

COMPANY TOWNS IN AMERICA

1880 TO 1930

by

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ABSTRACT

Between 1880 and 1937, immigrants and minorities found new opportunity in company towns across the United States. In return, company town owners gained cheap labor.

As these towns arose, so did many characteristics prevail in company towns: paternalism, ethnic diversity, resource extraction, labor opportunity, and technology. Each has been explored by historians, and in so doing, many historians have been accused of romanticizing about town life, town owners, community solidarity while other historians criticized town owners for worker exploitation, unsafe working conditions and poor quality housing and rampant paternalism.

This historiography examines the many viewpoints of historians who focused on several important topics related to the company town: the reasons for the creation of company towns; the physical environment and the residents of such towns, the way such towns were managed; the benefits and success of company towns; and the factors that contributed to the demise of company towns.

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INTRODUCTION

The superintendent's mansion sits high upon the hill overlooking the residents of the company town. The whistle blows, inhabitants pile out of their homes, and cookhouses ready to give 10 hours of their time in exchange for housing, food, and amenities. This was life for many people who worked in company towns from the 1880s to the 1930s. Westward expansion and the industrial age heeded the call for a solid work force ready to manufacture in the cities, mine coal in the Appalachians, and mill and rail in the isolated areas of the west. Company towns differed from industrial towns in that the entire town was owned by a single enterprise. These enterprises became especially significant in the successful expansion of mining and lumber industries of the west and the manufacturing and coal industries in the east. These towns provided housing, food, luxuries, and a place to work for their employees. The company provided a paternalistic environment by supplying its workers with all necessary provisions for life necessities. Workers seldom left their towns, depended upon company services, and sometimes accumulated huge debts to the company store.

By the 1930's company towns began to fail and the buildings remained vacant or were razed. Although short lived in America, company towns were a major factor in industry, economics, and westward development. Thus, they have been examined by historians who have focused on several important topics related to the company town: the reasons for the creation of company towns; the physical environment and the residents of such towns, the way such towns were managed; the benefits and success of company towns; and the factors that contributed to the demise of company towns.

The Creation of Company Towns

From their beginnings, company towns were modeled and built around rising industry in the urban east and ultimately within the rural environments of the west. John Garner describes the early regional development of these towns:

The century 1830-1930 experienced the greatest activity in [company town] development; the first fifty years saw them built along the river valleys of the Northeast, and the second fifty years witnessed a more vigorous and extensive establishment upon the Piedmont in the South and across the mineral plains, mountains, and forests in the West.¹

Margaret Crawford indicates that company towns grew up in certain regions that supported a specific type of industry: “Historically, company towns, dependent on the nature and viability of the industry that supported them, have appeared in many different forms, locations, and situations”.² Thus, in the west and in Appalachia, company towns were necessary because the nearest town was often a day trip away and the company’s responsibility was to provide for the basic needs of its employees at the local level. As James Allen demonstrates, commuting to work was not an option; the automobile was not widespread and commuting by train was impossible: “It would have been impractical for men to commute, even on weekends”.³

¹ John Garner, *The Model Company Town*: (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), p. 1.

² Margaret Crawford, *Building the Working Man’s Paradise*: (London, New York: Verso, 1995), p. 2.

³ James Allen, *The Company Town in the American West*: (Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), p. 7.

Commuting was an option in some mining towns in Colorado; the towns were considered “open”. Rick Clyne explains further that “half (the towns) were considered open and those towns were located close enough to existing non company towns that the operators did not have to supply all of the necessities of life for employees living there.”⁴ Eastern company towns attracted employees by providing the best living amenities other than simply attracting them to labor. Richard Ely, in writing about Pullman, Illinois four years after it was constructed in 1881, found “its purpose was to provide both a centre of industry and homes for the employe’s (sic) the company and such additional laborers as might be attracted to the place by other opportunities to labor.”⁵

During the industrial revolution, adequate housing for low-income workers was limited especially in eastern towns. Therefore, as Garner describes, towns were “designed for low-income workers, they provided a timely alternative to large industrial cities and projected an image of responsible design.”⁶ In Appalachia, population growth with limited arable land transformed the society from agrarian to a coal town society. With the creation of coal towns during the industrial revolution, Shifflet states “what lay ahead were economic opportunities in the coal towns and the beckoning promise of a better life.”⁷ Robert Maxwell finds that in East Texas, the lumber company towns were built in

⁴ Rick Clyne, *Coal People: Life in Southern Colorado's Company Towns, 1890-1930*. (Colorado: Colorado Historical Society, 1999), p. 16.

