

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-