

Sally Zanjani. *Devils Will Reign: How Nevada Began*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006; 222 pp., b&w ill., notes, bib., ind., cloth, \$29.95. ISBN: 0874176638

*Devils Will Reign: How Nevada Began*, by Sally Zanjani, is an important addition to western historiography in general, and specifically to the body of literature dealing with the beginning of the region's mining. Zanjani, one of the West's more accomplished and prolific historians, has contributed yet another volume, filling a gap that needed to be addressed. Many previous histories have dealt with the volatile period of the 1850s and early 60s in the western Great Basin, but Zanjani has attacked the problem with a precision and thoroughness not previously attempted.

The 1850s was a dynamic time when the western Great Basin, the future Nevada, was at a crossroads. Those who were settling its small, scattered communities were pursuing agriculture and occupations associated with overland travel or they were placer miners in places like Gold Canyon, the future location of the Comstock Mining District. Zanjani captures a time when the direction that the region would take was not apparent, and people struggled to carve out a living in this remote setting.

From a mining history point of view, the flecks of gold in this volume are scattered throughout a treatment committed to be comprehensive. The specialist might feel it necessary to treat this book like a placer deposit to glean the good from it. A danger confronts those who focus on mining history, however, in that its proponents risk failing to see the larger picture. *Devils will Reign* is about the overall context first and foremost, and that is its strength. It also happens that mining is naturally woven into this story, making an appearance throughout, so industry historians would do well to procure this book.

From the beginning, there were placer operations in the western Great Basin, a reflection of the California gold country not far away. With

the 1859 strike that discovered the Comstock Lode and initiated the famed rush to Washoe, the territory transformed. Zanjani is able to keep her balance, unfolding the story as its contemporaries might have perceived it, without being prejudiced by the outcome later historians would know well. The magic of this volume is that it tells the story of the 1850s as though it is an end itself rather than a prelude.

Zanjani is to be commended for *Devils Will Reign*. As always, her writing is a joy to read, and her history is expertly researched. Well-considered illustrations salted throughout constitute an additional bonus. The period of the 1850s and early 60s still holds promise for additional research and insights, but whoever follows will need to begin with Zanjani's work.

Ronald M. James  
Nevada State Historic  
Preservation Officer

Geoffrey L. Buckley. *Extracting Appalachia: Images of the Consolidation Coal Company, 1910-1945*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004; 264 pp., ill., cloth, \$46.95. ISBN: 0821415557

Geoffrey L. Buckley begins this well-executed volume with a quote from John Berger: "A photograph, whilst recording what has been seen, always and by its nature refers to what is not seen." While conducting other research at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, Buckley came across a mother load of nearly four thousand photographs commissioned by the Consolidation Coal Company, mainly of its operations in Kentucky and West Virginia, but also in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Wisconsin. *Extracting Appalachia* represents the author's commendable effort to present dozens of these images and make sense of them in a larger narrative about the company, its history, and view of the world.

Key to the "making sense" aspect is Buckley's

successful attempt to understand and interpret the images in their historical, spatial, and ideological contexts. Adopting the post-modern view, he argues that the photos should not (and cannot) be approached in a purely phenomenological sense as “neutral” images of miners, families, collieries, homes, landscapes, ceremonies, baseball teams, and community facilities, but must be treated as representations of what the company wanted the viewer to “see.”

The images, therefore, should be approached as “social constructions” that tell the company’s story from a specific point of view. While the author wants us to appreciate the images in their own right (there are many really tremendous photos here), he more importantly seeks to understand the meanings and messages behind them. As he states, “my purpose is to critically examine the photographs in the Consolidation Coal Collection, place them in historical context, and try to understand why they were taken and for whom.”

As America’s largest producer of bituminous coal by 1926, Consolidation Coal commissioned the photographs with certain intentions in mind. They regularly appeared in the company magazine, *The Consolidation Coal Company Mutual Monthly*, which had a peak circulation of eleven thousand between 1918 and 1928. In a general sense, the images were used to enhance the company’s prestige, attract investors, and establish the Consolidation’s “brand;” but they also purveyed not-so-obvious perspectives on workplace authority, labor-management relationships, the physical environment, and corporate paternalism.

In Chapter 1 the author provides a well-argued treatment on “reading” landscapes and other historical photographs, and, in so doing, lays the foundation for his interpretative approach. He promotes a sociological orientation that focuses on the “substructure”—class, control, gender, power, ideology, conflict, ethnicity, etc.—underlying the image. He offers an excellent review and analysis of the literature in this regard.