⁵ Richard Ely, “Pullman: A Social Study,” *Harpers Magazine* 70 (February 1885), p. 1453.

⁶ Garner, *The Model Company Town*. p.10

⁷ Crandall Shifflett, “*Coal Towns. Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), p. 26.

remote areas because, “It was much more economical to transport finished lumber to retailers than to haul logs great distances to a mill.”⁸

The rise of technology and industry were also significant factors in establishing company towns, especially in areas of resource extraction. Francaviglia signifies that “although company towns are largely a thing of the past in the United States, they were significant in areas where the systematic exploitation of such resources as mineral products and lumber was in the hands of one corporation.”⁹

In summary, company towns as these historians discovered, came into existence during a specific period in American history and for various reasons. In the Eastern states, owners wanted to attract a reliable labor force and provide superior company housing. In Appalachia coal mining towns provided housing for displaced farm workers and gave them new jobs. In the west, commuting was not an option and housing was mandatory. Such towns were necessary to house and accommodate workers involved in new industries and resource extraction.

The Environment and the Residents

Company towns varied in their appearance and structure but contained common elements such as housing placement and location. Linda Carlson explains that “bunkhouses often were separated from family houses, and manager’s homes often were

⁸ Robert Maxwell, *Sawdust Empire: The Texas Lumber Industry*: (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983), p. 136.

⁹ Richard Francaviglia, “City of Dust: A Cement Company Town in the Land of Tom Sawyer.” *The Journal of American History*, Vol.85, No.2 (Sept.1998), p. 710.

built atop hills or on larger lots.”¹⁰ Initially, sites began with temporary housing such as tents or boarding houses until permanent buildings could be built. A number of towns depended on geography, population, and the manner in which the company wanted to attract or treat its employees. Garner argues that eastern industrial town site development was dependent on the commute to work and population concerns:

None of the towns studied attained a physical radius of over one mile and populations rarely exceed five thousand. Laid out at a time when automobiles were unknown and when streetcars were still a novelty, they relied on pedestrian traffic to establish distances between places of residence, employment, commerce, and recreation.¹¹

Shifflet writes that coal town development in Appalachia was dependent on how paternalistic a company wanted to be to its employees. “Since some towns had better housing and other facilities than others, operators in those towns are sometimes said to be ‘more paternalistic’ than those where the facilities were inferior.”¹² In the western lumber towns, space and terrain was the primary factor in developing the layout of the town. Allen describes Falk, California, where “the mill was situated in a narrow canyon, and the town sprawled all over the hills of the canyon, with the company store located near the mill. This layout was similar to that followed by many of the early lumber-mill communities built in canyons near the center of logging operations.”¹³ Gates explains that the layout of bunkhouses was dependent upon the type of work one did and “separate

¹⁰ Linda Carlson, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest*: (Seattle:University of Washington Press Seattle, 2003), p. 15.

¹¹ Garner, *The Model Company Town*. p. 11.

¹² Crandall Shifflet, *Coal Towns*: (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), p. 33.

¹³ Allen, *The Company Town in the American West*. p. 81.

bunkhouses were made for the mill and logging crews since the loggers rose earlier to allow time for breakfast and to make their way up to the woods.”¹⁴

The bare bones of the company town consisted of employee housing, a cookhouse, the company store, and a church. Some companies also provided the extra amenities such as a library, theater, dance hall, swimming pool, and bowling alley. Many towns even offered family entertainment to attract family men. Carlson asserts that “married men were less likely to carouse, and newer bachelor camps offered diversions like card rooms, reading rooms, and movies.”¹⁵ In Pullman, Illinois, George Pullman wanted his employees to feel as wealthy as he felt. As Ely states, “It must be remembered that it is avowedly part of the design of Pullman to surround laborers as far as possible with all the privileges of large wealth.”¹⁶ A 1950’s brochure on Scotia, California-owned by Pacific Lumber and one of the only remaining company towns in the nation describes many amenities including, drug store, general department store, hardware store, supermarket, dentist office, dry cleaning establishment, bank, and movie theater. While all of the enterprises were privately operated, the company owned and maintained the buildings.

