

Mary Hill. *Gold, the California Story*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 317 pp., illus., maps, tables, notes, bib., index, cloth, \$45.00.

Mary Hill geologist and for many years editor of *California Geology*, has written a fine encyclopedic book about California gold, which will be a good reference book for many teachers and general readers. It is a masterful synthesis of many kinds of information – history, geology, mining, metallurgy, economics, finance, and folklore. Along with all the basic information, there is a wealth of trivia—how Pliny died, how much gold is on the windows at the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas, the life cycle of the desert tortoise, and even a recipe for chocolate truffles. Attention is given to the care currently exercised for environmental protection as well as the environmental consequences of mining in the past.

A lot of data, much of it technical, is presented in simple form. The source for much of the material is the magazine published by the California Division of Mines and Geology, whose readership is broad. It seems that California school children are one intended reader group: perhaps either a fourth grade California history class or a junior high science class. The adult reader may find the tone often flippant, but the information is reliable. The explanations of such complex technical subjects as gold genesis, volcanism, and plate tectonics are masterpieces of clarity.

In the zeal for accessibility, the author has given equal weight to many topics: a complete and well-balanced historical account of the California gold rush includes maps, drawings, and words to a popular song; almost the same number of pages is given to accounts of “lost gold mines” and outright scams. The geology of gold deposition is given the same attention as the legendary tales of Joaquin Murietta and “Black Bart.” Serious discussion of the theory of tectonic plates is presented in a style which tends to anthropomorphism—a drawing is captioned “Travels of the Farallon Plate: Now you see it, now you don’t”. “The Franciscan melange was scraped off...and left as a wastebasket of confusing rocks.” Even the Donner party, in its only reference is joked about. Nevertheless, the facts are all there, clearly

presented and illustrated: what gold is, why and how it is sought, and what that has meant in California, not only in the folklore and myth of the past, but up to the present. There is only one sentence on flotation as a method for gold recovery; there is one mention of amalgamation by mercury or quicksilver, but it is not indexed.

Carping aside, this book is recommended because it has within its covers all of the basic information about California gold. I especially welcomed the concise section on the “price” of gold. The illustrations are ample and excellent, with sources given in the appendix. The lengthy appendix also includes sources for quotations in the text and suggestions for further reading, along with tables on chemical properties of gold, the names and locations of North American nuggets, figures on gold production, and descriptions of museums where gold may be seen. This book is a good way to learn all there is to know about California gold, and then some.

Eleanor Swent  
Berkeley, California

John R. Park. *A Guidebook to Mining in America*. Miami, Florida: Stonerose Publishing Company, 2000, 2 Volumes, Vol. 1 – West, 310 pp., Vol. 2 – East, 312 pp., \$34.95.

In publishing *A Guidebook to Mining in America* the author has admirably accomplished a daunting task. Composed of two volumes, one covering the Western United States and the other covering the Eastern States, the guidebook is the best and only compilation that I have seen on the what, where and how to visit historic mine sites, museums, furnaces, and related sites in the 50 states (plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.). It includes more than 1,700 entries with 51 maps and 374 black and white photographs. Most entries include substantial background information— mostly historical—while 130 text inserts provide greater depth on selected topics.

Although the Guidebook is likely to be of particular interest to mining history buffs, anyone else with a penchant for history—particularly industrial his-

tory—who enjoys visiting such sites will appreciate this book. These volumes provide an introduction to the mining industries of nearly every region of the United States, with substantial information regarding corresponding exhibits and sites one can visit. The user will find it quite helpful to have such information at hand regarding the potential of an area as a first step in planning a vacation. Educators should be able to select appropriate mineral industry-related topics and field trips to supplement their curriculum. Furthermore, this publication will benefit mineral collectors; they will be able to plan more fruitful excursions to distant mining districts.

The breadth of scope of the historical coverage in the Guidebook is impressive, covering aspects of the mineral industry from mining to transportation to primary processing of mineral resources, from prehistoric times to the present. A selection of interesting examples includes: Thomas Edison's attempts at magnetic beneficiation of iron ores, lead mining and smelting by the Indian tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley, potash mines in the Southwest, sapphire mines in Montana and diamond mines in Arkansas, historic railroads in Alaska, iron ore boats of the Great Lakes, chromium mining in Maryland, titanium mining in Florida, and sea-salt manufacture on Cape Cod. Of course, you will find California gold and the expected Rocky Mountain mining camps represented, in addition to copper mining in Michigan and gold districts of the Southeast.

Several notable features of the guidebook include an informative glossary of mining terms (in Volume 2, East), extensive cross-referencing of the related sites and topics (i.e. Ely, Vermont to Ely, Nevada, both of which are named for Smith Ely who developed copper mines at both locations), and addresses of state geological surveys and state tourism offices to contact for further information. In order to compress so much information without resorting to tiny print, the author relies heavily on symbols to communicate important information on the many site entries. This can be a little confusing, but if the patient reader first reads the *Introduction and Guide to Entries* (in Volume 1, West) and refers back to the legend of *Abbreviations and Symbols* on the inside cover of either volume as needed, a little practice

will build familiarity with the system.

Any such Guidebook will always be incomplete, information will be dated before it is published, and inaccuracies are inevitable. The author could not visit all of the sites listed in his volumes, but sought feedback from others and made repeated inquiries to the places he had not visited. He acknowledges and addresses this shortcoming with advice on how to confirm and find out further information. Furthermore, the font selected is quite readable and the scanned photographs complement the text of the entries, adding to one's anticipation of visiting a historic mine-related site.

Johnny Johnsson  
Finksburg, Maryland

Susan Lee Johnson. *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush*. New York: Norton, 2000, 464 pp., bibl., index.

This provocative new look at the social life of the southern Mother Lode in the frenetic period prior to 1853 may startle readers familiar with contemporary narratives and traditional interpretations. Even insightful modern social histories such as Jim Holiday's *The World Rushed In* and Mac Rohrbough's *Days of Gold* seem a bit passé alongside this postmodern feminist narrative, which began as a dissertation at Yale in 1994.

As the author explains in the preface, she and her "lover and life partner. . . share visions for social justice, and those visions motivate our daily work." Deconstructing the past, in her view, is to read between the lines of diaries, public documents, newspapers, reminiscences and folklore, in order to discover fundamental truths about contemporary issues of race, gender, class and sexuality. Her broad range of reading adds perspective to an essentially regional history. With more losers than winners, the Southern mines, in her opinion, is a study of contradictions, a metaphor for the American success story. Emphasizing pushing, rather than pulling factors, she traces each ethnic path backward from the goldfields to underlying political, economic and social issues