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# Introduction

**“E**VERY MATURE NATION HAS ITS SYMBOLIC LANDSCAPES,” WRITES GEOGRAPHER D. W. Meinig, idealized places that evoke commonly understood meaning. He cites the New England Village, the Main Street of Middle America, and the California Suburb as examples of symbolic landscapes that have come to represent idyllic spaces for American family life. But, as Meinig also observes, although the favorable imagery of these iconic places is familiar, their physical and social character is poorly understood. “Perhaps,” he cautions, “we have been deluded by the very power of the symbols. When we attempt to penetrate the familiar generalizations and clichés . . . we may be startled at how narrow and uneven are the foundations upon which these stereotypes rest.”<sup>1</sup>

Myth often obscures the complex realities of place, and this observation holds equally true for locales occupying unfavored perceptual territory. For example, symbols of difficult and unwholesome living, impoverished central cities, and isolated rural boondocks are also burdened by misperception. Negative stereotypes dominate these environments, and although not wholly inaccurate in terms of conventional economic and aesthetic measures, such generalizations obscure

the internal value they hold as lived-in places. Mining has created a symbolic landscape similarly stigmatized. In the popular imagination, mining landscapes—mineral extraction and processing areas and the adjacent settlements for mine workers—have become icons of dereliction and decay. For those who live in these places, however, these landscapes may function as meaningful communities and homes.

MINING HAS PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE QUEST FOR mineral wealth was a dominant motive in early European colonization of the New World. Although not as driven as their Spanish counterparts by a desire to exploit the continent's mineral riches, the colonists of British North America wasted little time developing mines once ores were discovered. The first American ironworks were established at Jamestown, Virginia, in the 1620s. By the 1700s, the Atlantic colonies were trading significant quantities of iron and smaller amounts of copper and gold. As the nation grew, mineral prospecting followed, and frequently drove, advancement of the settlement frontier. Mining provided an impetus for settlement in numerous western states. By the early 1800s, lead was being produced by American settlers in the Mississippi River valley of Missouri, Illinois, and Wisconsin. By mid-century, copper was being extracted from Michigan and iron from Minnesota, and intensive mining of coal—a fuel that fired the furnaces of the American Industrial Revolution—in Appalachia was underway. By the mid-nineteenth century, manufacturers in the nation's economic core—the American Manufacturing Belt—had come to depend on a steady flow of metals and fuels from an ever-expanding and resource-rich periphery. Growing demand for minerals in the manufacturing belt, the extension of the national railroad network, and a succession of precious metal “fevers” produced dramatic growth in American mining. Bituminous coalfields of the Midwest were developed. Later, mountain and plains deposits came into production. Gold came to dominate the mineral economy of California after the Gold Rush of 1848–1849, and the metal, along with silver, copper, lead, and other mineral commodities, created distinctive mining districts across the American West.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of more than two centuries of mining activity, the United States has numerous historic mining districts. Although each is distinctive, they tend to share a common economic history. Mining is the quintessential “boom and bust” industry. Individual mining operations may differ in terms of mineral commodities, richness of deposits, and operating lifespans, but the finite nature of mineral deposits almost always results in the demise of mining-dependent economies.<sup>3</sup>

Typically, once the likely existence of a profitable prospect was discovered, America's historic mining districts would experience periods of rapid growth. These boom years were characterized by substantial capital investment in mine workings, transportation systems, and settlement infrastructure. Hastily developed, many mining communities sprung into existence seemingly overnight, and

as a result of their isolation, they were often occupied by imported labor. North America's historic mining districts, particularly those originating in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, served as foci for European immigration.<sup>4</sup>

Inexorably, the quality and accessibility of mineral deposits declines and mines typically become less profitable over time. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, worker organization often placed a further strain on the profitability of mining operations as workers began to claim a larger share of the return from the mines' output.<sup>5</sup> Although technological innovations in mining and mineral processing and increases in commodity prices may extend their lifespans, all mines eventually cease to be profitable. As mines close, deindustrialization of the mining region begins. This sustained decline in mineral production and employment is sometimes accompanied by a rise in alternate industries. In the majority of historic mining areas, however, remote locations and poorly diversified economies have ensured economic stagnation and decline following mine closure.

As single-industry communities dependent on the extraction of nonrenewable resources, mining towns often fail to survive deindustrialization. The backcountry of the American West is dotted with onetime mining settlements that have succumbed to wholesale abandonment and ruination. These mining ghost towns are particularly common in districts that contained company-owned settlements where operators salvaged and raised company towns in an attempt to recoup investments in community infrastructure. It is important to recognize, however, that community annihilation is not an inevitable outcome of mining's demise. Mining communities often outlast their industrial usefulness. It is a phenomenon that has not been quantified, but the survival of large numbers of American mining towns suggests that many persist in the midst of decay.<sup>6</sup> For these settlements, a mine's closure is followed by a period of economic decline characterized by falling income levels and high rates of unemployment. Significant population loss involving out-migration of younger, working-age residents may also occur. Economic decline and depopulation erode the local tax base, resulting in the loss of public services and a decline in the quality of community infrastructure. Residents of onetime mining towns are typically older and poorer than their rural counterparts, and more often than not their settlements have a worn-out appearance.<sup>7</sup>

