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Introduction: Southwestern Mining in the Twentieth Century

CHRISTOPHER J. HUGGARD, *GUEST EDITOR*

This issue of the *New Mexico Historical Review* is devoted to southwestern mining in the twentieth century. The contributors address a subject begging for attention in a regional field traditionally dominated by scholars of the Spanish, Mexican, and early-U.S. periods. Instead of focusing on the goldrush prospectors and grubstakers of the Old West, these essays seek to answer questions about engineers, everyday miners, national mining policies, and the role of large corporations in the New West. In essence, this issue reflects recent attempts by scholars to come to grips with the dawning of twenty-first century.¹ This issue examines one of the West's oldest industries that, contrary to popular myth, has survived and thrived well beyond the frontier stage.

The facets of mining history are so numerous that this issue could have taken a multitude of directions. Mining, for example, incorporates economic, political, technological, labor, gender, ethnic, and environmental issues over the entire course of southwestern history. In other words, to get at the minerals of the West and Southwest, innumerable socioeconomic factors mingled to form an amalgam that needs processing to fill the mold of mining historiography.²

If there is a period in mining history that has been carefully examined, it is the nineteenth century and the technological and socio-political aspects of that experience. The work of T. A. Rickard, Rodman W. Paul, W. Turrentine Jackson, Otis Young, Clark C. Spence, Duane A. Smith, and many others do a thorough job of digging into these important faces of the stopes of mining history.³

On the other hand, the twentieth-century experience has hardly been tapped. Spence's *Mining Engineers and the American West* (1970) and Duane Smith's *Mining America: The Industry and the Environ-*

ment, 1800-1980 (1987) provide two outstanding exceptions to this general rule. On the whole, however, the twentieth-century studies barely dip into the post-frontier era and are often written by historians with corporate interests in mind.⁴ Furthermore, few studies, even those that focus on the nineteenth century, look at mining in the Southwest.

To begin to fill this gap, this issue is devoted to twentieth-century mining in the American Southwest. But more than a time and a region, this collection of essays contributes to the "new" American history that has molded western historiography since the late 1970s.⁵ In mining history, this newness, which is actually the latest lamination in a generations-built field, harkens back to 1979 when several new social history monographs appeared, including Mark Wyman's *Hard Rock Epic*, Elliott West's *The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier*, and Ronald C. Brown's *Hard-Rock Miners*.⁶ Since that bonanza year, numerous "new" West essays and books have appeared to address social, gender, ethnic, and environmental issues along with the traditional economic, political, and technological themes in mining history. Among the best are Michael P. Malone's *The Battle for Butte* (1981), Marion S. Goldman's *Gold Diggers & Silver Miners* (1981), Ralph Mann's *After the Gold Rush* (1982), Paula Petrik's *No Step Backward* (1987), David Emmon's *The Butte Irish* (1989), and Sally Zanjani's *Goldfield* (1992).⁷ With these new studies as models, the authors of this issue delve into questions of labor, management, power, culture, Cold War strategy, and the environment.

A. Yvette Huginnie's "A New Hero Comes to Town: The Anglo Mining Engineer and 'Mexican Labor' as Contested Terrain in Southeastern Arizona, 1880-1920," explores the complexities of labor-management relations in Arizona. She argues that mining engineers were not the heroes that historians, such as Rickard, claimed they were. Rather, traditional, practically trained miners made as much of a contribution to southwestern mining as did university-trained engineers. Racist ideologies and practices that often subjected Mexican and Mexican-American laborers to unfair treatment and unjustly low wages also contributed to competition and conflict. Written as new western history, Huginnie's essay contributes to new labor history by giving credit to workers often overlooked in previous accounts.⁸

Kevin J. Fernlund's "Mining the Atom: The Cold War Comes to the Colorado Plateau, 1948-1958" also opens a new road in western historiography. After placing the Colorado Plateau's uranium boom in an international and strategic context, Fernlund examines the practical role of the prospector within the real life socio-political culture of the Cold War in comparison to the more traditional, mythical perspective of the region, represented by western film heroes of the 1950s. The result is a classic dichotomy of reality versus myth in which the ura-

nium prospector emerges as much a product of rugged American individualism as of federal sponsorship. Out of this blending of old and new, reality and myth, regional and global emerges a new era, the so-called atomic age. This period, which opened with so much optimism, was brought to a close by the peacetime disasters at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, and an unsustainable arms race. Despite the tremendous costs, Fernlund contends the United States won the Cold War largely because of the Southwest's uranium boom.

Another aspect of recent historical investigation is the use of photographs to interpret the past. Arthur R. Gómez's photographic essay, "Mining New Mexico," illustrates the multifaceted nature of this extractive industry in the Southwest. These images reveal the multicultural, industrial, social, and environmental faces of one of the West's most important economic endeavors. Clearly, these snapshots into the mining past impart images not easily captured in words.

