
Book Reviews

Cynthia Ackley Nunn. *Abandoned California: King Solomon Mine*. Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2019; 96 pp., 92 color and 47 b&w photos, paper, \$23.99. ISBN: 9781634991322

Cynthia Nunn's *Abandoned California: King Solomon Mine* is one of the "America through Time" series of more than a hundred photograph-based community biographies produced during the past decade by Arcadia Publishing. The King Solomon Mine was one of the intermediate producers in the Rand gold-mining district organized in the 1890s in Kern County, California, about one hundred miles north-northeast of Los Angeles in the Mojave Desert.

The text consists of a two-page introduction with photographs of the Paiutes native to the area, a three-page history of the King Solomon Mine, a one-page introduction to a section of photographs of relics in the nearby town of Randsburg, and a one-page concluding note.

The book is abundantly, perhaps superabundantly, illustrated with 139 photographs, 92 of them in color, mostly taken by the author. These photos are sometimes of piles of debris or of an abandoned piece of mining equipment, automobile or television set. In other instances, and to better effect, Nunn presents appealing illustrations of structures or creates comparative shots of historical photographs of surface features. The eight historical photos of underground mining, however, are of generic mining scenes drawn from the collections of the University of Southern California and the Library of Congress.

Presenting these photographs is the purpose of the book. The minimal text offers but a brief history, few production figures, and does not con-

nect the story of the Solomon Mine or the district to mining history or issues beyond that locale. The book contains no citations, bibliography or index. Text on the back cover asserts that "some of the richest gold strikes in California history were found in the areas of Randsburg and Johannesburg, located in the Mojave Desert section of Kern County," but no evidence is offered within to support this assertion.

Given the above, *Abandoned California: King Solomon Mine* mainly should appeal to those specifically interested in this mine or district.

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Richard V. Francaviglia. *Imagining the Atacama Desert: A Five-Hundred-Year Journey of Discovery*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018; 453 pp., 58 color and 23 b&w illus., 50 maps, notes, bib., ind., cloth, \$29.95. ISBN: 9781607813316

With stunning photographs and detailed maps, Richard Francaviglia narrates the five-hundred-year history of one of the world's driest places, the Atacama Desert in Chile, through cartography and geography. Tracing the desert from the early colonial era to the present, the author argues that the region changed over the course of four phases, each of which receives a corresponding chapter.

In the first phase, Europeans speculated that the Atacama lay empty, an unpopulated desert with increasing strategic importance. The early cartographic record reflects the naming of the desert not for its location, but rather its lack of settlements.