

ments as the war continued. Such changes illustrated Americans' changing political and social attitudes toward ethnics during the conflict.

This book is equally important because of Burton's discussion of the ethnics' attitudes about themselves and others along with the parts they played in America's social and political development during this critical period of history. Burton plays no favorites when examining ethnic conflict. He describes the excesses of nativistic behavior and the negative consequences of such misbehavior, but he also points out examples of hooliganism and clannishness practiced by the Irish and Germans both as citizens and as soldiers. Such forms of collective misbehavior were counterproductive and only exacerbated their differences.

Burton also reveals that, while both ethnic and native-born soldiers shared similar motivations in joining regiments, important differences existed. Ethnic warriors hoped to prove their loyalty to their adopted country. They fought to serve the Union *and* to gain acceptance as Americans, rather than to free slaves. The intensity of their loyalty is most dramatically revealed by the awful casualties ethnics experienced from wounds and disease. One regiment, the New York Eighty-eighth, led by a controversial colonel, Thomas F. Meagher, suffered the loss of 550 troops of 1,300 engaged at Fredericksburg. Ethnic regiments were also plagued by the same problems of terrible sanitation, political bickering, alcoholism, and other hardships of war that were experienced by native troops. In the awful crucible of total conflict the ethnics did bolster their political power and, to a great extent, their economic opportunities following the war. The shanty Irish of the fifties were to become the lace curtain Irish of the seventies.

Burton's study vividly shows that ethnicity remains a rich field of historical research, and partially supports the melting pot theory in the face of recent critics. His comprehensive and important assessment of the parts played by the ethnic regiments makes his work a valuable contribution to the fields of both ethnic and military history.

Aspen: The History of a Silver Mining Town, 1879-1893, by Malcolm J. Rohrbough. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. viii, 263 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$19.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ALLAN KENT POWELL, UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Aspen, Colorado, is known today as one of America's premier ski and vacation resorts. One hundred years ago, with a population of more

than twelve thousand, it ranked as Colorado's third largest city behind Denver and Leadville. In his account of the rise of Aspen to one of the West's most important mining towns (in league with Virginia City, Nevada; Butte, Montana; Leadville, Colorado; Park City, Utah; and others), Malcolm J. Rohrbough, professor of history at the University of Iowa, has produced an important study of a western mining town equal in merit to his earlier books, *The Land-Office Business* and *The Trans-Appalachian Frontier*.

After introducing the discoveries of silver in the valley of the Roaring Fork River and reviewing briefly how Aspen fits the general story of mining in the new world, Rohrbough offers Aspen's history in three parts: the evolution from the camp founded in 1879 to the town that had evolved with the construction of a smelter in 1883; the growth from a town to a city in 1887 when two railroads, the Denver and Rio Grande and the Colorado Midland, reached Aspen; and its prosperity as a city until 1893 when outside forces caused the price of silver to fall from \$1.10 an ounce in 1887 to \$.60 an ounce in 1893. Almost all of the mines closed, and the out-of-work miners left for other locations, notably the gold mines in Cripple Creek to the southeast. By 1930 Aspen's population had declined to 705.

Rohrbough's *Aspen* is much more than an account of the rise and fall of another western mining town. It is a well-written story that gives equal treatment to a variety of personalities, legal issues, community growth, mining technology, mine investment, transportation problems, social and recreational activities, organized labor, and the economic classes and ethnic groups that constituted Aspen. Rohrbough is especially effective in conveying the bustle, excitement, and dreams of a growing mining town on one hand; yet on the other, the despair, frustration, and sense of hopelessness as the town declined.

Rohrbough devotes chapters to the two principal mine developers, Jerome B. Wheeler and David M. Hyman, one "the universally known public figure," the other "the consummate behind-the-scenes operator" (80), but he emphasizes the role of the common people as well. He writes, "Between 1883 and 1887, Aspen was a drama that would have seized Shakespeare's attention: the clash of giant personalities, the conflict over important legal principles, the interplay of conspiracy and counterconspiracy, the drama created by human avarice. It was a large stage, too, with thousands of players, and though only a few had the largest and best speaking parts, it should still be kept in mind that their speeches and actions represented the dreams, aspirations, and futures of thousands of others who stood silently by but watched the dramatic actions and speeches intently" (108). As this

quotation suggests, Rohrbough writes with balance and a keen sense for the dramatic story of western mining. *Aspen: The Story of a Silver Mining Town* is a welcome addition to the literature of western American mining history.

No Step Backward: Women and Family on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier, Helena, Montana, 1865-1900, by Paula Petrik. Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1986; distributed by the University of Washington Press. xix, 206 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PAULA M. NELSON, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PLATTEVILLE

The Rocky Mountain frontier was essentially an urban frontier that included women and even children, although the numbers of both were relatively small in the early years. Paula Petrik, in her book *No Step Backward*, aims to put women "in their place" as important participants in the mining frontier experience. A secondary purpose of her work is to correct the overemphasis on agricultural women in the study of the frontier. To accomplish these goals, Petrik has studied the "interaction of different groups and generations of women in one locality over time" (xvi). *No Step Backward* is thus a community study that focuses on the women of a frontier mining city. Petrik hopes that her work will do more than recount the story of Helena's women; she sees it as a "prism" that will "refract women's experiences into its component parts" for the whole Rocky Mountain mining frontier (xvi). Petrik's thesis is that the mining frontier prompted increased economic and social equality for its not always willing women residents. To support her thesis, Petrik did substantial research in quantitative and manuscript sources. The result is an impressively researched book with much of interest to say.

No Step Backward is not a narrative history of the town of Helena and its women so much as it is an analysis of certain groups or social processes, such as divorce. The first chapter outlines the history of Helena and its population. The following chapters then assess assorted female groups and their roles. For example, Petrik provides a fascinating analysis of prostitutes in Helena, several of whom owned substantial property and presided over a tenderloin empire. This chapter features several prominent madams, whom Petrik characterizes as "capitalists with rooms." Other chapters describe mothers and daughters in Helena and the ways their lives changed over time; divorce in Helena; and the drive for equal suffrage in Montana, a development that Petrik sees as a vitally important product of the

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