Mining has also created some of the country's most environmentally troubled landscapes. Few industries have such a profound and visible impact on the environment. As early as the sixteenth century, mining was recognized as a destructive force in Europe; and environmental problems created by mining began to concern the U.S. public in the 1880s. Indeed, mining was among the nation's first industries to be regulated on the basis of environmental concerns, and as the industry's footprint spread into the nation's diminishing wild lands so did awareness that mining severely impaired the quality of land, water, and air.<sup>8</sup>

Mining's most visible impact involves land disturbance. Mining and mineral processing produce two categories of surface alterations: features associated with

mineral extraction and those associated with deposits of mining, milling, and refining wastes. The former include shafts, pits, quarries, and subsidence depressions; the latter, piles of overburden and milling waste and deposits of slag and tailings. These land disturbances can produce radical changes in local topography, drainage systems, and vegetation regimes, and both aquatic and terrestrial habitats may suffer long-term harm. Mining also generates a variety of pollutants. Among the most problematic are those derived from the large volume of solid waste material that mining and mineral processing typically produce. Mining waste may contain reactive sulfides, minerals that when oxidized generate acid mine drainage and are the leading cause of diminished surface and groundwater quality in mining areas. In addition to emissions produced from mineral refining and metallurgical processing, mining wastes may also release toxic metals, stream-clogging sediments, and harmful particulates into the environment.<sup>9</sup>

### THE MINING IMAGINARY

Historical geographer Richard Francaviglia has described mining regions as “hard places,” areas whose residents are burdened by amply documented economic, social, and environmental problems. Less often recognized, however, is that those who call these difficult places home bear the additional burden of living in regions with pronounced image problems. There exists a long tradition of scholarly and literary description equating mining landscapes with dereliction and decay. Lewis Mumford’s commentary in *Technics and Civilization*, a classic critique of industrial society in which mining plays a prominent role, attests to this fact. “Taking mining regions as a whole,” he writes, “they are the very image of backwardness, isolation, raw animosities and lethal struggles. From the Rand to the Klondike, from the coal mines of South Wales to those of West Virginia, from the modern iron mines of Minnesota to the ancient silver mines of Greece, barbarism colors the entire picture.”<sup>10</sup>

Mumford was the first scholar to seriously consider the links between mining and modernity, but he has hardly stood alone in condemning the industry’s physical and social influences.<sup>11</sup> Prior to examining these critical appraisals, however, it is worth noting that as recently as the early twentieth century, mining’s transformational effects were often viewed as symbols of progress, particularly in frontier mining districts and during the boom years of industrial development. Early mining activity in America was frequently celebrated for its ability to transform wilderness into economically useful space. As historian Duane Smith has described, frontier-era mining environments inspired admiration: “The land existed then solely to yield its bountiful mineral blessings to onrushing Americans who had the grit and determination (and, one might add, luck) to find them.”<sup>12</sup>

Favorable opinions of the industry’s influence began to wane as mining economies matured in the twentieth century and positive descriptions of industrial

progress were replaced by a powerful set of negative stereotypes. Modern accounts of mining regions recurrently evoke images of landscape dereliction. The following excerpt from a 1962 Department of the Interior study on mining and its environmental effects provides a vivid example: “Our derelict acreage [abandoned mine land] is made up of tens of thousands of separate patches. In some regions they are often close together. Where one acre in ten is laid waste, the whole landscape is disfigured. The face of the earth is riddled with abandoned mineral workings packed with subsidence, gashed with quarries, littered with disused plant structures and piled high with dross and debris, and spoil and slag. . . . [The mining landscape] debases as well as disgraces our civilization.” Indeed, the use of a common set of adjectives to describe the appearance of mining areas—“ugly,” “ruined,” and “wasted” are among the most prevalent—shows that these places are associated with misuse and failure. As Francaviglia properly observes, “[W]hen compared with the rolling farmland or wilderness so prevalent in our imagery of scenery, mining country does not fare well. . . . [O]bservers are likely to characterize mining country as a ruined, hellish wasteland.”<sup>13</sup>

Geographer Gavin Bridge more precisely details the origins of unfavorable opinion. Bridge explores what he calls “the mining imaginary,” popular idealizations of mining and its landscape effects. Reflecting the industry’s visible impacts on environments and communities, like Francaviglia, Bridge suggests that objections to mining mirror societal misgivings to the visual intrusion of industrial activities into rural spaces. “Portrayed as an irreverent intrusion or a jarring juxtaposition symbolic of modernization,” he writes, “mines are frequently described (in art, literature, and travelers’ accounts) as either disrupting the natural sublime or terminating a pastoral idyll.” Bridge reveals, however, that negative perceptions are also rooted in a belief that mining’s physical assaults affect the morality of mining societies. The existence of a morally disruptive “culture of massive disturbance” has been observed by mining scholars, who are apt to contrast the moral landscape of mining to that of an imagined space of preindustrial integrity and harmony. “In many accounts,” Bridge explains, “the technologies and rationalities of mining intrude to produce a ‘dis-spirit of place’ . . . mental changes that are interpreted as a fall from grace.” In fact, in many historic mining regions, conditions of blight, lawlessness, depression, and fatalism have been explained in the context of a “derelict land mentality,” a psychological insensibility alleged to be the product of daily interaction with a deranged and corrupting environment.<sup>14</sup>

