

"Through the Light Hole"

By Patrick Farrell, North Country Books, Utica, New York, 1996

REVIEW BY RICHARD CIPPERLY

Farrell describes his book as a "Saga of Adirondack Mines and Men," leading the reader to believe we are going to learn a great deal about the early mining industry in the Adirondacks. This is really not the case, however, as the book is truly a comprehensive history of the discovery and development of the now-closed Republic Steel mining operations in the vicinity of Port Henry and Mineville along the Champlain Valley.

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For those interested in early Adirondack mining in the Champlain Valley the first chapter dealing with pre-Revolutionary War discovery and early mining activity is particularly interesting. Did you know that Ethan Allen used a captured ore boat to cross Lake Champlain and attack Fort Ticonderoga? Or that Benedict Arnold, in command at Crown Point, used slaves to dig iron ore to assist in building the first American naval fleet on Lake Champlain?

Don't be disappointed; the author, a former engineer and manager for Republic Steel uses his fifty four years of mining experience to explain not only the technical side of the iron mining operations but the

economic issues which led to the eventual closing of the mines in 1971. The book is set with tables, diagrams and pictures to explain the detail of underground iron mining as well as the rise and fall of the business in the area. Farrell stresses the social and economic contribution of the mines to the area.

The reader will also be interested to learn the role New York iron played in 20th century military conflicts. For those interested in Lake Champlain history, the book is a fine reference with many photographs of the Mineville, Port Henry mining facilities, many of which are just a footprint today.

"With Wilderness at Heart: A Short History of the ADK"

By Bruce Wadsworth, Adirondack Mountain Club, 1996

REVIEW BY TODD THOMAS

It is probably still true that you can not judge a book by its cover. *With Wilderness at Heart: A Short History of the Adirondack Mountain Club* by Bruce Wadsworth and contributors, proves itself early on to be an exception to this generalization. With a cover prominently displaying the logo of the Adirondack Mountain Club, the publisher, it seems likely from first glance that what follows will be flattering reminiscences, on occasion of the ADK's 75th Anniversary celebration.

However, Wadsworth does present a fairly comprehensive timeline of ADK history in narrative form. The first section of the book, penned by Wadsworth, breaks the history of the Club into significant time periods, covering the major names and events of each period. This basic information is all that is provided, and the book lacks an in-depth bibliography for those desiring deeper readings. An example of the brevity is the

"1921-1922" section, covering the creation of the Club, which is described in only four pages. The next section, "1922-1929," covers several more early events over a much longer time period with only two additional columns. This reader was left longing for more information, especially regarding events such as the 1928 conservation policy adoption which "caused the loss" of many ADK members (pg. 13).

The second part of the book continues the chronological history of the club, but with a more specialized focus. It begins with a look at the educational and outreach programs of the ADK, covering topics such as the history of Johns Brook Lodge, the Adirondack Loj, and the recreation programs of the Club. These sections are written by various contributors, all of whom are longtime ADK members and leaders. Although the specialized nature of the sections allows more depth, the authors do not seem willing to discuss the events or conflicts that shaped the group, concentrating solely on the outcomes. Eleanor F. Brown, the author

of the book's final section, is the only contributor who seems to inject a touch of drab reality into her account of ADK history, admitting to dissension among Club leaders over the preservation vs. conservation issues that have always inspired contention within environmental and recreation organizations.

With Wilderness at Heart provides a brief overview of the names and formative events that created and shaped the ADK we know today. The second half of the book, through deeper, more specialized chronologies, provides a more enjoyable and informative read than the first half.

Overall, this very short book (106 pages, plus brief appendices) is an excellent start for those interested in examining Adirondack history, or an entertaining reminder for those long involved with the ADK. Numerous pictures, sprinkled throughout both halves of the book, do help the reader by giving faces to some of the multitude of names presented. However, the book lacks the depth and objectivity necessary to be more than a memento of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary celebration.

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