Churches of every denomination competed with the rising saloons in company towns, east and west. In Pocahontas, Virginia, one of the earliest coal towns, liquor flowed freely and before the saloons were built, and as Shifflet describes, “miners could purchase a drink at ‘blind tigers’, coin-operated machines where, for the deposit of a

¹⁴ Gates, *Falks Claim, The Life and Death of a Redwood Lumber Town.* (Eureka: Pioneer Graphics, 1983), p. 29.

¹⁵ Carlson, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest.* p. 79.

¹⁶ Ely, “Pullman: A Social Study.” p. 460.

quarter a miner could get a drink of uncertain quality delivered by a hand of uncertain origin.”¹⁷ While many owners prohibited alcohol, it was difficult to maintain a “dry” town. For instance, Gates describes how 10-year-old Chester Barnes set up a secret bar at the Falk dancehall where “one man would come up and say, ‘I want the key to Myrteldale.’ Chester then set up his drink, with a chaser of lemonade, and no one knew the difference.”¹⁸ Amenities varied from place to place, dependent on the location of the town, the values held by the owners, and the type of workers they wanted to attract.

Between 1890 and 1910, southern and eastern Europeans, mainly Italians, arrived in droves, changing the demographics in logging camps and coal camps. Consequently, the migration set up a class system in which Clyne describes that “the best housing going to Anglo-Americans and northern Europeans. Blacks and Hispanos lived in designated areas, as did southern European residents.”¹⁹ Many immigrants and various ethnicities settled in the company town despite deplorable conditions. Rachel Batch explains “Southern and East-Central European mining families carried pre-migration standards of ‘a good life’ to the modern industrial system which were then shaped by acquired understandings of deplorable conditions in coal towns.”²⁰ The conditions in coal towns were so bad that one miner reported “When I move to Coal Town, my impression of the community was ‘Heavans! Do I have to stay here?’ The streets were filled with holes. In

¹⁷ Shiflett, *Coal Towns*. p. 49.

¹⁸ Gates, *Falk's Claim*. p. 99.

¹⁹ Clyne, *Coal People*. p. 46.

²⁰ Rachel Batch, *Finding Stability in a Company Town: A community study of Slickville Pennsylvania, 1916-1943*. (The University of Pennsylvania 2000), p. 1043.

them days if it rained a little you got marooned.”²¹ In the Antebellum South, the coal mines offered African Americans an income, although not comparable to white wages. One black migrant reported that “on the farm I was not making anything, but in West Virginia I made a dollar on my first day and I thought I was rich.”²² As Corbin finds, this did not go over well with the white miners who were displaced during labor strikes because “they [African Americans] are used to low wages and grateful for the increase in pay and they dare not breathe a word without the permission of the company.”²³ A 1909 government report reported the earnings in West Virginia coal mines were “6 cents less for black workers and 4 cents less for immigrant workers compared to native-born white workers.”²⁴

The majority of newly arrived immigrants found that fellow countrymen already working in the same community had a place to live and a job within a one mile radius. Lumber towns desired Scandinavian workers because their prior skills were specific to the lumbering business. Allen describes some of the reasons why the Scandinavians were drawn to the company town setting: “one reason for this was the fact that the immigrant usually arrived almost penniless, and the paternalistic situation in the company town immediately gave him a home as well as credit in the company store.”²⁵ In Pacific

²¹ As quoted in Herman Lantz, *People of Coal Town* (New York: Columbia University, 1958), p. 33.

²² As quoted in David Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1981), p. 63.

²³ Ibid. p. 63.

²⁴ Price Fishback, *Soft Coal, Hard Choices: The Economic Welfare of Bituminous Coal Miners, 1890-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 176.

²⁵ Allen, *The Company Town in the American West*. p. 102.

