

Miner and author David Lavender, who worked at the Camp Bird mine, is quoted about the “stampede” when the dinner bell was rung. “The vast old building shook with the rush, and the bottleneck created by the door into the dining room was a dangerous thing,” he wrote, adding that all energies were then devoted to consuming the greatest amount of food in the least amount of time.

Quality, as well as quantity, of food was important, too. As noted in the book, the boarding house cook was the most important person at a mine, since hungry miners would move on to the next mine if not well fed. Mining companies often praised their cooks’ specialties—“his old English plum-pudding is worth going miles”—in the local newspapers.

Simply by giving men a place to live and eat near their places of work, boarding houses allowed mining to gain a foothold in the high country. *My Home at Present* addresses all aspects of boarding house life, and it provides a new perspective into the significance of the mining economy in the West, particularly in Colorado.

Many of the boarding houses were located in remote locations, high on the sides of steep mountains. Even so, they were not immune from federal and state census takers, who noted each lodger’s occupation, nationality, age, and marital status. Social historians will appreciate that the authors took the time to research who these people were and from where they came.

At the time, mining was exclusively a man’s job, but women worked and lived in the boarding houses as early as 1880. A few were wives (with children) of superintendents, but widows, such as forty-one-year-old Katie Conhela from Finland, often were employed as cooks. In 1880, the majority of the men were born in the U.S., while most of the non-Americans came from Europe. After 1900, a large influx of miners came from Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, and Italy.

It is easy to get caught up in the authors’ enthusiasm for their topic. In the chapter on “The Lodgers,” they comment that census data can only

provide limited information, adding, “It would have been interesting to accompany the census taker as he made his rounds, and to listen to the stories the miners, mill workers, cooks, and waiters had to tell.”

The book is just plain fun to read. A special treat is David Lavender’s reminiscences on rat hunts at the Camp Bird boarding house. And, since we know the Vendl’s will return to Colorado, it will soon be time to look for their next book—rumored to include more on mining in the San Juans. (Smith and the Vendl’s are also the authors of *Colorado Goes to the Fair: World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893* (University of New Mexico Press, 2011).)

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James Rada, Jr. *Saving Shallmar: Christmas Spirit in a Coal Town*. Gettysburg, PA: Legacy Publishing, 2012; 183 pp., 40 b&w images, notes, bib, paper, \$18. ISBN: 9780971459977.

*Saving Shallmar* can be recommended as a very enjoyable and informative book that tells a surprising and memorable story. James Rada, Jr., provides a case study on the rise and fall of a small mining village in the soft coal fields of western Maryland. The author is a good storyteller with an engaging style. He offers numerous details about the town’s history and culture, none of which are particularly surprising or new, but the tale turns on a significant occurrence in 1949 that forms the core of the “saving” aspect of the story—more about that later.

Located in Garrett County along the north branch of the Potomac River, Shallmar was established by the Wolf Den Coal Company after 1917. Like most company towns during the early decades of the twentieth century, Shallmar had no indoor plumbing, electricity, or running water, and its streets were unpaved and unlit. Production peaked in 1929, when about a hundred min-

ers worked at the Wolf Den Mine. The 1930s was a difficult decade, but things improved when coal demand and employment surged during World War II. Following the war, however, coal orders plummeted and the company and town teetered on the brink.

The decline led to significant problems for Shallmar's residents, including poverty, malnutrition, and despair. The situation came to a head in November 1949 when a schoolgirl passed out during class because she had not eaten a decent meal for some time. The main meal in her family home of two parents and several children had recently consisted of "only apples."

The school's principal, J. Paul Andrick, delved into the matter. The caring and compassionate Andrick, who emerges as the hero of the story, visited several homes, talked to numerous students and parents, and thereby discovered a real emergency. He knew that many students looked pale and gaunt, and wore pitiful clothing and shoes, yet he could not believe that he had missed the gravity of the destitution among them. His consternation was compounded by the fact that he resided in the town.

Along with hunger and malnourishment, he found that many children had no shoes or warm clothing and, because of it, regularly missed school. Their homes were frightfully drafty and cold, in large part because the families had insufficient money for coal. The parents of the typically large families had grown bewildered by their plight but, as proud mining people, they stoically endured and hoped for better times. Meanwhile, they and their families struggled to survive in cold and hunger.

In consultation with his wife Molly, also a teacher, Andrick proceeded to write letters to newspaper editors, elected representatives, and others who could possibly make a difference. These missives described the plight of Shallmar's residents and urged that something be done. A regional newspaper sent a reporter who, after interviewing Andrick and numerous other towns-

people, returned home and wrote a front-page story under the headline: "Shallmar Residents Near Starvation, Urgent Appeal Made for Food, Clothing, and Cash."

