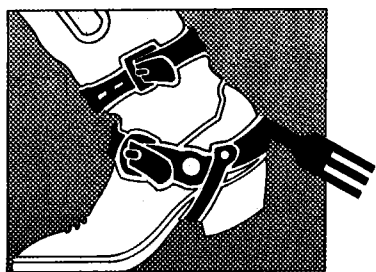


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Earp, tearing apart the standard biographies that emerged in the 1920s, replacing the heroic lawman with a less-than-upright brawler event by event, town by town, from youth to death. But Isenberg goes beyond chopping down another cherry tree myth to use the demythologized Earp as a representative man, a solid sample of the ideal man of a period between the sturdy yeoman pillar of the community of the early nineteenth century and the celebrity on whom the spotlight of the last hundred years has never stopped shining. For a lifetime, anything was possible, and Earp was the self-made and remade man of the era par excellence.

Where the work falls short is in not developing at any length the rise of the Earp legend. Isenberg starts pretty much from the assumption that the legend is there and needs taking down, and he doesn't spend much time beyond using the early biographies as foil for his exploration of Earp's life on the move. He probably spends more time discussing the nature of the cattle towns, the beef industry, and the gold mines of the West, the settings for Earp's mythologized and actual exploits. When it comes to biography, Isenberg's major contention is that Earp held on to his story until he died and only after his death did the biographers and movie makers have a field day with the myth. *Wyatt Earp* unmakes a self-made man, debunks a minor myth, illustrates a neglected aspect of the nineteenth-century West, and provides a contrast to the twentieth-century portrayals of the past.

*John H. Barnhill
Houston, Texas*

Gambling on Ore

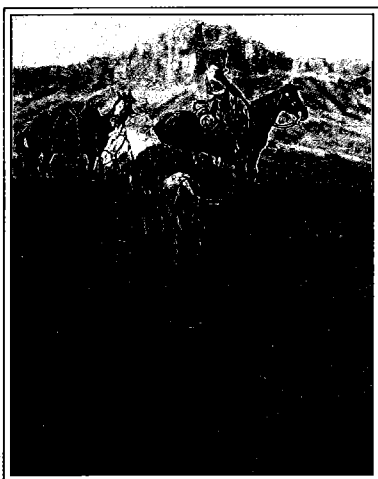
THE NATURE OF METAL MINING IN
THE UNITED STATES, 1860-1910

Kent A. Curtis

University Press of Colorado, Boulder, 2013. \$39.95 cloth.

Gambling on Ore is the latest attempt by an environmental historian to make sense of the history and impact of industrial mining in America and specifically the American West. The fundamental paradox that this book and others address is how to reconcile the profound environmental and human cost of industrial mining with the basic material fact that mined products are the foundation of modern life.

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The book has many strengths, including a well-written narrative and some especially noteworthy original drawings. When the scope of Anaconda's pollution is considered, it is easy for historians and readers to react with incredulous indignation, but Curtis carefully navigates that line and assists the reader in doing so by showing how his own ideas on the topic evolved. Curtis's emphasis on Montana as a case study permits him to use chronology in a rigorously analytical fashion, which makes his explanation of the transition from scattered gold rushes to lode mining one of the most convincing I've read.

I do have some mild critiques. Curtis overplays the influence of the so-called "Freiberg Men" in shaping hard-rock mining practice and policy in the early years, and conversely underestimates the value of technical expertise from Spanish precedents and practical experience generated in other places in the West. Many of the early Butte experts, including George Hearst and Marcus Daly, learned about mining on the Comstock and did not have a formal technical education. Curtis acknowledges this, but argues they "absorbed" the techniques of the European-trained engineers (p. 131). Even when Freiberg-trained engineer Rossiter W. Raymond takes Montanans to task for their lack of smelting knowledge, he contrasts their situation not with European excellence, but instead with other successful western districts in Nevada, California, and Colorado (pp. 95–96). There are also some occasional mistakes, such as the description of pan amalgamation (p. 82); the inclusion of Leadville, Colorado, as a subject of study by Clarence King and James Hague in 1870 (p. 87); and the consolidation of "all Butte mines" into Amalgamated by 1906 (p. 156, caption).

These shortcomings are minor, however, in the context of the book as a whole. Curtis's powerful analysis and wide contextual range should make this book appeal to a large audience of scholars in environmental history and the history of the American West, and its length, readability, and breadth of interpretation would make it valuable in graduate seminars in both areas. His innovative take on Montana's mining heritage should justify its addition to the library of anyone interested in the state's history. I hope this deserving book is read widely.

Eric C. Nystrom

Rochester Institute of Technology, New York