

MINING HISTORY NEWS

Volume 6 • February 1995 • Number 1

Nevada City Meeting

The Mining History Association's June 1-4 conference organizers are busy. Carmel Barry Meisenbach reports that the National Hotel in Nevada City will be the location of meetings and the banquet, but other events will include a number of field trips. On Thursday the 1st an optional tour will be offered to Malakoff Diggings, a California State park that was the site of massive hydraulic mining. The town of New Bloomfield has been restored as part of the interpretation and preservation program. The tour will end in time for participants to join the opening reception at the hotel.

Formal papers and the banquet will be held Friday and Saturday, June 2-3, in the National Hotel's conference facilities. Bill Mulligan, Linda Greene, and Rolla Queen comprise the program committee this year and report the agenda will be full for our June meeting. Dr. Don Hardesty, historical archeologist at the University of Nevada and author of books on the archeology of mining, will be our banquet speaker.

On Saturday afternoon the group will head to the Empire mine for a tour of another California State Park dedicated to the interpretation and preservation of California's mining past. The Empire mine grounds include the mill site, surface works and underground workings as well as the splendid brick manager's home and grounds.

Nevada City and Grass Valley contain exquisite examples of architecture and

many nineteenth century mining sites. The Nevada County Mining Museum is well worth a tour as are other places described in the self-guided tour to be included in registration materials.

An optional tour to the Forest City and Allegheny area is proposed for Sunday. Details are still in formulation, but will probably include an underground tour of one of the new mining operations on the Mother Lode and a barbecue lunch.

Although our conference and events will occur mostly in the Nevada City-Grass Valley area, we encourage participants to explore the other areas of the Mother Lode, either for research or pleasure. Highway 49 runs the length of the mining country and is well worth the time and effort to drive and explore such placer and hard rock camps as Columbia, Sonora, Jamestown, Sutter Creek, Plumas-Eureka, and many more.

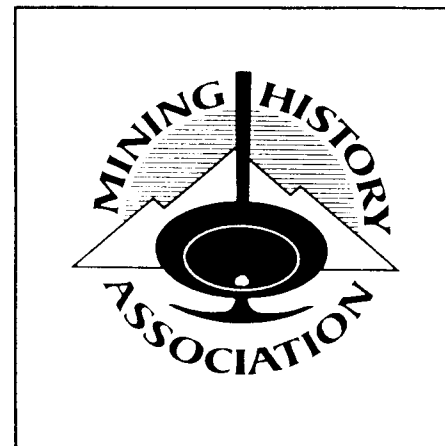
If you have time, do try to visit the restored Sutter Fort in Sacramento as well as the historic old town. Sacramento also includes one of the most impressive railroad museums, the California State Railroad Museum. Researchers should take advantage of the state archives as well as the state mining and geology library.

We anticipate a busy four days in June. The next newsletter will contain more details plus registration materials. If you wish to make early reservations for lodging contact the National Hotel at 916-265-4551 and let them know that you are with the Mining History Association. The Nevada City Chamber

of Commerce will send their visitor's guide by calling them at 916-265-2692 or writing them at 132 Main Street, Nevada City, CA 95959.

Knight & Co. Foundry

Knight Foundry is a working foundry that has been restored as a unique example of the industrial and technological practices once common on the Mother Lode. The plant has recently been designated a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. Begun in 1873, the foundry repaired mine machinery. Nineteenth century practices are still used at the works in producing gray iron castings for industry and preservationists. To visit the historic plant or become a Friend should write the Friends of Knight Foundry, P. O. Box 1873, Sutter Creek, CA 95685



President's Page

This is a wonderful time to be a mining historian, almost as much fun as being in Virginia City, Nevada, Bodie, California, or Leadville, Colorado in the 1870s. The mining industry is changing and facing all types of new challenges and we are right here to document them.

I hope someone, or somebodies, are out there collecting photographs and materials on the gold rush of the 1980s, of right now in northern Nevada. Think about how valuable that will be in ten, twenty-five or one hundred years. What about all those posters and flyers that environmentalists are putting up, or political handbills about gambling or no-gambling in former mining camps? Who is collecting that?

