MINING THE AMERICAN WEST

A Bibliographical Guide to Printed Materials
on American Mining Frontiers
in the British Library

by

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PREFACE

There are few geographical regions in the history of the United States that lack a mining frontier. Almost from its discovery, the image of America as a land of golden wealth has presented a powerful image to the world. America's extensive economic resources have led some historians to suggest that the abundance of the land and its use by her citizens and governments is a key factor in shaping the national character. From different angles both Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and David M. Potter's *People of Plenty* [1954] (Ac.2691.dw(26) show the key roles of mineral wealth in the American experience.

There are many reasons why students of American history cannot ignore the mining frontiers. The discovery of precious metals hurried the westward movement of the nation. The discovery of gold in California in January 1848 and the Gold Rush the next year is only the most prominent example. The early history of many western states, especially Nevada, Colorado, Idaho, Arizona, Montana, the Dakotas and Alaska are intimately tied up with mining activities. These were linked to politics and the issues of statehood which were in turn, welded to the growth of American nationalism, encouraging as they did the development of regional and national transportation and communication networks. The international flavour of the mining communities also warrants closer examination for students of comparative history.

American land and water laws are other examples of continuing connections to western mining history. The urban frontier reflecting the boom and bust cycles of
mining communities, remain a factor in American economic history. The hundreds
of ghost towns in the West are the most silent reminders of this aspect of mining
history.

The investment of European capital in American mining provides another
reason for taking a closer look at this area. American labor history is particularly
tied into mining history. Additionally, the importance of the science of mining
technology, much of which was developed in the American West, provides an
important chapter in the history of technology. This includes the history of
exploration and the growth of geological knowledge. Other dimensions are less
positive. The environmental impact has been significant and remained for later
generations to address. And the effects of mining rushes on the original or reserved
homes of Native Americans was devastating. Then too, the few who got rich
compared with the loss and destruction of so many others, requires continuing
research and evaluation.

Yet there is little doubt about the great impact that the discovery, extraction
and use of mineral wealth had in American history. While we tend to think of gold
and silver, we must also include coal, oil, copper, gas and other extractive minerals.

This bibliography provides a basic guide to the printed materials on this
important topic in American History as reflected in the holdings of the British
Library. It does not claim to be comprehensive, but it will provide the serious
student with a window to the literature on Western American mining history.
Included is a short bibliography of the larger topic of world mining frontiers.
David J. Whittaker
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The Monongah Mining Disaster was the worst mining accident of American history; 362 workers were killed in an underground explosion on December 6, 1907 in Monongah, West Virginia. The majority of these fatalities occurred in Kentucky and West Virginia, including the Sago Mine Disaster.[3][4] On April 5, 2010, in the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster an underground explosion caused the deaths of 29 miners.

Controversies[edit]. Mines are often controversial in their local areas, with local residents split by those in favor particularly due to the economic impact of new jobs and those concerned by the environmental impact and occupational hazards. The American West. This lack of understanding has led to uranium extraction projects that cause irreparable environmental devastation. NRDC’s research reveals that 62 out of the 100 current and prospective ISL mining sites fall within western counties for which high or extreme risks of water sustainability are predicted by mid-century (see Table 4 and Figure 19). The EPA, to its credit, has commenced a revision of its health and environmental protection standards for uranium and thorium mill tailings.2 Apparently content with the status-quo until the EPA issues new standards, the NRC has yet to.

Nuclear Fuel’s Dirty Beginnings: Environmental Damage and Public Health Risks From Uranium Mining in the American West. Historians sometimes define the American West as lands west of the 98th meridian, or 98° west longitude. This line of longitude runs through the middle of Texas and Kansas up through the eastern third of Nebraska and the Dakotas. Some definitions of the region include all lands west of the Mississippi or Missouri rivers. Conflicts broke out between mining companies and miners as the latter tried to organize into labor unions. Such labor groups as the Western Federation of Miners protested, demanding legal protections and better conditions under which to work. The labor organizer Mary Harris Jones, better known as “Mother Jones,” spent her long life working to improve conditions for miners.
Mining the U.S. West is dotted with mines. Many sit abandoned, part of the legacy of earlier generations' pursuit of wealth and industrial feedstock, while others continue to produce the valuable minerals that modern societies increasingly rely upon. As part of our broad goal to improve environmental policy related to mining, the Center of the American West has undertaken projects advocating policies that will facilitate the cleanup of hazardous abandoned mines and prevent the creation of a new generation of legacy mines. Resources. Patty Limerick's Testimony Before the House Subcommittee on Natural The Monongah Mining Disaster was the worst mining accident of American history; 362 workers were killed in an underground explosion on December 6, 1907 in Monongah, West Virginia. The majority of these fatalities occurred in Kentucky and West Virginia, including the Sago Mine Disaster. On April 5, 2010, in the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster an underground explosion caused the deaths of 29 miners. Controversies. Mines are often controversial in their local areas, with local residents split by those in favor particularly due to the economic impact of new jobs and those concerned by the environmental impact and occupational hazards.