Although images of dereliction often surface in descriptions of mining areas where the industry remains active, as a regional characterization dereliction tends to emerge most strongly in historic mining areas where deindustrialization has amplified and left bare an array of social, economic, and environmental problems. Deprived of their founding industry—their reason for being—and appearing idle, disordered, and environmentally abused, historic mining regions carry a

particularly unfavorable aesthetic. Collectively, depictions of mining along with the environments and communities it produces have served to create a symbolic landscape. In the societal imagination, historic mining towns are emblems of decay and debasing moral influence. This portrayal is so prevalent that many historic mining regions—Appalachia is perhaps the best example—have become synonymous with failure and decay.<sup>15</sup>

## PLACE, IDENTITY, AND THE MINING LANDSCAPE

Not all mining landscapes have become symbols of dereliction, and every mining settlement does not evoke repulse. Sometimes, historic mining towns stand as curious relics of a romanticized frontier age. Preserved in a state of arrested decay, the ghost town of Bodie, California, is now a state historic park, attracting some 200,000 visitors each year. Other historic mining towns have avoided dereliction or rebounded from its effects. Communities like Cripple Creek and Aspen, Colorado, where mining-based heritage tourism and outdoor recreation have produced opportunities for rejuvenation, show that dereliction is not an inevitable fate. Likewise, the unique settings of some historic mining towns, such as Bisbee, Arizona, have facilitated their evolution into artists' colonies or retreats for alternative life-stylers. On the whole, however, these are exceptional cases. Unlike Bodie, most historic mining towns that have succumbed to ghost-town status have perished without notice. Unlike Cripple Creek, Aspen, or Bisbee, those that survive mine closure mostly struggle to survive. Unfortunately, the unfavorable opinions of mining environments are often warranted. Yet, as is common of symbolic landscapes, these presumptions obscure important aspects of life and landscape in mining regions and, in some cases, have perpetuated outright falsehoods.

A case in point is the belief that mining settlements are impermanent. True, like the mineral deposits their economies relied on, many mining settlements experienced finite life-spans. The fact that a portion of a mining town's workforce was often transitory—bachelor miners in particular were highly mobile—has also reinforced their image as temporary settlements. This condition of impermanence is one of the mining community's most domineering images. It is also, however, an overgeneralization that has had a detrimental influence on our understanding of mining areas. As a result of their assumed impermanence, the persistence of historic mining towns, a phenomenon discussed earlier in this chapter, has not been given adequate attention. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in regional mining histories, the majority of which ignore the post-mining years or at best treat them in epilogue fashion.<sup>16</sup> The end of mining usually signals an end to the historical narratives of these "temporary" locales; and readers are left with the false impression that mining communities have rich pasts but inconsequential futures.



Moreover, as the comments of classics scholar James D. Muhly show, the belief that mining towns are impermanent also reinforces a myth that the ties binding their residents to place are weak or nonexistent. Historic mining towns, he alleges, “are most likely to be ephemeral affairs, created by individuals who always saw their residence at the site as temporary.” Muhly erroneously concludes, “[M]ining provides a community of occupation, not a community of place,” a falsehood that those residing in onetime mining towns would quickly have refuted had care been taken to consider their views. Alarming, however, Muhly’s oversight is common in mining-related literature, little of which has attempted to refine the myths of the mining imaginary through direct engagement with the inhabitants of mining regions.<sup>17</sup> This book attempts to remedy that oversight.

To date, few studies of historic mining areas have attempted to convey their inner qualities as lived-in places. As a result, the persistence of historic mining towns and, more importantly, their internal value as communities and homes remain largely unrecognized. In truth, mining communities are rarely viewed as decayed and debasing locales by their inhabitants. Indeed, that the views of residents might lie in opposition to dominant societal perceptions should come as no surprise. As long recognized by cultural geographers, notions of dereliction, like all judgments made of landscapes, are highly subjective.<sup>18</sup> This point is raised not to deny the troubles and hardships that exist in mining areas but to show that there are other stories to be told about mining environments, which despite their shortcomings, may have a positive influence on their residents. In fact, mining’s physical and social legacies are often central to a community’s “sense of place” and may serve as a foundation on which local identity is structured and maintained.