What about the story of Summitville, Colorado and the environmental mess. Your association president is collecting material on that site and that issue for an in-gestation history. What about the environmental stories of other mining locales? What about the recent events at the old ghost camp of Bodie, where preservationists vs. industry made news?

How about collecting information on modern mining companies and changes in technology and equipment. What is the story of heap leaching, how has copper mining changed in the last generation, and how has coal mining evolved? Who is collecting the papers, interviewing the innovators, or recording the changes?

The fight over the 1872 mining law is another hot topic. We as historians should be on top of that with an active collecting of articles and testimony. Is anyone doing an oral history program of today's working miners and managers?

This is just a sampling of what we should be doing not only for our own information, but for the future -- we have an obligation here. How would it have been had this occurred a century ago! We would be in bonanza today.

Duane Smith
Durango, Colorado

The Third International

In our last issue David Neufeld offered a review of the Third International Mining History Conference and a description of the Cripple Creek tour. Member Charles Morris attended the conference in Golden last June too, but enjoyed the Leadville tour so much he wanted that field trip not be overlooked. Chuck offers the following brief piece on that memorable portion of the conference: "Ed Pieker of Royal Gold did a magnificent job in lining up a full day in Leadville for the 70-some guests on the buses. The Chamber of Commerce was the first stop and all enjoyed their slide presentation. Next a delightful lunch was served at the Delaware Hotel, a beautifully renovated Harrison Avenue structure that revives memories of the Victorian era. After lunch the Colorado Historical Society's Healy House, Tabor Opera House and Museum, the Heritage Museum, and the National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum offered opportunities for tours at the visitors' leisure. The day was capped when Neil Reynolds, municipal judge and fourth generation "Leadvillian," conducted his famous (infamous?) walking tour of downtown Leadville. His witty stories and anecdotes, while showing off the churches, saloons, bars, and bawdy houses (many in memory now), enthralled the participants. Neil was dressed for the part with bowler hat, suit and vest, gold key chain, cane, and the ever-present cigar."

Thanks Again

The Third International conference was a grand success because of the many individuals and institutions which helped organize and support the event. The Mining History Association wishes to recognize again the Colorado School of Mines faculty and staff for their hard work and support, especially President George Ansell, Dr. James McDivitt, Dr. Gary Baughman, and Melody Francisco. President Ansell and Professor McDivitt unflinchingly helped with overall

orchestration. Anyone who has coordinated an event such as this realizes that many small details must all fall into place in order for the success of a conference to occur. Much of the credit belongs to Gary and Melody and the rest of the staff at the school's office of Special Programs and Continuing Educations. Thank you all.

Organization News

The newly elected officers of the Mining History Association are Noel Kirshenbaum, vice-president (president elect), and board members Gene Gressley, Ron Limbaugh, and Karen Vendl. The nominating committee for 1995 are Ed Hunter, Liston Leyendecker, and Lysa Wegman-French. Congratulations!

A special thanks to our outgoing board members Elizabeth Jameson, Michael Ostrogorsky, and Carlos Schwantes. All helped the organization through its earliest beginnings and were eager participants at board meetings or through the mails.

Thanks to Robert Trennert and the nominating committee, Lynn Langenfeld and Charles Hughes, for their efforts during 1994.

Officers for 1995 are Duane Smith, president, Noel Kirshenbaum, vice-president, Bob Spude, secretary, and Ron Brown, treasurer. Membership chair is Glenn Cook.

The Mining History Association Newsletter

Denver, Colorado

Distributed to association members; membership is open to all interested in the history of mining. Dues are \$25 per year. Please send dues to MHA, Post Office Box 150300, Denver, Colorado 80215.

Submissions for publication in the newsletter are welcome. Write to Robert L. Spude, Editor.

CALL FOR PAPERS

SIXTH MEETING
OF THE
MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

at the historic National Hotel
Nevada City, California
June 2-3, 1995

The Program Committee for the Nevada City meeting of the Mining History Association invites proposals for individual papers or complete sessions (including chair and discussant) on any topic or aspect of mining in history. Sessions normally include two or three papers of twenty minutes each. There are no geographical or temporal limitations.

