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Review of Mills & Mine: The CF&I in the TwentiethCentury.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Mills & Mine: The CF&I in the Twentieth Century. By H. Lee Scamehorn. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992. Preface, introduction, illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliographical essay, index. x + 247 pp. \$37.50.

Following in the tradition of his earlier work, *Pioneer Steelmaker in the West* (1976), H. Lee Scamehorn concludes his history of CF&I. There is no need to guess here—this is a history of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company from the company's perspective. Scamehorn criticizes earlier historians for emphasizing "labor policies, particularly the coal miners' strike of 1913-14," that tended to ignore the "firm's important role in the evolution of Colorado and the American West." Then the author sets out to chronicle the growth and eventual decline of the steel works at Pueblo, Colorado, and the various coal mining operations located primarily in Huerfano and Las Animas counties.

In the bibliographical essay Scamehorn admits that "the company records constitute the principal source" on company activities. In that sense, this is a major strength of this work. The author's best chapters are those covering business operations. But those sections discussing company-labor relations create something of a problem, particularly chapter three, "The Coal Miners' Strike of 1913-1914." Scamehorn uncritically accepts CF&I President Jesse Welborn's view of the strikers and their actions. On page after page of this section the reader sees "Welborn branded," "Welborn noted," "Welborn called the

strike one of the most vicious ever conducted," and "according to Welborn." More disturbing, ten pages of his argument against union activities, including direct quotations, remain undocumented (pp. 40-50).

The chapters on company stores and company towns are better balanced and chronicle some of the inadequacies of company policy. Scamehorn admits that CF&I company stores made huge profits during the early era. The author also paints a picture of company towns where CF&I "built and maintained all structures—houses, dispensary, store, churches, and saloons" (p. 83). Scamehorn offers balance here by providing first-hand observations by Eugene S. Gaddis, a former employee and critic of company town policy and suggests that company officials "were out of touch with the reality of life in the camps" (p. 85). The Las Animas County company towns such as Primero, Segundo, Sopris, and Berwind were ethnically diverse with Hispanics, Italians, Greeks, and eastern Europeans. Company towns also segregated Hispanic and African Americans.

Saloons played an important role in company town social life. For example, in 1915, Segundo, with only 600 inhabitants, had no fewer than fourteen saloons dispensing alcohol. But contrary to the author's conclusions that "acts of violence were rare" (p. 90), recent research has revealed that company towns were violent. Homicides rates were extremely high in Las Animas County (1880-1920 they averaged 35 per 100,000), were usually alcohol related, and often occurred in company saloons.

The author's treatment of the Rockefeller Industrial Plan also needs to be read with caution. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., appointed William L. Mackenzie King to head a group to develop a plan for employee representation. In this system, the "company reserved to itself certain rights and privileges, including the enforcement of laws, the promulgation of rules and regulations governing the mining of coal, the posting of wages, the right to hire and fire employees" (p. 62). Although viewed as a success by Rockefeller after only three years, Scamehorn documents that there were many critics. Apparently most miners employed under the system did not take it seriously. There were numerous strikes and attempts to organize unions. Eventually the plan ended with the CF&I's acceptance of the United Mine Workers as the bargaining unit in December 1933.

Despite the shortcomings listed, this work provides needed analysis of how the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company was able to operate successfully in Colorado. If one reads it with a critical eye, it is a useful addition to understanding the rise and demise of a steel company in the twentieth-century West.

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