These qualities of the mining landscape are the central focus of this work. This book interprets the historic mining town’s meaning as *place*, a term that refers to the landscape’s function as a center of meaning. All inhabited landscapes hold cultural meaning, emotional significance that is a product of interaction with the land over time. These less observable facets of landscape include its atmosphere and sentimental value. The phrase “sense of place” is also used to describe these meanings. Commonly, sense of place refers to the positive attachments people hold for the environments in which they live, those intangible qualities, built up over time, that make landscapes “special and worth defending.”<sup>19</sup>

Attachments to place are an essential part of the human experience. “I do not think that one can survive as a human creature,” writes geographer Peirce Lewis, “without special attachments to special places.” A part of what makes places special is their capacity to provide inhabitants with a sense of rootedness, described by anthropologist Keith Basso as “an enduring affinity with known localities and the ways of life they sponsor.”<sup>20</sup> Moreover, this sense of belonging may also provide a foundation on which local identities are structured. A rich area of contemporary landscape scholarship is the study of these people-place connections, whereby landscapes are recognized to be visible entities that both reflect and

constitute individual and social-group identities.<sup>21</sup> In short, landscapes reinforce a sense of who we are. Kent C. Ryden explains:

Part of the sentiment which people feel for places derives from the feelings of identification that they form with those places. We commonly and casually identify ourselves in terms of geographical labels, as being Midwesterners or New Yorkers; more important, if we feel that our present selves are inextricably bound to our pasts—that our lives have historical continuity, that we are the products of our past experiences—and if we tie memory to the landscape, then in contemplating place we contemplate ourselves. . . . This sense of identity may be one of the strongest of the feelings with which we regard places. . . . [T]his feeling of identity helps give order, structure, and value to the geographical world.<sup>22</sup>

The meanings ascribed to place are difficult to uniformly define as they often vary across places over time.<sup>23</sup> Place perceptions may differ across generations. They may also be influenced by aspects of social identity, such as gender, age, ethnicity, and class. In addition, place meanings may be multiple and conflicting, and they may be contested by individuals or groups living within the same region. Internal debates may exist over the meaning of place. So, too, debates over place values commonly occur across perspectival divides. That is, landscapes often hold different meaning for insiders (the residents of place) and outsiders (visitors or observers). This divide holds especially true for visually unpleasing and seemingly derelict places like historic mining towns. By and large, the mining imaginary, that popular body of images that defines society's view of mining landscapes, represents the external view of place. As I show in this book, however, these popular perceptions are incomplete.

Mining landscapes hold different meanings for residents and outsiders. In his 1987 article "Continuity and Decline in the Anthracite Towns of Pennsylvania," for example, geographer Ben Marsh expertly interprets the paradoxical nature of place perception in defunct mining towns. With a focus on onetime coal mining communities in eastern Pennsylvania, Marsh's work remains the definitive study on place and the mining landscape. "By conventional economic or demographic measures, and by the normal standards of landscape esthetics, this is the least attractive part of Pennsylvania," he writes. In terms of their local value, however, Marsh notes that these communities are considered fine and distinctive places to live. Arrays of economic, social, and environmental problems exist in these communities, but residents maintain a strong commitment to place. "The residents of the anthracite towns of Pennsylvania show a considerable loyalty to a landscape that provides them with little of material value," Marsh explains. "This should remind the observer that any broad concept of place must address two different aspects of a landscape: the physical support it provides (*means*) and the intangible rewards it offers (*meaning*)."<sup>24</sup>

Marsh calls this phenomena the “duality of place,” explaining that “place is partly the *means* an area provides for its own continuation, but also the *meaning* derived from its past for its continuation.”<sup>25</sup> In the mining imaginary, a popular image of the historic mining region has been constructed that is based almost exclusively on observations of the land’s limited *means*. Yet, although mining landscapes may offer little in the way of material reward, as Marsh has shown they often hold emotional significance. Expanding on Marsh’s pioneering work, I aim to dispel the perception that mining landscapes are necessarily derelict and morally debasing locales, an abstract external viewpoint that not only fails to recognize the internal value of historic mining regions but adds additional obstacles to addressing their myriad problems.

In the chapters that follow, the experiential qualities of place are explored in three historic mining towns from the mineral discovery phase through mine closure and deindustrialization. A broad range of place perceptions held by residents and outsiders is interpreted and compared to capture the varied and often conflicting meanings these areas hold as they cycle through the boom and bust stages of a mineral-dependent economy. Through this study, a new story of the historic mining town is presented, one that draws attention to its inner value as a community and home and emphasizes the roles mining landscapes play in maintaining and reinforcing local identities.

The study of place and identity in historic mining regions is not uncharted territory, but it is a subject lacking explicit focus. A fragmented body of research by historians, geographers, planners, sociologists, and others provides indirect insight into people-place relationships by way of investigation into related avenues of study. Regional mining histories, for example, usually focus on the social and economic evolution of specific mining communities, and many provide excellent insight into the lives of ordinary people. Consequently, regional histories can serve as resources for the study of place, the meaning of which is rooted in local history and resident experiences. Direct interpretation of place, however, or of the mining landscape’s social significance rarely occurs in regional mining histories or in other mining literature. Even when it does, analysis is often limited to the landscape’s role as a material symbol of defunct technologies and industrial systems.<sup>26</sup> Mining environments, however, hold broader and more far-reaching local meaning that most social research has left unexplored. As anthropologist Kathleen Stewart has observed in the coal camps of West Virginia, “[T]he detritus of history piled high on the local landscape has become central to a sense of place.”<sup>27</sup>

As already noted, regional mining histories tend to overlook the place-based attachments that exist in mining communities that have survived mine closure, and a similar oversight exists in other mining-related research. As Douglas Porteous observes in his review of social research on single-industry communities, including mining towns, scholars have paid far more attention to the rise of industry and

community than to their decline. “Clearly the boom end of the boom and bust cycle,” he writes, “has been deemed more exciting and lucrative.” Of particular concern, Porteous maintains, is the lack of research on the reactions of impacted populations in these failing places.<sup>28</sup>