Proposals should include an abstract (not to exceed one page) for each paper, plus biographical information about each presenter and session participant. Please send proposals to the Program Committee chair before March 1, 1995.

1995 Program Committee:

William H. Mulligan
1995 Program Committee Chair
Department of History
Murray State University
Murray, Kentucky 42071-3311

Linda Green
Death Valley National Monument
Furnace Creek, California

Rolla Queen
Desert District
Bureau of Land Management
Riverside, California

Conferences

The annual meeting of the British National Association of Mining History Organizations will be held July 14-17, 1995 in Lilleshall National Sports Centre, Newport, Shropshire, U.K. The event will include surface and underground tours, club displays and trade stands, and talks and seminars. For more information write: Adrian Pearce, 72, Hopkins Heath, Shawbirch, Telford, Shropshire TF5 0LZ, U.K.

Historic Preservation

Wolverton Mill. The desert country of Utah attracted its share of single blanket, jackass prospectors at the turn of the century. Notable among the ranks was Edwin Thatcher Wolverton, a Maine native with distinct woodsman skills. Combining these abilities with mining, Wolverton built a sturdy post and beam log mill with a hand made twenty foot under shot water wheel that powered by belt and pulley a series of arastras and a chile wheel. Such water powered milling operations were commonplace in the one or two man operations of the nineteenth and early twentieth century West. What is most unique about the Wolverton mill is the fact that it has been preserved. Bureau of Land Management staff carefully disassembled and moved the structure from the Henry Mountains, and restored it to its original appearance. Located behind the BLM office in Hanksville, Utah it is well worth the side trip to go see. For more information call the BLM office at 801-542-3430.

Rhyolite, Nevada. With recent media attention from as diverse magazines as Wild West (April 1995, pp. 44-46) and Sunset (March 1995, p. 14), and with Alan Patera's recently published Rhyolite the Boom Years, we anticipate that pilgrims rushing to the annual Rhyolite Festival March 18-19 will have much to read and guide them. The Friends of Rhyolite anticipate the appearance of

many spirits for the parade, games, and gold mining events in this Death Valley ghost town. For more information write Friends of Rhyolite, Box 85, Amargosa Valley, NV 89020.

Lake Valley, New Mexico. The Bureau of Land Management has been actively designating and providing visitor amenities on a number of Scenic Byways throughout the West. One of the more recent projects was the installation of interpretive signs along the Lake Valley Scenic Byway which runs south from Hillsboro, New Mexico to Lake Valley, an 1880s silver camp, now ghost town. The Black Range museum in Hillsboro is well worth a stop as is the Three Sisters bakery. The byway is a quiet, rarely used paved road that cuts through some of the more storied mining lands of New Mexico, the desert foothills of the Black Range, and is a good diversion off of Interstate 25.

Keweenaw, Michigan. Keweenaw National Historical Park is in the process of producing a General Management Plan for the new park. Public input is an important component of the process and anyone wishing to participate, comment or just receive the park newsletter should write to Superintendent Bill Fink, Keweenaw NHP, P. O. Box 471, Calumet, Michigan 49913.

Collectibles

Warren Anderson of America West Archives sent his most recent catalogue. He offers a mixture of print items -- books, documents, reports, stock certificates, -- as well such rare items as autographs and relics. The recent catalogue includes stock certificates from failed enterprises such as the Yucca Cyanide Company (appropriately named) and more profitable ventures, such as the Nevada Copper Belt Railroad. You can also buy a check signed by gunman Diamondfield Jack Davis. For a copy of the catalogue write Warren at P. O. Box 100, Cedar City, UT 84720.

