

Cohen's book contains helpful hints for historians interested in the urban schools of an agricultural state. Were any Iowa cities guided by similar progressive visions, business dominance, and challenging ethnic mix? Even if they weren't, the historical evolution of Iowa's urban school systems would be worth similar detailed study.

Regulating Danger: The Struggle for Mine Safety in the Rocky Mountain Coal Industry, by James Whiteside. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. xv, 265 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$37.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PHILIP F. NOTARIANNI, UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Coal mine fatality rates in the five Rocky Mountain states of Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming consistently surpassed the national averages. At least 8,016 coal miners lost their lives in these five states between 1880 and 1984. *Regulating Danger* describes why mining in the West was so dangerous; analyzes the roles of miners, owners, and government in dealing with issues of safety; and outlines the effectiveness of state and federal legislation in regulating the dangers of coal mining throughout the United States.

James Whiteside provides a general history of the coal mining industry in the five western states, dealing more thoroughly with Colorado. He approaches the topic chronologically, weaving all five Rocky Mountain states into the discussion, and at times interspersing national events and trends into the study. Various illustrations and photographs enhance the book, as do tables that chronicle statistically by states (including the U.S. totals) the fatalities in western mines.

The work begins by establishing the industrial setting of coal mining in the Rocky Mountain West through a state-by-state discussion. As the author states, "Examination of this complex setting, with its layers of authority and interdependent workers, reveals much about miners and their work relations and how those relations helped to shape safety conditions in the mines" (43). Whiteside stresses the significance of large-scale commercial coal mining to the industry as a whole, and he highlights the roles of both owners and miners.

Then he proceeds to discuss safety regulations, from the first legislation passed in Colorado in 1877 to the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1969. The most significant theme that permeates the entire period is the belief by industry and many government officials that miners were responsible for their own safety. While the author is very sympathetic to the miner, he does note the joint responsibilities of owners and miners. He points out, for

example, that coal operators emphasized production and compensated miners on a tonnage basis, which led miners to hurry on "dead work" (such as timbering and cleaning up shale or loose rock), thus compromising their safety.

Another key theme is the lack of effective enforcement of safety legislation and the role of the federal government in eventually providing that enforcement. By the turn of the twentieth century, laws governing coal mining existed in all coal-producing states and territories in the United States. However, this legislation proved ineffective, even as fears ran rampant that such laws would impede economic growth. The root of the problem was the lack of uniform safety regulations. Federal control, many believed, could provide the needed uniformity, but would also squeeze out the small operator. Ironically, too, as Whiteside points out, production and competition influenced operators toward reform, especially large producers who could afford to enact safety measures.

Much of Whiteside's analysis, while dealing with five western states, is significant for the study of the coal industry nationally. By probing federal involvement in regulation and pointing to general trends in the industry, such as increased mechanization, Whiteside effectively places his discussion in a national context. Thus, *Regulating Danger* is a useful, probing study into a problem that touched small towns, individual states, and the entire nation: deaths in coal mining accidents. (Readers of Iowa history will be reminded that an explosion killed twenty miners at the Lost Creek No. 2 coal mine in Oskaloosa on January 24, 1902.) Whiteside stresses accidents due to falling rock and explosions—incidents with the best statistics. He basically ignores individual accidents and the deaths inflicted by maladies such as black lung, for which statistics are harder to obtain. Nonetheless, this book effectively illustrates that mine safety and its history are indeed critical issues. Thus, it is necessary reading for all who are interested in a historically significant industry that is changing and may be of even greater importance in an energy-starved future.

The Business of Breeding: Hybrid Corn in Illinois, 1890-1940, by Deborah Fitzgerald. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990. xi, 247 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

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Deborah Fitzgerald has delved into the archives of the University of Illinois, the Funk Brothers Seed Company, the limited holdings of DeKalb Agricultural Research, and USDA Bureau of Plant Industry

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