Notable exceptions, however, do exist. A handful of scholars have explored the perceptual qualities of mining landscapes and their work provides a foundation on which this book builds. Despite the myriad problems that exist in historic mining areas, residents often retain positive visions of place. Marsh has observed this phenomenon in the anthracite valley of Pennsylvania. So, too, has social historian Thomas Dublin. Similar observations have been made by geographers William Wyckoff and Christopher Davies in historic mining districts in Montana and Wales, respectively; by American studies scholar Kent Ryden in Idaho; and by anthropologists Kathleen Stewart and Leslie Robertson in West Virginia and British Columbia, respectively. Notable as well is the multidisciplinary work *Coping with Closure: An International Comparison of Mine Town Experiences*, in which several case studies show “that it would be a mistake to underestimate the attachment of local residents to mining communities.”<sup>29</sup>

Collectively, this small but important body of research shows that mining can create cohesive communities whose residents exhibit a deep and lasting commitment to place. In historic mining towns, attachment to place is rooted in mining-era experiences. The physical toil and danger of mining, historically among the most strenuous and hazardous of all occupations, created common hardships that brought miners and their families together. The meager and unpredictable wages also created a shared need for support. Day-to-day survival required cooperation, and labor organizations and ethnic groups provided networks for resident bonding that strengthened a sense of belonging to a community.

Products of the mining past, these qualities often continue to shape life in mining towns long after the industry’s local demise. Community continuity, memories of the mining past, and the stories residents share of the mining way of life become a folklore passed down from one generation to the next and ensure that these aspects of place are not forgotten. The mining landscape also reminds residents of their mining heritage. Built structures and environments—miners’ houses, neighborhoods, and commercial districts—as well as the remnants of mineral extraction and processing—industrial structures, mine sites, and waste piles—are reminders of the town’s reason for being. They may also function as distinctive icons of home. A venue for the expression of common experiences, the mining landscape plays an important role in maintaining a collective sense of place. It provides a context for local existence, an attribute that can be especially powerful for immigrant miners and their relatives for whom mining represents the beginning of their lives in America. The labor and sacrifice of friends and family who toiled in the mines may also be embodied in the mining landscape. Frequently, mining’s physical legacies come to memorialize those who died in the

mines, particularly in communities where no formal miners' memorial has been constructed.

The mining landscape also reinforces individual and social-group identities. Mining communities identify with the rugged severity of a landscape and a life that has always been rich but difficult. In many ways, the land's tough, unpretentious, and toil-worn appearance mirror qualities of self-worth. Mining landscapes remind them that they are members of strong, hardworking, and persevering communities. In fact, the physical and economic challenges of mining life often produce communities with a marked ability to endure. The inhabitants of historic mining towns "get by," Marsh writes, "because they are so good at getting by. That skill is their heritage." This will to survive helps explain why, when given even marginal opportunity and resources to survive mine closure, mining communities frequently persist.<sup>30</sup>

As past scholarly research suggests, mining landscapes are perceptually complex. Through a focused, comparative analysis of place and identity in three separate mining towns, this book advances our understanding of the value they hold as enduring communities and homes. It is important to note, however, that such insight is of more than academic relevance. Traditionally, place research has been used to further our understanding of regions and to provide insight into the lives of geographical "others."<sup>31</sup> Increasingly, this research also is being recognized to have pragmatic relevance. By detailing the different perceptions residents and outsiders hold of historic mining regions and by considering the ways these meanings have shaped responses to problems in these regions, this book shows that an understanding of place has material applications that reach beyond historic mining towns.

On a continent where economic development has been fueled in large part by the exploitation of a seemingly limitless natural resource base and in a continually urbanizing, restructuring, and globalizing economy, derelict landscapes are numerous. North America contains failing rural communities and urban zones of numberless variety, including onetime oil boomtowns, logging and fishing villages, factory and mill towns, agricultural communities, and inner-city neighborhoods. Like historic mining towns, life struggles on in these locales. Despite their disadvantages, however, multitudes of "derelict" communities remain rich with personal meaning.<sup>32</sup> Attachments to place exhibited in mining towns serve to remind us, Ryden writes, "that the marginal can (and should) be seen as meaningful—that the obscure backwater that the outsider may view in a negative light can be a positive, nurturing place for the people who live there."<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, although the industrial past may leave positive imprints on local culture—solidifying societies, giving meaning to place, and reinforcing local identity—its negative legacies—economic decline and environmental degradation—also threaten the very survival of mining communities.<sup>34</sup> Place analysis reveals this predicament and provides specific insight into how such problems might be mediated.

Place meaning often guides individual and collective actions. Place is a powerful social influence in natural resource politics, where decisions regarding the management of environmental resources can transform place meanings around which individuals and group identities may be structured. By unearthing these less-tangible environmental values, place-based perspectives can provide more nuanced data than are typically available to environmental decision-makers. It can also transform the decision-making processes themselves by “redistributing power to voices and meanings that may not otherwise be expressed.”<sup>35</sup> Place is recognized as a “humane and responsible way by which to approach larger questions of environmental prudence.”<sup>36</sup> In historic mining regions, for example, questions surrounding the social benefits and costs of renewed mining activity may exist that place analysis can at least partially address. Likewise, as is shown in the case studies presented in this book, abandoned mine land remediation policy can be informed by place analysis. Locally acceptable reclamation and restoration programs require an understanding of the emotional value mining landscapes hold for their inhabitants.