Help Needed

The Monitor-Mogul mine complex in Alpine County, California may be reopened by Western States Minerals. Environmental investigations, including historical research and historical archeology have begun. Mining has a long history in this area near Markleville, with early intense prospecting in the 1850s, followed by hard rock mining in later years. During the 1960s operations occurred under the name of "Zaca Mine," a name which will be retained by the new explorers. Cultural resources work will be conducted by Davis-King & Associates, with Shelly Davis King as Principal Investigator, Dr. Susan Lundstrom conducting historical archeology, and Judith Marvin investigating the historical archives. A team of mining geologists, and historians will be involved in compiling field records and historic overviews of the former mines, including the Advance, Alpine, Colorado, Curtz, Georgiana, Glove, Lincoln, Morning Star, Orion, Red Gap, Silver Hill, and Tarshish. At least two towns will also be investigated. Anyone with information about these mines please contact Shelly Davis-King, P. O. Box 10, Standard, CA 95373. Phone 209-533-0305.

Melvin Schmidt, assistant professor of McNeese State University, is continuing his research on the mining, minerals, and townsites of the Rocky Mountain states for a future book on the region. He is also collecting select minerals from many of the mines of the Rocky Mountain West. He needs your help, especially with California and Nevada minerals, in order to more completely show those area's mineralogy. Photographs of minerals will be included in each book. Anyone wishing to submit sources is encouraged to contact Schmidt at 245 Vanessa, Lake Charles, Louisiana 70605.

More Help Wanted

"The Cornish-American Connection" is a major research effort to document the emigration of Cornish people to America. Many Cornish moved to the mining regions of the United States and elsewhere, a major impact to their homeland. The combined effort of historians and genealogists, the Cornish-American Connection project is gathering data with the hope to answer social questions about who went, how old they were, did they go as families or in groups, how many women, how many returned, etc. The organizers of the project are asking for information from individuals or researchers who may have data about Cornish emigrants, such as name, date of birth, when emigrated, occupation, how long stayed, and where. Write Moira Tangye, Cornish-American Connection, Murdoch House Adult Education Centre, Cross Street, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 2BU, United Kingdom. Phone: 01637-874151 / 01209-215736

Joseph Kurtak writes for assistance with his long-term research project on the tungsten mines of Pine Creek near Bishop, California. He has a personal interest since his father worked there for thirty years and Joseph did as well before going off to college to become a geologist. He is looking not only for research materials but recommendations for support, either grants or donations, to help with the work. If anyone has recommendations please contact Joseph Kurtak at 5621 Whispering Spruce Dr., Anchorage, AK 99516.

World Wide Web users can find mining history notes and people by accessing the Internet browser to find URL + <http://www.ex.ac.uk/> that will take you to the University of Exeter server. Then use Faculty Information to find Economic and Social History. The files are there as Mining History Network. Thanks to Roger Burt, University of Exeter for setting the system up.

Book Notes

Otis Young has published "Black Legends and Silver Mountains: Spanish Mining in Colonial Spanish America Reconsidered," a revision of the view of Spanish mining as being regressive; rather they were progressive and well adapted to their environment in the new world. The bad name under which Spanish colonial era mining has since labored was the consequence of a retrospective assessment which lacked historical insight into its evolution and difficulties. The essay appeared in Quest of Mineral Wealth: Aboriginal and Colonial Mining and Metallurgy in Spanish America edited by Alan K. Craig and Robert C. West, 1994. Geoscience and Man vol. 33, pp. 109-118 available from Department of Geography and Anthropology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70893-6010.

Richard Peterson sent in a correction on his Manifest Destiny in the Mines mentioned in the last newsletter. It is now available from R and E Publishers, 468 Auzerias Ave., Suite A, San Jose, CA 95126. Phone 408-977-0691, FAX 408-977-0693.

"Geology and Production History of the Uranium Ore Deposits in the Cameron Area, Coconino County, Arizona," is another contributions to the grey literature prepared by William L. Chenowith to the Arizona Geological Survey, Contributed Report CR-93-B (August 1993). Besides geologic and other information the report includes a ten page, detailed history of the events in the area, especially during the 1950s.

Whiskey, Six-guns & Red-light Ladies is the printing of Tucson saloon-keep George Handy's diary 1875-1878. The book contains much about the underworld of this desert jump-off spot just prior to and during the Tombstone boom. Splendid. Write High-Lonesome Books, Silver City, NM 88062.