Northwest lumber towns, Scandinavian and Italian workers seemed to be prominent and were specifically requested as Carlson explains:

The Potlach Lumber Company, Washington made instructions to employment agencies make clear the company's original preference for workers of Nordic heritage. Many other employers must have had similar policies: in two of the Washington counties where logging and sawmilling were important, the largest groups of foreign-born workers came from Norway and Sweden.²⁶

Mines and lumber camps in general attracted not only southern and European immigrants but people who were drawn to the frontier. As Shifflet explains "young, single or unattached males who had been uprooted from definite expectations of social behavior and placed in a unfamiliar environment where anxieties and tensions of life and work sought relief in exaggerated and sporadic outbursts of unbridled behavior."²⁷

Unfortunately in some towns, segregation and racism were often byproducts of ethnic diversity. Carlson illustrates that "ethnic minorities usually were isolated, sometimes in the town's only worker-built housing."²⁸ Maxwell finds that in Texas lumber company towns, the segregated black housing had no water, and "several houses shared a single water faucet in the yard."²⁹ In contrast, Corbin explains the West Virginia coal towns housing quality was the same for any race and the races were generally integrated. Most towns were from 200 to 500 people, so if it were segregated, "blacks never lived more than a few hundred yards 'up the hollow' from the whites, and they still worked together in the integrated mines and went on picnics or played baseball

²⁶ Carlson, Linda, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest*. p. 44.

²⁷ Shifflet, *Coal Towns*. p. 52.

²⁸ Carlson, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest*. p. 5.

²⁹ Maxwell, *Sawdust Empire*. p.145.

together on Sunday afternoon in the company ball park.”³⁰ However, when company housing became tight in the northern cities where African Americans came for work Corbin asserts that “the black newcomers were jammed together in the worst houses, forced to pay excessively high rent, and suffered from an inequality of public services.”³¹ Clyne writes that Colorado coal towns were also integrated and the “Hispanos” of Mexican descent were able to earn double the money than that of the farms and served as “Hispano committeemen during the Great Strike.”³²

Many companies not only exploited various ethnicities but used them as pawns and scabs in labor strikes. During one of these Colorado great strikes in 1884, Clyne explains, the company hired “three hundred African American strikebreakers who were brought into the Walsenburg district from Tennessee; they were apparently the straw that broke the union’s back. Miners reluctantly return to work, accepting the 10-percent pay cut.”³³

Operators of towns sometimes accused of encouraging ethnic diversity to reduce workforce solidarity against management, failed in such a quest mainly because the inherent dangers of coal mining and logging lent itself to a workforce that watched each others back. According to Clyne:

Miners knew that the best way to mitigate the mine’s ubiquitous danger was to work together and look out for each other. This approach transcended ethnic distinctions and other divisions that might otherwise separate miners on the surface. As miner John Tomsic suggests, the men “were so close together in the mine [that]...one was watching the other one, protecting the other guy all

³⁰ Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*. p. 66.

³¹ Ibid. p. 66

³² Clyne, *Coal People*. p. 50.

³³ Ibid. p. 8.

the time..., and any danger that would come up...it just drawed the men right together.³⁴

Eastern textile towns after the 1880's brought in many immigrants but the relationship between the owner and employee was strained. Crawford explains that the "language barrier and unfamiliar customs stretched the social gulf between employer and employee that a personal bond became impossible."³⁵ Shifflet explains that many coal towns in Appalachia attracted British workers who often had their own camps, soccer teams and "extra police had to be called in."³⁶ Carlson finds that in the west, mining and lumber towns often saw large amounts of Japanese workers who were not immune to inequalities and were given jobs such as "domestic servants for the McMillin family and hotel staff. Legend says it was they who painstakingly handpicked the weeds out of the turf on John McMillin's private golf course."³⁷

Historians demonstrate that women and black American citizens were also exploited and discriminated by company town owners. Duff explains that "company towns allowed corporations to construct social hierarchies that assured the dominance of white, native-born, Anglo-Saxon males over blacks, immigrants, and women."³⁸ Many of the women in coal towns were prostitutes who eventually married the miners primarily because they were the only women available. Consequently, the women were not respected by men as well as church going women. Lantz describes the following:

³⁴ Ibid. p. 52.