Place meanings influence planning and cultural resource management politics as well. Planner Kevin Lynch said it best: “[T]he human experience of a landscape is as fundamental as any other factor and should be considered from the first.”<sup>37</sup> Considerable planning challenges exist in onetime mining towns and development decisions can influence their future viability as habitable settlements. Depopulation, economic decline, and decaying infrastructure are critical issues whose address requires consideration of the needs and desires of those who still live and work in these communities.<sup>38</sup> Again, the case studies that follow highlight this fact. They also confirm that effective planning recognizes the need to maintain locally meaningful elements of the landscape.

Stewardship of historic resources also requires an understanding of place. Because the mining past plays an important role in maintaining a sense of place and reinforcing self and social-group identities, local support often exists for retaining mining’s physical legacies. Preservation of mining landscapes, however, is a challenging task often complicated by the fact that the objects of historical and emotional significance may be hazardous to the environment and public health. From the outsider’s perspective, they may also appear visually blighting. Balancing historic preservation objectives with environmental quality concerns, and overcoming negative outside biases inhibiting recognition that the mining landscape may contain something worthy of preserving, are problems faced by each community in this book.

Noted landscape scholar J. B. Jackson wrote often of the importance of abandoning the spectator stance when evaluating the worth of landscapes, whatever their form. Every planner, landscape architect, and conservationist, he believed, has an obligation to rethink what a landscape is worth to the people who inhabit it. The human landscape, Jackson wrote, is the “product of much sweat and hard-

ship and earnest thought; we should never look at it without remembering that, and we should never tinker with the landscape without thinking of those who live in the midst of it—whether in a trailer in an oil field or in a city tenement.”<sup>39</sup> Jackson’s heartfelt plea also applies to historic mining towns, where widely held perceptions of dereliction cast an unsympathetic shadow. The mining imaginary obscures the value that these former mining towns hold as centers of human experience. This oversight is not a trivial matter as conflict between an inhospitable environment and a commitment to place is creating a difficult future for the residents of many historic mining regions.

By and large, the historic mining towns presented in this book represent unexamined places whose regional histories, the foundations on which past and present place perceptions are grounded, have not been carefully interpreted. The chapters that follow tell the story of evolving place meaning in Toluca, Illinois; Cokedale, Colorado; and Picher, Oklahoma (Map 1.1). A brief concluding chapter compares experiences in the case studies and presents closing observations.

Rural communities with populations in 2000 of approximately 1,300 (Toluca), 140 (Cokedale), and 1,700 (Picher), these mining towns have experienced the boom-and-bust cycle of a mineral-dependent economy. As early twentieth-century mining settlements, they endured significant economic decline and population loss following mine closure. Despite these and other commonalities, however, it would be unwise to suggest that Toluca, Cokedale, and Picher represent the experiences of every American mining town. They do, however, represent many.

Each mining town occupies a different physical and cultural region of the central United States: Toluca is located in the Central Lowlands of the Midwest; Cokedale, in the Southern Rocky Mountains; and Picher, on the border of the Ozark Plateau of the Upland South. Their industrial and social histories also differ. Toluca and Cokedale were coal mining towns; Picher was a hard-rock mining settlement producing lead and zinc. Many first-generation European immigrants settled Toluca and Cokedale, whereas Picher contained a predominantly Anglo-American workforce. Cokedale is the only study site that was a company town and it was owned and operated by a single mining firm. Mining’s operational lifespans also varied in each of these communities. Toluca is the oldest; its mine closed in 1924 after thirty-one years of operation. Cokedale’s mines lasted forty-one years, closing in 1947. Picher is the youngest of the three communities. Productive for more than fifty years, the last of Picher’s mines closed in the late 1960s. The study sites also show different outcomes of deindustrialization. From a socioeconomic standpoint, Toluca’s economy is faring relatively well, but Cokedale is only now beginning to recover from the shock of deindustrialization. Its economy is showing modest signs of rejuvenation and its population has stabilized. Picher, however, is a community still struggling to survive. Out-migration continues and Picher’s economy remains severely depressed.

The mining landscapes of each community are also unique and mining's physical legacies have created different challenges. These include planning problems, and historic preservation and environmental remediation concerns. Although light manufacturing and agriculture now dominate the economy and landscape of Toluca, its residents have not forgotten their mining past. The most significant features remaining from the mining era are two mounds of coal mining waste that residents have affectionately named "the Jumbos." Beginning in the 1980s, conflicts arose over the future of these landmarks, spurring the community to rally for their protection. These efforts were successful and in the late 1990s a reclamation plan was initiated that protected the environment and preserved the Jumbos. In contrast to Toluca's residents, the residents of Cokedale and Picher occupy landscapes that are thoroughly dominated by visual reminders of the mining past. Cokedale was given National Register Historic District status in 1981 and is one of the country's best-preserved company coal mining towns. Although local identity in Cokedale is closely bound to the mining landscape, the complex issues of heritage interpretation and preservation planning remain unresolved. In Picher, industrial ruins and mining waste litter the local landscape and its citizens are plagued by a host of mining-related environmental problems that threaten Picher's very existence. The town was designated an EPA Superfund site in the early 1980s, yet many retain a deep attachment to the land. As all of the study sites show, a sense of place and identity remains intimately tied to the mining landscape. Residents share mining histories that continue to give meaning to land and life.