Book Reviews

Robert L. Brown, Central City and Gilpin County: Then and Now (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printer, Ltd., 1994), xx, 217 pp., bib., illus.

Robert L. Brown, Cripple Creek: Then and Now (Denver: Sundance Publications, 1991), 128 pp., bib., illus.

This pair of publications act as book ends for Colorado's gold rushes: Central City was the site of the first significant rush in 1859, and Cripple Creek sparked the last major gold rush in the early 1890s. The value of the books lies in their many photographs; the historic images are predominately from private collections, and so are not available to researchers. To make the photos even more revealing, Brown paired many of the historic pictures with more recent views of the same sites. These twosomes tell interesting "before-and-after" stories: sometimes one can hardly tell that the place is the same, while other times the similarity of the images is striking. The quality of the captions is uneven; the best are those which point out the common features, or differences, in the pair.

Alongside the photos Brown relates the stories of the mining districts in his entertaining, easy style. These are popular histories, *sans* footnotes, and with bibliographies containing only secondary sources. The discovery of gold, railroads, brothels, strikes, fires, ethnic groups, and local characters are all covered in the narratives. In both books, Brown casts his net widely, looking at the towns in the context of the larger region. The author also provides histories of the two cities' numerous mining town satellites, many of which no longer exist.

Although Cripple Creek has a few maps, both publications cry out for more and better maps. Brown spends much time trying to explain where places are geographically, often describing them in relation to local landmarks. Maps would illuminate the locations simply and

clearly, for readers both familiar and unfamiliar with the area.

Of the two books, Cripple Creek is the better. There is more cohesion and logical progression within and between the chapters, and there is more meat to the text. At times, Central City seems to be merely a series of interesting vignettes.

However, the biggest problem with the 1994 publication Central City, subtitled "Then and Now," is that it contains only a brief epilogue about the cataclysmic changes that have occurred in Central City and its neighbor Black Hawk since gambling was legalized in 1991. Multi-million dollar casinos have become commonplace, numerous historic buildings have had "facadectomies" performed on them ("preserving" only the front wall, while building an entire new building behind it), and the whole social and economic life has been thrown into turmoil. A reader anxious to learn about the current events will be sorely disappointed by the "Then and Now" story of Central City. Gambling was also reinstated in Cripple Creek in 1991, but Brown can be forgiven for not covering the resulting changes, due to Cripple Creek's 1991 publication date.

It is ironic that the "current" photographs of both books have become valuable historic photos in their own right. They preserve the images of the towns as they appeared on the brink of dramatic changes.

Lysa Wegman-French
Boulder, Colorado

Clark C. Spence, Mining Engineers & the American West, the Lace-Boot Brigade, 1849-1933 (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press 1993, reprint 1970 Yale University Press edition), 407 pp., illus., notes, bib.

I used to give away copies of Clark Spence's Mining Engineers & the American West to my colleagues in the mining industry. They made great Christmas gifts. Few books do such a

good job of bringing to life the story of mining engineers. I gave up the practice when the book went out of print. I'm happy to report that Spence's classic in mining history has finally been reprinted. Thanks to the University of Idaho Press Clark C. Spence's Mining Engineers & the American West is available in a softback edition containing the complete text, notes, and bibliography.

The evolution of the mining engineer profession is well documented here. From nineteenth century beginnings, engineers became more important to the mining world as the industry changed from small scale, pick and shovel operations to the massive industrial plants of the late nineteenth century. Today, it is taken for granted that educated mining engineers are critical in the exploration and development of mines, but not so in the nineteenth century. Spence exposes the charlatans as well as explains the growing pains in education and business.

Mining engineers were among the first professional people in the United States. Spence traces the development of mining education, and gives well deserved credit to the influence of European mining schools. Many of the engineers who would win fame and fortune in the western United States were products of Harvard or Yale who completed graduate studies in mining in Europe, particularly at the Konigliche Sachsische Bergakademie at Freiberg in Saxony, Germany.

