

Miners did not discover silver-bearing lead ore, the mainstay of Wasatch mines, until the summer of 1864. Soldiers from California under the command of General Patrick Edward Connor made the first discoveries in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons. In addition to the soldiers, most of the prospectors came from the Utah Territory, the United States, and Great Britain. Investors came from the same locations, including Great Britain, which supplied a sizeable proportion of the investment capital. Some British capital, as in the case of the infamous Emma Mine, was ill spent.

Development proceeded much as in districts elsewhere in the West. Miners established various towns, and they used a wide range of technologies to get the minerals out of the ground and to market. In addition to the dangers of mining itself, avalanches and fires posed a constant threat. Processors built a number of smelters in the canyons. Although miners removed much of the ore from the canyons by wagon over poor roads, some slid the ore in leather pouches, and a number removed the ore by gravity tramways. In 1875 the Wasatch and Jordan Valley Railroad opened service to Alta in Little Cottonwood Canyon.

After considering lumbering and mining, Keller offers chapters on other topics. Chapters consider recreation and hydropower; and the final three chapters offer a narrative on the location of geographic features and their history. Readers who want details on the development of economic activities during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in one of Utah's most important nineteenth century areas will find this book extremely useful.

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Kevin Krajick. *Barren Lands: An Epic Search for Diamonds in the North American Arctic*. (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2001.)

Xiii, 442 pages, notes, index. \$26 hardback.

Avarice, ambition, adventure, anguish—*Barren Lands* portrays it all. Many people probably never realized that the North American Arctic, within the past twenty years, witnessed a search for diamonds that rivaled anything in world history.

It might be sung "that diamonds are a girl's best friend," but diamonds brought out some of the worst in men and women in this tale. More to the point is the comment by the Roman poet Virgil, substituting diamonds for gold, "O accursed craving for gold!" After completion of this book, the reader wonders who won. In a somewhat typical scenario, it was the companies that profited not the men, many of whom greatly suffered and sacrificed to find the diamonds.

Kevin Krajick is a crackerjack storyteller and he easily matches the adventure yarn he sets out to tell. An experienced, prizewinning journalist, he did his homework and visited the sites, and then takes the reader with him through the historic background of humans' love affairs with those pieces of crystal carbon, down to the development of Canada's diamond mines.

The first third of *Barren Lands* traces the history of diamonds and the fraud, murder, greed, and deceit that generally followed as the search went forth. Some readers might find this section a little long, but it is worth the reading and definitely sets the stage for what follows.

Krajick follows the careers of Chuck Fipke and Stew Blusson in their fanatical, ruthless pursuit of diamonds. A strange pair they were and they met some even stranger individuals in their journeys. They searched from the United States into northern Canada, and it is a story worth telling. Others were soon on their trail as the story unfolds. These people are an obsessed, eccentric group driven by personal ambition, greed, and mania. There are real heroes and real bums among the group and not always do the good people win.

From start to finish it shows what men will go through when catapulted by greed and the lure of wealth. As was said about miners, they would go through heaven to reach a gold strike in hell. The author tells the story so well that the reader will pick favorites and choose villains (the De Beers corporation fits the latter title nicely) before too long and wait to see how their favorites all come out and if the "bad guys" get their just rewards.

This is one history book that is truly hard to put down. Krajick is a fine writer with the skill of making his subjects come alive and building excitement and tension as the story unfolds. His sense of pace in telling the story is outstanding. The author also has a fine touch when describing the environment and discussing what happened to it as the miners advanced. The reader should not overlook the page references either; they contain fascinating information that expands on the text.

This reviewer might quibble a little about including conversations that the author could not possibly have heard or have been privy to from some written source. Some photographs would have been a welcome addition also, to help visualize the people and the land. It is possible that Krajick may have "gilded the lily" on a few stories but never enough to detract from his pursuit of discovering what happened, why, and to whom.

One may wonder what will happen to the native peoples and their land now that diamonds have been found, but that is the story of another book. *Barren Lands* is recommended for fascinating hours of reading.

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Holly Skinner. *Eye of the Blackbird: A Story of Gold in the American West* (Boulder: Johnson Books, 2001.) 298 pp., notes, bib., index, paperback, \$17.50.

One opens this book with great anticipation because it is billed as a prospector's story of her own experience interwoven with an account of the Western gold rushes. As a rule, prospectors are a taciturn breed, disinclined to discuss what they do and, above all, where they go (or to write about it in diaries or memoirs). Regrettably, author Holly Skinner proves to be no exception to this rule. Specifics on her own prospecting are disposed of by page thirteen and not returned to until almost the end of the book. "Gold is the excuse," she candidly admits, but it appears that her actual prospecting has been rather brief.

The bulk of this volume is concerned with vignettes of the mining rushes—and not only excitements over gold. The Comstock and Tombstone (both silver rushes) are duly recounted, as are the familiar sagas of the Earps, along with Mark Twain and the Spanish conquest. All this is interspersed with the author's wilderness experiences living alone in a deserted sheep camp in the farther reaches of Wyoming's South Pass and taking pride in her survival skills. Evidently she is unaware that Panamint Annie and Fannie Quigley, among other women prospectors before her, have taken similar pleasure in the wilderness and their ability to survive there.

The author's vignettes are well told, technical matters are clearly explained, and her descriptive powers are sometimes keen, as when she writes of the coyote's "banshee language" or a man with "Lincoln's cavernous features." Reflecting on the darkness in her isolated situation, she observes: "We are creatures of light. Light is safety. Light is comfort. When you learn to walk in darkness alone and unafraid, you have learned to be not quite human." Readers new to the mining world may find this book an enjoyable introduction; mining historians are unlikely to see much in these pages that is new to them.

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