
Book Reviews

Janet Floyd. *Claims and Speculations: Mining and Writing in the Gilded Age*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2012; 184 pp., 4 b&w illus., notes, bib., ind., cloth, \$45. ISBN: 9780826351395 (cloth), 9780826351418 (electronic).

Janet Floyd explores some of the diverse literary and journalistic responses to the gold and silver mining rushes in the American West in the late nineteenth century. A senior lecturer in American Studies at King's College, London, she has previously studied the writings of pioneer women. Here, she focuses on both contemporary and later writings on the major rushes and their aftermaths in California in the 1850s, the Comstock in the 1860s and '70s, Leadville in the 1880s, Cripple Creek in the 1890s, and the Klondike at the turn of the twentieth century, with a chapter on "sex work" drawn from all of these locations. Seeing mining as "fabulously complex," the author explores the tangle of its writings to "uncover different strands" of its literary engagement, and to "grasp the essence of gold and silver mining."

Floyd first considers various metaphorical models of the historical role of mining for their influences on the overall interpretation of mining writing and vice versa. Then, looking at the California gold rush, she contrasts Louise Clappe's sharp, on-the-spot reports from the mines with Bret Harte's later, hazier fictional pieces set against mining backdrops, and Jim Townsend's unsavory newspaper promotions of an outright scam. In these she finds evidences that "writing invented and sold mines, it imitated mining episodes, and it certainly mined mining with a will."

Turning next to the Comstock, Floyd studies the writings of Mark Twain, Dan De Quille

and other journalists as examples of the particular approaches chosen by insiders directed mostly at local readers. In Leadville and Cripple Creek, on the other hand, her focus is on the role of the popular novels of less engaged observers, primarily Mary Hallock Foote and Hamblin Garland, in romancing the mines for eastern readers. As an interlude, Floyd also explores writings throughout this period for their views on the "unruliness of gender and sexuality," namely prostitution and homosexuality, in the mines and their subtler representations. Lastly, she explores writings on the Klondike, mostly those of Jack London and Robert Service, for their characterizations and interpretations of the last big "poor man's rush."

In all, *Claims and Speculations* yields up a rich, if occasionally murky, amalgam of literary responses to western mining, ranging between a "distaste and evasiveness toward the mining cultures from outside, and deep cynicism and uncertainty from within." Yet, this sampling seems to tell us much more about the broader social interests and sensitivities of the period than it does about miners' expressions, experiences, and expectations, which define the essence of mining.

For further work along such veins, however, there are still rich lodes as yet untapped, which might be very profitably worked. A sharper view of the trials and concerns of miners can be dug from the popular, often pungent, songs written for miners by the miners themselves and their entertainers—from "Old Put's" gold rush songsters, through their newspaper doggerel, to the Wobblies' little red songbook. The unappreciated role of the Dime Novel thrillers in glamorizing the gold rushes for teenagers and recruiting the next generation of rushers is also rich ground. And, of course, the pernicious fantasy literature of min-

ing promoters could offer endless amusement and outrage.

Richard Lingenfelter
University of California, San Diego

Bob Weldin. *The Dry Diggin's Club*. Spokane: Miner's Quest, 2012; 303 pp., paper, \$20. ISBN: 9780578106823

Mining engineer Bob Weldin, a long-time member and former president of the Mining History Association, explained his motivation for joining the novel writing fraternity:

The stories in this book are primarily based on events that happened to the author and other field geologists during the 1960s. The stories have been fictionalized to illustrate what might have happened as well as what actually did. The reader should not try to attach actual names to the characters because they are composite personalities developed to illustrate the more interesting and dynamic people who are attracted to the mining industry.

The story takes place in the Pacific Northwest and focuses on Sara Mullins, who “is able to break into this masculine domain, yet, preserve the attributes of her femininity.” The author brings her alive as her career unfolds in the evolving world of mining in the post-World War II era and beyond. Along the way, it also provides some interesting insights into the mining profession.

Rather than summarize this well-paced story, the reviewer encourages one and all to read and enjoy *The Dry Diggin's Club*. Where does the title come from? That too may be found in the book.

Duane A. Smith
Fort Lewis College

Catherine Holder Spude, Robin O. Mills, Kark Gurcke, and Roderick Sprague (eds.). *Eldorado! The Archaeology of Gold Mining in the Far North*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press and the Society of Historical Archaeology, 2011; 357 pp., 39 b&w illus., 8 maps, 27 tabs., ref., paper, \$55. ISBN: 9780803210998

This volume is the first attempt to summarize the work of historic archaeologists on early gold mining in Alaska and the Yukon Territory. The book is written primarily for archaeologists, but will be useful to historians, ethnologists, and other cultural resource specialists. Historic archaeological studies on mining sites in the far north—field surveys, excavations, oral histories, and analyses of material culture—began in the 1970s. Most of the early work focused on Skagway and Dawson. Since the 1990s, considerable archaeological investigation has been carried out in other parts of the far northern mining frontier, but much of that work was produced in “gray literature” (unpublished professional reports) for government agencies and papers presented at conferences.

This volume, which focuses on placer mining, is divided into five parts. Part I includes essays by Robert Spude, giving a brief overview of the history of Alaska-Yukon gold rushes between 1880-1918; Donald Hardesty, on theoretical perspectives on frontier mining patterns; Robin Mills, on a proposed model for a placer-gold-mining settlement system; Catherine Holder Spude, on predicting social and economic function at residential and commercial sites in the far north; and Margaret Purser, on comparative opportunities and challenges, seeking to put the work done on Alaska into a national perspective and suggesting directions for future historic archaeological studies of mining in Alaska.

Part II consists of three essays focusing on coastal transfer and supply settlements provisioning the Upper Yukon through Skagway and Dyea. Part III includes two essays on links in the interior transportation system. Part IV contains four es-