## NOTES

1. D. W. Meinig, "Symbolic Landscapes: Some Idealizations of American Communities," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 164, 172–173.

2. Early American mining and ironmaking are discussed by Otis E. Young and Robert Lenon, *Western Mining; An Informal Account of Precious-Metals Prospecting, Placing, Lode Mining, and Milling on the American Frontier, from Spanish Times to 1893* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970). For the history of Western mining, see William Greever, *Bonanza West: The Story of the Western Mining Rushes, 1848–1880* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963); Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Mining Camps: The Urban Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967); Clark Spence, *Mining Engineers and the American West: The Lace-Boot Brigade, 1849–1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); and Mark Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic: Western Miners and the Industrial Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

3. Homer Aschmann, "The Natural History of a Mine," *Economic Geography* 46:2 (1970): 171–190.

4. For readings on mining and ethnicity, see A. L. Rowse, *The Cousin Jacks: The Cornish in America* (New York: Scribner, 1969); David Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875–1925* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,



1989); and Susan L. Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).

5. Notable works in mining labor history include Vernon H. Jenson, *Heritage of Conflict: Labor Relations in the Non-Ferrous Metals Industry up to 1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950); Richard Lingenfelter, *Hard Rock Miners: A History of the Mining Labor Movement in the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); and Priscilla Long, *Where the Sun Never Shines: A History of America's Bloody Coal Industry* (New York: Paragon House, 1989).

6. Douglas Porteous makes this claim in *Planned to Death: The Annihilation of a Place Called Howdendyke* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 229.

7. For readings on the economic and social impact of deindustrialization in single-industry communities, see Art Gallaher and Harland Padfield, eds., *The Dying Community* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1980); Roy Tyler Bowles, *Little Communities and Big Industries* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1982); and Porteous, *Planned to Death*. Mine closure is analyzed in Cecily Neil, Markku Tykkilainen, and John Bradbury, eds., *Coping with Closure: An International Comparison of Mine Town Experiences* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

8. Richard V. Francaviglia, *Hard Places: Reading the Landscape of America's Historic Mining Districts* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 214. Clarence Glacken describes Georgius Agricola's defense of sixteenth-century European mining in *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 468–469. The historical impact of mining in the United States and awareness of the industry's environmental harm are detailed by Duane A. Smith in *Mining America: The Industry and the Environment, 1800–1980* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987).

9. Earle A. Ripley, Robert E. Redmann, and Adele A. Crowder, *Environmental Effects of Mining* (Delray Beach, FL: St. Lucie Press, 1996).

10. Francaviglia, *Hard Places*, 9; Kenneth L. Wallwork, *Derelict Land: Origins and Prospects of a Land-Use Problem* (London: David & Charles, 1974), 19; Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), 73.

11. Mumford's analysis of mining and its societal affects is discussed by Gavin Bridge in "Contested Terrain: Mining and the Environment," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 29 (2004): 245. In addition, a large body of research in the physical sciences details mining's environmental impacts. Social scientists and historians have also considered a broad range of mining-related topics, but a focus on the social and economic maladies of mining areas links much of this research. Likewise, the works of novelists and journalists exhibit similar themes and many of the most enduring depictions of mining landscapes exist in popular literature. Upton Sinclair's *King Coal*, Emile Zola's *Germinal*, Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley*, and Henry Caudill's *Night Comes to the Cumberland*s, for example, provide powerful accounts of industrial exploitation, social and economic hardship, and environmental abuse. These and other widely read "place-defining" works have assigned powerful meaning to mining locales. See Upton Sinclair, *King Coal* (New York: Macmillan, 1917); Emile Zola, *Germinal* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1937); Richard Llewellyn, *How Green Was My Valley* (New York: Macmillan, 1940); Harry M. Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberland*s: A Biography of a Depressed Area (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1962). Place-defining literature is

discussed by James R. Shortridge, "The Concept of the Place-Defining Novel in American Popular Culture," *Professional Geographer* 43:3 (1991): 280–291.

12. Smith, *Mining America*, 5.

13. According to John Jakle and David Wilson, derelict landscapes are dominated by visual symbols of disinvestment, vacancy, and degradation. See *Derelict Landscapes: The Wasting of America's Built Environment* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992), 9; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Surface Mining and Our Environment* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1962), 51–52, quoted in John W. Simpson, "The Emotional Landscape and Public Law 95-87," *Landscape Architecture* 75:3 (1985): 60–63, 108–109, 112–113; Francaviglia, *Hard Places*, 9.