Chapter 2 presents a history of Consolidated Coal between 1860 and 1945. A unique yet familiar story of “building a great company” unfolds. Big city capitalists, mergers and takeovers, absentee ownership, and booms and busts structure the drama as the empire is built. By 1927, Consolidation owned ninety-two mines and employed some twelve thousand workers.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 turn to the photographs. Chapter 3 looks at life in the company town, including people, homes, stores, gardens, schools, and other amenities. Chapter 4 examines the world of work that encompassed miners and laborers, equipment, and safety training. Chapter 5 highlights the physical environment related to forests, streams, waste, pollution, and degradation. The last chapter summarizes the main themes and presents conclusions, while also comparing the Consolidation images with those in some other historical collections.

I was especially appreciative of the author’s presentation in Chapter 3 dealing with the company’s towns. He states that Consolidation Coal spent more than most other mining firms on upkeep, sanitation, and amenities, especially in the 1920s. The images do indeed convey a sense of commitment by the company to building livable and secure communities where workers and families could survive and thrive. However, there was another angle: “In the case of Consolidation Coal, there was also a firm belief in the interlocking principles of contentment sociology, welfare capitalism, corporate paternalism, and industrial Americanism.”

The company realized, of course, that contented workers would be less likely to join unions or otherwise be influenced by “radicals.” The images on the layout of the towns also reflect an important sub-text: the reality of social stratification, whereby the houses of the miners and their families were of a distinctly lower quality and in less desirable locations than those of the managers and their families. Such are the common characteristics of coal (and other) company towns.

The author relies on a large number of often long, indented quotations that, while always appropriate and informative, do get a little tedious. But this criticism is a small matter, for Buckley has produced a seminal work that includes a thorough grounding in contemporary interpretative theory, the wise selection of images to make his points, and a solid analysis of what Consolidation Coal's photos reveal and do not reveal. The book makes an important contribution that can be appreciated by the general reader, but will be of special interest to scholars in fields such as photographic interpretation, Appalachian studies, landscape analysis, coal mining, and industrial history.

Robert Wolensky  
University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point

Thomas Dublin and Walter Licht. *The Face of Decline: The Pennsylvania Anthracite Region in the Twentieth Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005; 277 pp., b&w photos, map, graphs and tables, 8 append., notes, bib., ind., cloth, \$65, paper, \$24.95. ISBN: 0801484735

*The Face of Decline* deals with the important and relatively un-studied dying phase of mining, in this case in the Pennsylvania anthracite region trending southwest from Scranton. Historians usually focus on the boom periods in mining history, rather than on eras of contraction or abandonment. But coal mining areas never had the glory days of the precious-metals districts, and the industry's often sporadic and contentious nature has led to a better examination of the hard times in coal.

Even so, much of the best work on decline and de-industrialization, particularly that of the latter twentieth century, has been done by sociologists rather than historians. So it is a pleasure to see two senior and respected historians, Thomas Dublin and Walter Licht—each of whom has written extensively on labor history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—examine decline

in one of the most important mineral fields in the country.

Anthracite's decline began after World War I. Anthracite tends to run in narrow, contorted veins, which makes it much less amenable to the machine mining that began to dominate and lower the cost of bituminous coal. Anthracite's heat-producing advantage in smelting could be nullified by coking, and anthracite lost its market as a fuel to cheaper, cleaner, and easier-handling petroleum and natural gas. By 1970, few working mines remained in the region, and a peak employment of 156,148 in 1917 had dwindled to 6,286. Pennsylvania anthracite employed fewer than a thousand people in 2000.

During the first great crisis period, the Great Depression, miners tried to mitigate their unemployment by forcing coal companies to adopt equalization programs, wherein all of a company's properties kept operating at least part-time, regardless of profitability, to spread employment to as many workers as possible. Some miners temporarily broke with their union, the United Mine Workers, forming the independent United Anthracite Miners of Pennsylvania after they decided that the UMWA did not represent them effectively. A third tactic used to survive the depression days was the bootleg mining of small surface veins. Bootleg miners illegally extracted that coal, processed it in small, home-made crushers, then either sold it to truckers or trucked it to nearby cities themselves. Although resisted ineffectively by the companies, bootlegging enjoyed wide community support and made a fairly effective bridge across the rough times.

During the final collapse in the twenty-five years after World War II, such temporary expedients did not avail. A fundamental reordering of the regional economy was called for, and Dublin and Licht discuss at length regional attempts to either bring this about or at least to mitigate the effects of chronic unemployment. The authors discuss efforts by governments and communities to promote industrial development to replace an-