³⁵ Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*. p. 33.

³⁶ Shifflet, *Coal Towns*. p. 162.

³⁷ Carlson, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest*. p. 47.

³⁸ Betty Parker Duff, *Class and gender roles in the company towns of Millinocket and East Millinocket, Maine, and Benham and Lynch, Kentucky, 1901-2004: A comparative history* (The University of Maine:2004), p. 662.

There were many whores here who married and settled down in the community. Most of them never went into many social groups in the community but they stayed where they were and gradually were blended into the background. Some joined the churches and were accepted. Others tried to do this and failed—that is, they lapsed into their old behavior. They got loudmouthed, for instance, and drank and whenever they would do this it wouldn't go over very well. The people would say, "Well, remember she is nothing but a prostitute."³⁹

In contrast, in the town of Falk, Gates describes the experiences of a woman named Maggie who was the head cook and her cookhouse was called "Camp Maggie". On one occasion she had ordered some butter down canyon to be shipped via railroad by the company store. The butter was rancid and Maggie immediately phoned Matt Carter and said "Matt, you'd better get out on those tracks 'cause the butter you sent up here was so damn rotten it just started walkin' back down the hill"⁴⁰ In coal mining towns, the presence of women were essential because they had to do everything related to the household chores, especially provide the many meals that their hungry miner required. The presence of a wife kept miners settled and the married ones tended to stay around. According to Corbin, "only the presence of the family can keep the mine worker in the area and because of this it generally laid off single workers during slack periods according to marital status rather than seniority or color."⁴¹ Unfortunately, the work was dangerous in any company town and when a husband was injured or killed, compensation to the family was minimum or nothing at all. Coal towns in Colorado experienced many tragedies ranging from injury to death. The mines were incredibly unpredictable with explosions crushing workers at any given time. Women had to remarry to keep their

³⁹ Lantz, *People of Coal Town*. p. 150.

⁴⁰ Gates, *Falks Claim*. p. 109.

⁴¹ Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*. p. 65.

families afloat. Clyne explains that “a woman with children had to remarry as soon as possible-economic survival depended on it. Likewise, a widowed miner, especially one with children, had an immediate need for a new wife to run his household”⁴²

The living conditions in company towns varied considerably across the nation. An eastern town generally followed the urban pattern of surrounding neighborhoods and was generally well kept. Coal towns were often on the meeker side with potholes for streets and dirt for floors. Mill towns in the west were dependent on the terrain and the quality of housing was predetermined by location. The closer a town was to an urban environment, the better features it had because amenities and supplies were nearby.

In summary, historians have found that living conditions in company towns differed across the states but individual treatment was often based on ethnicity. The mass 1900s exodus of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe to coal mines and logging towns in America brought about separations in class benefiting Anglo-Americans and northern Europeans. Several company towns hired minority workers as scabs during strike periods, thereby creating friction with the first hire employees. African Americans and “Hispanos” made more money than they were accustomed to on farms, but less than their white counterparts. Much of the time, non-white workers were segregated within the towns and had fewer amenities than their co-workers. Women were highly regarded as cooks in cookhouses and in family homes. As long as they did not mimic their male counterparts with drinking and swearing, their treatment was adequate but not equal. In

⁴² Clyne, *Coal People*. p. 80.

regards to race and gender treatment, company towns micro-climates mirrored that of the larger macro-climate America.

Treatment of all people was dependent on the unique era of mass immigration in the early 1900's, continued discrimination of minorities and women during that particular time and extremely dependent on town management style.

Town Management

Company towns usually were owned by several investors, but often managed by one person. Thus management style differed from place to place. Many owners were accused of exploiting their workers and oppressing them economically and politically, while some were seen as paternalistic, caring for the workers as individuals. Margaret Crawford illustrates that the towns built during the Progressive Era had a new management style as "progressives shifted their emphasis from improving the individual's moral condition to improving the social and environmental conditions that produced the individual."⁴³ The relationship between the company's owner and their employee went far beyond the late 20th century 9 to 5 working environment. The company was the landlord as well as the food supplier, the bank, post office, and source of entertainment. The residents' dependence on their employer was extremely high and this could cause problems if matters went awry. Workers were careful about not owing too much to the company store, especially their soul. Merle Travis composed the song 'Sixteen Tons' in 1947 about a coal miner who finds himself in an endless circle of debt:

I loaded sixteen tons, I tried to get ahead,
Got deeper and deeper in debt instead.

