Placer mining attracted the Chinese, who outnumbered whites in Shoshone County (home to the Coeur d'Alene mining region) in both the 1870 and the 1880 census. Their absence in the North Fork placers calls for further investigation.

The above topics are this reviewer's wish list and not this work's deficits. Speaking to a local newspaper columnist, co-author Suzanne Bamonte commented that this is "not necessarily the type of book a person might sit down and read through from start to finish." Indeed, *Coeur d'Alenes Gold Rush* exemplifies the coffee table book to be savored in small bites. The exhaustive index enables the reader to pursue a topic throughout the volume and the lavish illustrations invite

leisurely page turning. This is a beautifully presented book, filled with exquisite detail on nearly a century and a half of the history of the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River and the people who live there.

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Doug Ammons. *A Darkness Lit by Heroes: The Granite Mountain-Speculator Mine Disaster of 1917*. Missoula, MT: WaterNymph Press, 2017; 229 pp., 11 b&w illus., 5 maps, glos., paper, \$22. [A historical novel.] ISBN: 9780692900420

On the night of June 8, 1917, fire broke out in the shaft of the North Butte Mining Company's Granite Mountain Mine in Butte, Montana. As the fire spread from a ruptured, oil-soaked electrical cable to the timbers of the shaft and the stations at the various levels of the mine, toxic gases spread through the North Butte's mine workings in both the Granite Mountain and Speculator mines, trapping scores of men who were working that shift.

Some were overcome by smoke and the carbon monoxide produced by incomplete combustion and killed quickly, some were able to escape into the workings of neighboring mines of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, and handfuls of men tried to save themselves by bulkheading themselves in drifts where they hoped the smoke would not spread. Some of the men in the latter category were eventually rescued days later, but many died. All told, 166 miners lost their lives in the Granite Mountain Mine fire, also sometimes called the Speculator fire in Butte. It remains the worst hardrock mining disaster in United States history.

The Granite Mountain disaster was a traumatic episode for the people of Butte. It received extensive coverage in Butte newspapers. The results of a federal government investigation were published by the U.S. Bureau of Mines as *Lessons*

of the Granite Mountain Fire (1922). Historians of Butte nearly always give the event some attention, and lore of the disaster looms large in the reminiscences of Butte natives.

Until Doug Ammons' account, published as *A Darkness Lit by Heroes: The Granite Mountain-Speculator Mine Disaster of 1917*, the most extensive historical treatment of the fire has been Michael Punke's *Fire and Brimstone: The North Butte Mining Disaster of 1917* (2006). Punke is an attorney, not an academic historian, yet he followed scholarly conventions in writing *Fire and Brimstone*, including extensive notes citing the sources of quotes and other important historical information.

Ammons takes a different approach. Although he conducted extensive historical research in newspapers, the federal investigation, and most notably the six hundred pages of testimony collected during the coroner's inquest—which has recently been made available to the public at the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives—Ammons chose not to follow scholarly conventions in his account of the Granite Mountain disaster. One might call the book a non-fiction novel, in the vein of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. Ammons narrates the story of the fire from the perspectives of many of the men who experienced it. They talk to each other, and their words are in quotes, but readers have to guess whether any of the quotes are drawn from historical sources.

Ammons's resulting book is an amazingly engaging narrative of the Granite Mountain disaster. He has studied drawings of the mine workings, developed a good understanding of mining technologies used in Butte in 1917, talked to recent miners who describe what it is like to work underground, researched city directories to know where miners working in the Granite Mountain Mine lived, and attended to numerous other research details; so his narrative conveys the gritty and harrowing immediacy in which men found themselves when they realized fire had broken out and they tried to stop it, when they realized they