The article included the fact that the miners had seen only three months of work in 1948 and twelve days in 1949. Indeed, their unemployment rate stood at 80 to 90 percent in 1949. They had run out of unemployment compensation and used up the small amount allocated by the United Mine Workers of America. Moreover, the company had no cash flow and its main owner, who lived far away, was disinclined to help financially, although he agreed to suspend the twelve dollar monthly rent payment for company homes. The local church ran out of charitable funds, dependent as it was on donations from members.

Much to Andrick's surprise and gratification, except from government agencies the response to the news story was overwhelming. Voluntary deliveries of food, clothing, shoes, and Christmas toys began arriving by the truckload from points near and far, but mainly from persons and organizations in Maryland. About five thousand dollars in cash also came in as word of Shallmar's plight spread throughout the region and nation. Edward R. Murrow of CBS News covered the story, as did reporters from metropolitan dailies, including Murray Kempton of the *New York Post*. Suddenly, Shallmar was big news.

Two new but welcome problems arose: where to store everything and how to distribute what had come in. Town leaders organized a committee to distribute the goods in an equitable fashion and also to develop a plan to nurture the newfound resources into the short-term future. As a result of the media publicity and the genuine concern of contributors, the town and its residents avoided disaster and enjoyed a happy Christmas as 1949 ended, especially the children who reveled in the toys, food, and clothing.

However, this windfall did not "save" Shallmar in the long run. While the populace avoided an immediate calamity, and once again ate good

meals and wore warm clothing and shoes in heated homes, it was clear that the town could not continue without a reliable source of employment. Although the mine reopened under local ownership in 1951, it produced only ten to fifteen thousand tons a year and provided jobs for a relative handful of workers. The men agreed to work without a union, but the UMWA intervened and prevented that from happening. Still, the small mining operation continued to produce coal and provide some work. But not enough, so an out-migration began in the 1950s. In 1952, J. Paul and Molly Andrick left to teach in another school district where he eventually became principal. By 1956, the settlement had only 34 homes and 151 citizens.

The Buffalo Coal Company bought the mine in 1968, but closed it in 1971. Only fifty people were living in Shallmar by that time. In 1970, a mountain of coal tailings gave way “burying out-houses and filling the basements of the houses.” It was another serious blow and most of the remaining occupants saw it as a sign to move out. Shallmar became a veritable ghost town, although some hearty souls remained behind and, in fact, a few still live there.

In constructing the story, Rada relies on interviews, newspapers, websites, secondary sources, and various types of official documents. Although *Saving Shallmar* is written for a popular, not an academic, audience, the author provides nearly page-by-page referencing in the “Notes” section in the back of the book. Rada clearly conducted a good deal of research to prepare the volume. His use of individual names and places, along with several photographs, helps enhance the reality of the narrative.

Three points of analytical consideration regarding the volume: First, the author sometimes displays what could be interpreted as an ideological bias in his criticisms of “the government” and “the union,” without delving too deeply into the details surrounding their respective weak responses to Shallmar’s crisis. Second, at certain points

the narrative borders on the nostalgic while devoting more attention to the descriptive and less to the analytical. Third, the author’s list of the coalfields in the U.S. properly includes the Appalachian, Midwestern, and Rocky Mountain fields, all bituminous. However, he does not mention the other American coal, anthracite or hard coal, produced in a ten-county area in northeastern Pennsylvania. Not that this exclusion diminishes the well-told story, but it is worth remembering that anthracite was the first American coal to be mined and, as such, played a vital role in fueling the nation’s industrial revolution after 1820. A few hearty souls still mine it—and live in places like Shallmar!

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Eric C. Nystrom. *Seeing Underground: Maps, Models, and Mining Engineering in America*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2014; 320 pp., 43 b&w illus., notes, bib., ind. cloth, \$40. ISBN: 9780874179323.

*A dozen lawyers on a side,  
And eminent experts multiplied;  
Maps of the biggest and the best,  
And models ‘til you couldn’t rest.*

So begins Rossiter Raymond’s poetic satire of mining litigation. But maps and models served other important purposes besides the litigious one lampooned by that eminent expert Rossiter Raymond. In *Seeing Underground*, Eric Nystrom examines the development of what he calls “the visual culture of mining,” meaning the uses of map making and model building to interpret underground spaces for purposes of development, safety, litigation, and education.

*Seeing Underground* considers the period from 1870 to 1920, the era of the triumph of industrial mining, largely through case examples. The book is divided into two sections that discuss the mak-