⁴³ Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*. p. 47.

Well they got what I made, and they wanted some more,
And now I owe my soul to the company store.⁴⁴

The song portrays a negative view of companies using their power to define and purposely raise prices at the store, encircling the residents into further debt, and trapping them into servitude. Clyne disagrees with this negative view of the owners, but believes company stores were a “necessary evil and were the only means of ensuring that the miners and their families would have access to food, supplies, and other necessities of life.”⁴⁵ He further recounts an oral interview with a woman who said feared losing their jobs if they didn’t buy at the company store:

We had to buy everything at the store... The pay was in scrip money... You couldn’t go to Trinidad to buy anything... If anybody would go down... and buy something in Trinidad, if the superintendent found out next morning they would have their check time hanging on the hook, instead of the check number they carry into mine. They would have to move away from there, no more work for them there. That was pretty tough for it was hard to get another job right away.⁴⁶

Several company owners were accused of purposely paying low wages, strike breaking any employee who protested the company, and taking advantage of their dependence on the company because there was no place to live once employment was terminated.

Porteus agrees that:

Trade union organization may be prevented, religious bigotry fostered, and social class structures fossilized; dissenters and “radicals” may be dismissed from their jobs, and consequently from their homes and thus from the company town itself.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Merle, Travis, ‘Sixteen Tons’, 1947.

⁴⁵ Clyne, *Coal People*. p. 22.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 24.

⁴⁷ Porteus, Douglas. “Social Class in Atacama Company Towns” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol.64, No. 3(Sep.1974), pp. 409-417.

In Ludlow, Colorado, a 1913 strike forced several miners and their families to live in a tent colony outside the company town. The conflict culminated in violence as Clyne explains: “In the day long melee, the tent colony burned, and twenty of its inhabitants, including two women and eleven children, died from either gunshots or fire.”⁴⁸ While this is an extreme case, it shows how far companies sought to control and how they retaliated when they lost. After this episode, John D. Rockefeller (absentee owner of Colorado Fuel and Iron) went to many of the company towns to introduce the “Rockefeller Plan” which was supposed to improve miners living conditions, safety, and sanitation. It ultimately failed and as historian McClurg demonstrates, became “less and less a method of sharing decision-making with the miner and more and more a means by which the will of the employer could be imposed without incurring the penalties of open industrial warfare.”⁴⁹

Contrary to this view, some historians see that most companies looked out for their employees and families and had their best interest in mind. James Allen sees that “owners of many company towns actually had the interests of their employees at heart in the operation of company houses, company stores, and other economic activities.”⁵⁰ He goes on to explain the rising “high prices in company stores were often caused by the increased cost involved in transporting goods to isolated areas.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Clyne, *Coal People*. p. viii.

⁴⁹ Donald J. McClurg, “Labor Organization in the Coal Mines of Colorado, 1878-1933” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1959) p. 429.

⁵⁰ Allen, *The Company Town in the American West*. p.x.

⁵¹ Ibid. p.x.

A number of historians are accused of being nostalgic and naive versus realistic about company town life. Shifflet compiled oral history projects about life in coal town Appalachia and found that “most striking about former miners and their families are the positive recollections of the life and work in the company town”⁵² Contrary to his view, David Corbin accuses Shifflet of describing what was good about the towns and leaving out the bad: “the deadly mine explosions, the unsanitary conditions, the mine guard system and the beating and murders of union organizers, black lists and housing contracts.”⁵³ Shifflet argues that while company towns have been stereotyped, “still it is not necessary to deny the oppression that did exist in the company town, both above and underground, in order to affirm that the company town has been stereotyped.”⁵⁴ Hugh Wilkerson and John van der Zee’s study about the lumber town of Scotia, California in the early 1970’s uncovered a great deal of paternalism in their interview with Stanwood Murphy: “We’re a paternalistic company, I know that’s a dirty word but it’s accurate. We lose money on the town. Not as much as we lose on the hotel and restaurant, but some. We figure it’s worth it, to keep a good crew on here.”⁵⁵

In summary, historians have found that the management of any company towns was viewed as exploitative, manipulative and greedy, while others were seen as caring, bestowed with opportunity, and endowed with a sense of community. The dynamic

⁵²Shifflet, *Coal Towns*. p. 150.