Freiberg graduates such as James D. Hague, Louis and Henry Janin, James B. Grant, and John Hays Hammond made up an elite "lace-boot brigade" of engineers who shared a common background. They brought back from Germany not only knowledge of the most advanced scientific methods of mining and processing ores, but also progressive attitudes about the place of science in social affairs.

Although conservative in such matters as labor relations, some of these men went on to support mine health and safety regulations, mining and

metallurgical research, and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

The book is a treasure trove of tales about the early mining engineers and their experiences on the Western frontier, either facing gun toting desperados, angry claim jumpers, or angrier investors. The hostile environment is recounted here as well as experiences in the court room, in mine examinations and development, and the varieties of the job.

Readers will appreciate Spence's researches into over 100 archives to find that small nugget of information to support his explanations. By using the original papers of mining engineers, the book comes alive with personalities, the Janin brothers, globe trotter John Hays Hammond, geologist Clarence King, and a host of other men and women, famous and less so.

The University of Idaho Press does a fine job in reprinting the book and is to be congratulated for their efforts.

Stan Dempsey
Royal Gold, Inc.

Paula Mitchell Marks, Precious Dust, The American Gold Rush Era 1848-1900 (New York: William Morrow, 1994), 448 pp., illus., maps, notes, bib.

Paula Mitchell Marks, a Texan with a doctorate in American Civilization, is interested in the frontier. Her dissertation was a biography of a Texas pioneer couple, and her previous work includes a narrative popular history of the gunfight at the O.K. Corral, Tombstone, Arizona Territory. Her interest in Precious Dust, the American Gold Rush Era 1848-1900 is not mining history but rather in what the North American gold rushes of the late nineteenth century can illustrate about the frontier. Precious Dust is inspired by her desire to understand and explain those features of the North American continent which shaped the "real" American character.

The book opens with a brief chronology of the gold rushes of western North America. This acts as a backdrop to a lengthy, and eventually boring, map walking exercise describing the travels to the different gold fields. The second half of the book is divided into six thematic chapters on life in the gold fields, urban development, law and order, Native Americans and minorities, families and women.

In her account Marks sets up an analytical framework comparing "the 'old' triumphalist view of the frontier story as one of tremendous positive energy and achievement" with "the 'new' critical interpretations of the frontier west as a place of failure, greed and exploitation." (dust jacket blurb). While a potentially interesting approach, this never gets off the ground as Marks does not appear to have read any of the revisionist historians she wishes to correct or emulate. Her understanding of contemporary western historiography is limited to tragedy versus triumph. And in the triumphalist view she uses the gold rushes to identify the critical moment in frontier history when the crucible of national development was smelting the "real" American character. The book provides a detailed look at the mechanics, or better yet, the alchemy, of the American frontier experience which she claims created moments of perfect democratic republican freedom, equality and opportunity.

This approach is based largely upon sources prepared by white Anglo-Saxon males. Thus the thematic chapters on minorities, Native Americans, and women are limited to collected observations and notes by whites triumphantly striding through the wilderness. While statements that Chinese and Blacks enjoyed episodes of freedom seem questionable Marks clearly exhibits a lack of knowledge on her topic in describing the lives of First Nations peoples. Quoting a journalist covering the Klondike stampede who notes the "sadly degenerated" Indians "wearing store clothes and an Americanized

aspect," Marks concludes "that natives were increasingly compelled to adopt an unnatural, and often bastardized, form of Anglo culture... hastening the decline of the tribes and their eventual dependence on the federal government." (pp. 287-8). The tragedy. Strangely, stampedeers using moosehide clothing, moccasins or toboggans are not noted as being bastards, they are "pioneers." The triumph! Marks however dismisses the First Nations people quickly and cleanly by intimating that they either died of small pox or drank themselves to death. The recent completion of a comprehensive land claim agreement with the fourteen First Nations in the Yukon recognizing their original title, and similar attempts by First Nations to re-establish their claims to the Black Hills area, appears to put these kinds of badly racist statements into the same class as those preaching holocaust denial.