Christopher J. Huggard's "Mining and the Environment: The Clean Air Issue in New Mexico, 1960-1980" examines the southwestern copper industry's smelter emissions problem. Choosing the Kennecott Copper Corporation's smelter at Hurley, New Mexico, as a focal point, Huggard places the air pollution issue in a local, state, and national context. In examining this volatile issue, he argues that the environmentalism of the 1960s and 1970s redirected national industrial policy just as unionism had in the 1930s and 1940s. The drama of the more recent transition, which culminated in the federal Clean Air Act of 1967 and subsequent amendments in 1970 and 1977, was acted out in hearings before the United States Senate, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Environmental Improvement Board of New Mexico. Huggard's essay contributes to a maturing environmental history which has traditionally focused on agriculture and forestry rather than mining in the West.

Finally, Elizabeth Jameson's closing comments assess the issues raised, and Gene Gressley reviews two recent mining histories: Sally Zanjani's *Goldfield* and John Fahey's *Hecla*.

NOTES

1. Gerald D. Nash has urged western historians to examine the twentieth-century West and Southwest for more than two decades. See the first edition of his *The American West in the Twentieth Century: A Short History of an Urban Oasis* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973).

2. For a thorough grounding in western mining historiography, see Rodman W. Paul, "A Tenderfoot Discovers There Once Was a Mining West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 10 (January 1979), 4-20, and Clark C. Spence, "Western Mining," in Michael P. Malone, ed.,

Historians and the American West (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 96-122. This issue also follows in the tradition set by the *Journal of the West's* special issue on mining, "Boom to Bust and Back Again: Mining in the Central Rockies, 1920-1981," of October 1982, edited by Duane A. Smith.

3. T. A. Rickard's *A History of American Mining* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1932), Paul's *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963; paperback ed., Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), W. Turrentine Jackson's *Treasure Hill: Portrait of a Silver Mining Camp* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1963), Otis E. Young Jr.'s, with Robert Lenon, *Western Mining: An Informal Account of Precious-Metals Prospecting, Placering, Lode Mining, and Milling on the American Frontier from Spanish Times to 1893* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), Spence's *Mining Engineers & the American West: The Lace-Boot Brigade, 1849-1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), and Duane A. Smith's *Rocky Mountain Mining Camps: The Urban Frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967; paperback ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974). The history of mining in the colonial period also needs development. Peter Bakewell's *Mining and Society in Colonial Mexico: Zacatecas, 1546-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), his *Miners of Red Mountain: Indian Labor in Potosi, 1545-1650* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), and Elinore Barrett's *The Mexican Colonial Copper Industry* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987) do an excellent job of examining colonial Mexico and Potosí.

4. Spence, *Mining Engineers*; Duane A. Smith, *Mining America: The Industry and the Environment, 1800-1980* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987; paperback ed., Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1993). Examples of corporate histories are Isaac F. Marcossou's *Anaconda* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1957), and Robert Glass Cleland's *A History of Phelps Dodge, 1834-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952). Some exceptions to this rule are Russell R. Elliott's *Nevada's Twentieth-Century Mining Boom: Tonopah, Goldfield, Ely* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1966), H. Lee Scamehorn's *Mill & Mine, The CF&I in the Twentieth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), Raye C. Ringholz's *Uranium Frenzy: Boom and Bust on the Colorado Plateau* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1989), and numerous essays published in state and regional journals.

5. See Eric Foner, ed., *The New American History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Gerald D. Nash, *Creating the West, Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991); and Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner, and Charles E. Rankin, eds., *Trails, Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

6. Mark Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic: Western Miners and the Industrial Revolution, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Elliott West, *The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); Ronald C. Brown, *Hard-Rock Miners: The Intermountain West, 1860-1920* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1979); also, see James E. Fell, Jr., *Ores to Metals: The Rocky Mountain Smelting Industry* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979). A year later, Spence, "The Golden Age of Dredging: The Development of an Industry and Its Environmental Impact," *Western Historical Quarterly* 11 (October 1980), 401-14, highlighted environmental issues in mining history. Richard Lingenfelter's *The Hardrock Miners: A History of the Mining Labor Movement in the American West, 1863-1893* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), also made an important contribution to the New Social History that was incorporated into mining historiography in the 1970s.

7. Michael P. Malone, *The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier, 1864-1906* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); Marion S. Goldman, *Gold Diggers & Silver Miners: Prostitution and Social Life on the Comstock Lode* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981); Ralph Mann, *After the Gold Rush: Society in Grass Valley and Nevada City, California, 1849-1870* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Paula Petrik, *No Step Backward: Women and Family on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier, Helena, Montana, 1865-1900* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1987); David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Classical Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-*

1925 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Sally Zanjani, *Goldfield: The Last Gold Rush on the Western Frontier* (Athens: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1992); also, see James Whiteside, *Regulating Danger: The Struggle for Mine Safety in the Rocky Mountain Coal Industry* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), and Richard V. Francaviglia, *Hard Places: Reading the Landscape of America's Historic Mining Districts* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991) for similar "New" West monographs.

8. See David Brody, "Reconciling the Old Labor History and the New," *Pacific Historical Review* 62 (February 1993), 1-19, and Leon Fink, "American Labor History," in Eric Foner, ed., *The New American History*, 233-50.

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