

Bob Ring, Al Ring, and Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon. *Ruby, Arizona: Mining, Mayhem, and Murder*. Tucson: U.S. Press & Graphics, 2005; 257 pp., 115 illus., 7 tables, 10 maps, notes, additional information, 2 appendixes, paper, \$22.95 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.

This is actually three books in one: a history of mines and mining in the Oro Blanco Mining District of southern Arizona which focuses on the mining and milling of ore, a history of the rigors and hazards of life in an isolated mining camp near the Mexican border, and an account of the individual backgrounds and relationships of the families involved. It is an excellent beginning for anyone interested in the genealogy of a particular resident of Ruby.

Chapters One, Two, Four, Six, and Eight focus on historical and technological developments in south-central Arizona from Spanish times on. Beginning with the Plancas de Plata discovery in 1736, the authors briefly trace the early history of Spanish mining in the region. While the history is emphasized, details and examples of equipment and techniques are also covered.

The focus, however, is on the beginning of American mining and its evolution in the Oro Blanco Mining District. Included in the first chapter is a brief description of significant early American mining efforts, including those of Charles D. Poston, and Sylvester Mowry. But the initial focus is on the Oro Blanco Mine, the Montana Mine, and the individuals involved there from 1853—the date of the Gadsden Purchase Treaty which made the area American territory—to 1877.

Chapters Two through Four cover the discovery of the Montana Mine, the subsequent expansion of gold and silver mining in the district, the shift to lead and zinc mining during World War I, and its subsequent decline. Woven into the description of the mining process and its evolution is the story of the individuals who made it possible.

Chapter Five is the “Mayhem and Murder” section of the title, describing in great detail two separate murder cases and their impact on the community. As before, the chapter contains a detailed account of the genealogy of the principal individuals.

Chapter Six describes the one really prosperous period in the Ruby’s history: 1926 to 1944. Again, as there is with the genealogy of individuals, there is extensive coverage of the history of the Eagle-Picher Lead Company. Chapter Seven covers the same period, but focuses on the population boom and the daily life of Ruby, providing an extremely detailed and perceptive look at life in a relatively small, isolated, mining camp.

The remaining chapters relate to the collapse and decline of Ruby, despite the efforts of its residents. However, unlike many, maybe most, mining camps, Ruby’s residents have refused to let it die, and the book concludes with a pictorial display of Ruby today and a brief account of life there now.

The book does an excellent job of chronicling life in Ruby from its beginning to the present. It is abundantly illustrated, possibly too much so, with 115 illustrations (see pages 90 and 195 for examples of redundancies). Although it follows a straight chronological sequence, there are instances of deviations within chapters, particularly in the early ones. The book’s most serious defect, despite ample and thorough footnotes, is its lack of a bibliography. However, this is still an excellent and entertaining read about a little-known camp.

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