The text is littered with quotations, over 40 pages of endnotes detailing the sources. And while these might offer some authenticity to her text, most are very short excerpts, often only a single word, dropped in to lend validity. This appropriation of meaning is compounded by her indiscriminate use of contemporary diaries and letters, later reminiscences and much later popular journalistic histories as sources of equal value and meaning. In the end the book appears to be little more than a topical presentation of the index cards produced while Marks read her sources.

Finally, the book is full of errors of detail that, for the querulous, [and after reading this book I was plenty of that] diminish its content further. Specific Yukon cases include her description of seeing the summit of the Chilkoot Trail from Sheep Camp (p. 132) [Having worked and hiked the Chilkoot Trail for ten years I can assure Dr. Marks that the summit is not visible from Sheep Camp], and reference to the "Moosehead" slide at Dawson (p. 136) [Moosehead is a fine Canadian beer brewed in the Maritimes, while the Dawson feature is Moosehide slide].

While individually insignificant the cumulative effect of these details seriously erodes Marks desire to provide authenticity to her text.

Precious Dust reveals little about mining, the topic only serving as a backdrop for her exploration of the frontier life. The book suffers from the author's failure to establish any kind of intellectual framework for the presentation of her text. Marks recognizes the importance of history in defining identity, however she focuses her work on the re-presentation of an old exclusive identity highlighting the triumphs of the white Anglo-Saxon male. This appears to trouble Marks but without a firm grasp of the new historiography she is unable to make the leap to an inclusive view of our past in the west and north. The book offers little either to the historian of mining or the west and does a disservice to the reading public.

David Neufeld
Parks Canada, Whitehorse

Kenneth Owens, ed., John Sutter & A Wider West (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 138 pp., illus. map.

Gene M. Gressley, Old West/New West, Quo Vadis (Worland, Wyoming: High Plains Publishing Company, 1994), 199 pp.

The history of the West is undergoing close scrutiny and revision. Ever since the publication of Patricia Limerick's Legacy of Conquest (1987), Western historians have been heatedly debating the "New West" interpretation of our region's past. Mining historians have until these volumes been on the periphery of the debate.

Gene Gressley's edited work Old West/New West includes six essays, beginning with an excellent prologue by Gressley, followed by an introductory essay by Patricia Limerick. Gerald Thompson and Malcolm Rohrbough, both published in mining history, dissect

the "New West" history. Thompson concludes that there really is not a New West history that emerged in the 1980s, but it has been part of the scholarship for the past several decades. The New West historians have created a straw soldier by attacking the writings of Frederick Jackson Turner of a century ago. One of their biggest criticism of the New West historians is the pessimistic tone of their writings.

This criticism of pessimism is detailed in the sometimes harsh essay of Gerald Nash, who puts the New West historians into a broader context, especially comparing them to the radicalism of Western Europe. Old West/New West is a powerful book that will be discussed as a major criticism of the New West historians' failings, especially their inability to yet write a new interpretation of the entire history of the West.

Kenneth Owens edited work John Sutter & A Wider West contains essays that offer new ways of looking at one well-known character. Sutter's "diary" is also included.

Owen coordinated the Sutter Lectures at California State University in 1990 and the five speakers' essays are included here. Each essayist looks at the traditional story of Sutter, the man who helped create the atmosphere for the California gold rush and then was swept away by events, so the traditional story goes. Patricia Limerick looks at Sutter as the prototype for Western failure, her new paradigm for understanding the western experience. Sutter was overextended, was a terrible manager and entrepreneur, and paid the price by losing all instead of gaining a fortune.

Richard White and Albert Hurtado also look at Sutter in a new light. White looks at how Sutter and his contemporaries changed the natural

world around them. He asks us to reevaluate the western experience in terms of the impacts on the environment. Similarly, Hurtado reviews the Indian experience, much like he had done in his seminal work Indian Survival on the California Frontier (1988)

Both the Owens and Gressley volumes ask historians to reevaluate how we interpret the past. The Sutter volume may be of more interest to mining historians, but both books make important suggestions on how to rethink how we view the past, taking into considerations new aspects such as environment, Native Americans, and business failure. I also recommend Gressley's Old West/New West to individuals interested in learning what the New West brouhaha is all about.

Robert L. Spude
Denver

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