

mining historian.

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Alan J. M. Noonan. **Mining Irish-American Lives: Western Communities from 1849 to 1920.** (Mining the American West.) Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 2022; 377 pp., 18 b&w illus., 14 tables., 3 append., notes, bib., ind. cloth, \$53. ISBN: 9781646422500.

Readers of this journal will be familiar with the University Press of Colorado's monograph series, *Mining the American West*. The series has a wide scope and has contributed much to our understanding of mining throughout the American West. Alan Noonan's *Mining Irish-American Lives* is a worthy addition to this series.

Noonan takes up numerous important questions that overlap and fall into several areas of scholarship, primarily mining history and the history of the Irish in the United States. Noonan also covers a long period—from the California Gold Rush to 1920—as well as covering a large geographic area—his West is very inclusive of mining areas. The presence of Irish-born and Irish-American miners in the West (and in other mining areas) has been noted before. Generally, these have been studies of specific areas, like David Emmons on Butte, Montana, and Ron James on Nevada, to mention two. Noonan expands the scope and shows that there was a strong and significant Irish presence generally throughout mining areas in the West from their very beginning in California. The book will provide a useful context and base for those looking at particular communities or types of mines.

Noonan also weighs in on questions surrounding Irish acceptance in the United States and the unskilled nature of Irish immigrants. Multiple studies of Irish in mining have demonstrated that in mining a large percentage of Irish were skilled, having worked as miners in Ireland. Noonan shows that the Irish were generally welcomed in

mining communities and did not face the opposition and discrimination that was common in the Northeast and Midwest. The number of communities he examines makes this an especially significant finding.

Irish-born and Irish American can be deceptively simple terms and Chapter One discusses the varieties of identity incorporated in those terms in an effective and nuanced way. Those in mining communities were Catholic and Protestant, and while many had been born in the United States of Irish parents, others had come from Ireland, often directly to a mining area. Noonan also shows that mobility was a significant part of the lives of Irish miners, who moved from mining area to mining area to follow opportunities. In this they were no different than miners from other ethnic groups but shared this and many other common characteristics of miners and the communities in which they lived. Noonan is very familiar with the more general literature on Irish identities and the Irish in the United States and draws on that very effectively to limn the nature of the people he is focusing on and how they saw themselves and were seen by the larger society.

The following chapters trace the development of western mining from the California Gold Rush through the various mining areas that developed as the West was explored and developed. While his focus is on the role that Irish and Irish-American miners and entrepreneurs played, Noonan never loses sight of the diversity of mining communities and the diversity within the Irish community in each. He also adds to the growing literature on the Irish in the West that demonstrates that their experience in terms of acceptance into the community was quite different than it was for those who settled on the East Coast or in the Midwest.

One of the strengths of *Mining Irish-American Lives* is its strong statistical foundation based on the U.S. Census. Noonan has a solid grasp of the size of each community and its demographic characteristics. He is able to distinguish between Irish-born and second- or later-generation Irish

Americans. This provides a strong foundation for each chapter, if sometimes presented subtly. Additional strengths are his familiarity with the literature on each of the areas and eras being discussed, and his extensive use of diaries, letters, and newspapers. Of note is his inclusion of poetry and songs written by miners. These are not unique to the Irish, but they are strong elements in Irish culture that were part of the cultural baggage that miners brought with them to their new homes and which became a central part of the Irish-American culture that developed. While each chapter addresses the central question Noonan has posed about the Irish in western mines, each is focused on the details of an individual community or mining area. In each chapter he raises topics for further research and investigation.

*Mining Irish-American Lives* will repay reading by scholars with a wide range of interests, with a great deal to offer both mining historians and scholars of Irish America.

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Leigh Campbell-Hale. *Remembering Ludlow but Forgetting the Columbine: The 1927-1928 Colorado Coal Strike*. (Mining the American West.) Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2023; 332 pp., 36 b&w illus., notes, bib., ind., cloth, \$47 (e-book, \$38). ISBN: 9781646423019.

*Remembering Ludlow but Forgetting the Columbine* is a title that does not roll off the tongue easily. However, author Leigh Campbell-Hale's presentation of twentieth century labor history is written in a thoughtful, thorough manner drawing the reader in to what could be a dry topic. *Remembering Ludlow but Forgetting the Columbine* examines the Columbine Massacre, an incident during a 1927-1928 coal strike in northern Colorado that the author asserts had more influence on subsequent labor laws than did the better-known 1914 Ludlow Massacre in southern Colorado.

As Campbell-Hale compares the two

strikes she examines the causes, context, and legacies of the strikes in relation to labor organizing and coal mining in Colorado and the United States. Campbell-Hale successfully argues that previous examinations of the Ludlow Massacre and subsequent labor laws attribute more weight to this earlier strike than to the Columbine strike that resulted in much 1930s-era labor legislation.

The story begins with a brief description of the events at the Columbine coal mine northwest of Denver. On 21 November 1927, strikers approached Serene, the company town of Josephine Roche's Rocky Mountain Fuel Company (RMFC), and the company's newest and most valuable property, the Columbine coal mine. A month earlier, the majority of Colorado's miners had voted to go on strike, closing most of the state's coal mines. The only mine still operating was the Columbine. Each day strikers marched through town singing and protesting the strike-breakers. On November 21, the gates to the town were closed to the strikers and police denied them entrance. Arguments ensued resulting in violence, with police killing six striking coal miners and injuring sixty.

The book is divided into three sections. Chapters one through three introduce the reader to three principal actors closely associated with the Columbine strike: Josephine Roche, owner of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company in northern Colorado; Powers Hapgood, labor organizer and an employee of Roche after she signed the 1928 contract with the United Mine Workers of America; and A. S. Embree, Industrial Workers of the World organizer and strike leader of the 1927-1928 walkout. Campbell-Hale's book presents comparative biographies of these three key players before, during, and after the strike. She also introduces the theme of industrial democracy, a common discourse presented from the Progressive Era through the end of World War II and into the cold war.

Chapters four through six describe the events beginning on 8 August 1927 leading to the 1927-