14. Bridge, "Contested Terrain," 243–244; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Surface Mining and Our Environment*, 51–52, quoted in Simpson, "The Emotional Landscape," 60. Discussion of a "derelict land mentality" is also included in Jakle and Wilson, *Derelict Landscapes*, 9; David H. Loof, "Growing Up in a Dying Community," *The Dying Community*, ed. A. Gallaher and H. Padfield (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1980), 225; and Wallwork, *Derelict Land*, 294.

15. For example, Simpson writes: "Each of us has vivid mental images of ravaged Appalachian mountains, orange-colored streams clogged with mud, and the abject poverty hidden in the back hollows of the region." See Simpson, "The Emotional Landscape," 60. See also Loof, "Growing Up in a Dying Community," 224.

16. Two notable exceptions are Peter Goin and C. Elizabeth Raymond's *Changing Mines in America* (Santa Fe: The Center for American Places, 2004) and Eric L. Clements's *After the Boom in Tombstone and Jerome, Arizona: Decline in Western Resource Towns* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003).

17. James D. Muhly, "Foreword," in *Social Approaches to an Industrial Past: The Archaeology and Anthropology of Mining*, ed. A. Bernard Knapp, Vincent C. Pigott, and Eugenia W. Herbert (New York: Routledge, 1998), xv.

18. See Jakle and Wilson, *Derelict Landscapes*, 9; David Lowenthal, "Not Every Prospect Pleases," in *Changing Rural Landscapes*, ed. E. H. Zube and M. J. Zube (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), 129–139; and D.W. Meinig, ed., "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. D. W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 33–48.

19. James Duncan, "Place," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, ed. R. J. Johnston, D. Gregory, and D. M. Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 442–443; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 138; David Seamon, "Phenomenology and Environment-Behavior Research," in *Advances in Environment, Behavior, and Design*, ed. G. T. Moore and E. Zube (New York: Plenum, 1987), 10; Peirce Lewis, "Defining a Sense of Place," *The Southern Quarterly* 17:3 (1979): 29.

20. Lewis, "Defining a Sense of Place," 29; Keith H. Basso, "Wisdom Sits in Places," in *Senses of Place*, ed. S. Feld and K. H. Basso, eds. (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 83.

21. Richard H. Schein, "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87:4 (1997): 660.

22. Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 39–40.

23. Antony S. Cheng, Linda E. Kruger, and Steven E. Daniels, "'Place' as an Integrating Concept in Natural Resource Politics: Propositions for a Social Science Research Agenda," *Society and Natural Resources* 16 (2003): 88.
24. Ben Marsh, "Continuity and Decline in the Anthracite Towns of Pennsylvania," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77:3 (1987): 337.
25. Ibid., 338. Marsh sites Shotter for the conceptualization of place duality. See John Shotter, "'Duality of structure' and 'Intentionality' in an Ecological Psychology," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 13 (1983): 19–43.
26. Mining-related research in industrial preservation and archaeology has tended to focus on these aspects of the mining landscape's significance. See Robert L.S. Spude, David A. Poirier, and Ronald M. Greenberg, eds., *America's Mining Heritage* (Washington, DC: National Parks Service, 1998); and Arnold R. Alanen, "Considering the Ordinary: Vernacular Landscapes in Small Towns and Rural Areas," in *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, ed. A. R. Alanen and R. Z. Melnick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 112–142.
27. Kathleen Stewart, "An Occupied Place," in *Senses of Place*, ed. S. Feld and K. H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 137.
28. Porteous, *Planned to Death*, 227–230. Randall Rohe makes a similar claim in "The Geography and Material Culture of the Western Mining Town," *Material Culture* 16 (1984): 115.
29. Marsh, "Continuity and Decline"; Thomas Dublin, *When the Mines Closed: Stories of Struggles in Hard Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); William Wyckoff, "Postindustrial Butte," *The Geographical Review* 85:4 (1995): 478–496; Christopher S. Davies, "Wales: Industrial Fallibility and Spirit of Place," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 4:1 (1983): 72–86; Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*; Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Leslie A. Robertson, *Imagining Difference: Legend, Curse, and Spectacle in a Canadian Mining Town* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005); Cecily Neil and Markku Tykkäläinen, "Introduction," in *Coping with Closure*, 19.
30. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 152; Marsh, "Continuity and Decline," 350.
31. Cary W. de Wit, "Field Methods for Investigating Sense of Place," *North American Geographer* 5:1–2 (2003): 5–30.
32. Marsh makes this claim in "Continuity and Decline," 351.
33. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 103.
34. See Marsh, "Continuity and Decline," 337–339.
35. Cheng, Kruger, and Daniels, "'Place' As an Integrating Concept," 89, 98, 100.
36. Jonathan M. Smith, Andrew Light, and David Roberts, "Introduction: Philosophies and Geographies of Place," in *Philosophies of Place*, ed. A. Light and J. M. Smith (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 6.
37. Kevin Lynch, *Managing the Sense of a Region* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), 3–4.
38. For a critical discussion of place attachment and planning policy in derelict environments, see John A. Agnew, "Devaluing Place: 'People Prosperity Versus Place Prosperity' and Regional Planning," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 1 (1984): 35–45.
39. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, "Goodbye to Evolution," *Landscape* 13:1 (1963): 2.