⁵³Corbin, “Coal Towns:Life,Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Sourthern Appalachia, 1880-1960. *The American Historical Review*, Vol.97, No.4 (Oct.1992). p. 1292.

⁵⁴ Shifflet, *Coal Towns*. p. 161.

⁵⁵ As quoted in Hugh Wilkerson and John van der Zee, *Life in the Peace Zone, An American Company Town*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), p. 150.

between the company owner and their employees was just as complex as the towns themselves and to view them in black and white terms would be inadequate.

Benefits and Successes of Company Towns

The industrial revolution shaped the era between 1880 and 1900 with an increase in resource extraction. Westward expansion demanded use of railroads, steel mills, lumber mills and textile mills, all over the country to support the rising economy of the United States as well as its increase in population. Company towns housed the workers of the industrial revolution because more resources were needed to fuel rising industry. The success of company towns was dependent on how fast they could extract those resources with the modern technological methods available to them. Trains needed coal to run, new towns and cities required wood for building, and copper was needed to make weapons and telegraph wires.

Carlson writes that Northwest towns were “the best or the biggest or the last of their kind. Thanks to natural resources, they produced the most copper, the best clay, the longest timbers, the most power.”⁵⁶ Successful mill production was not solely limited to large companies but included small towns like Falk, California. As Gates explains “the mill was producing 40,000 board feet of lumber daily and the company was swamped with work orders and sales orders. Virtually every corner of country began to receive redwood milled at Falk.”⁵⁷ Coal production in the east was just as significant as the lumber boom. The Appalachia territory produced the greatest amount during the industrial revolution Lewis finds that “coal production in the Appalachian fields tripled in

⁵⁶ Carlson, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest*. p. 175.

⁵⁷ Gates, *Falk's Claim*. p. 65.

the 1890's and then experienced a stunning five-fold increase up to 1930, when it reached 80 percent of the nation's total production."⁵⁸ New technological developments, particularly in the lumber industry, were an important part of company success and were fueled by the rising economy. Dilsaver reports that companies in the Sierra Nevada's such as the Michigan and California Lumber Company produced millions of board feet in lumber with new ways to transport.

The most important improvements affecting every stage in the lumbering industry, were in the transportation of logs and lumber. The inefficiency and the expanse of wagons and flumes had long impeded local timber cutting. The new companies overcame the problem by constructing railroads or extending lines to millsites or lumber yards.⁵⁹

New machines such as the steam donkey invented in the 1880's were developed to move logs out of the woods with greater ease. After the logs were removed, the company milled them with circular saws. The circular saws were not as effective in cutting the redwoods because of the sizable wood. Gates described the first time Noah Falk made his technological advancement "when he installed a Stearns band saw in the mill-the first successful installation of its kind in the country."⁶⁰

Aside from being technologically innovative, company towns were also valued for their aesthetics. Journalist, writers, filmmakers, and historians were drawn to the small town atmosphere that helped create radio shows, movies, and scholarly research. A logging camp in Grisdale, Washington captivated fame by an annual event that hosted a southern California radio program called "Queen for a Day". Carlson describes the event:

⁵⁸ Ronald L. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America: Race, Class, and Community Conflict*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), p. 121.

⁵⁹ Lary M. Dilsaver, "After the Gold Rush." *Geographical Review*, Vol.75, No.1 (Jan.1985), pp. 1-18.

⁶⁰ Gates, *Falk's Claim*. p. 31.

“The winner got to spend a rainy November day in the woods, got a tenderloin steak for lunch, a tree topping demonstration, and a tea party with Grisdale women.”⁶¹ Many towns in Washington attracted filmmakers for exciting shots of scenery, locomotives, and the small town atmosphere as Carlson writes that in “*For God’s Country and the Woman*, produced near Longview, Washington, in 1936, forty loggers worked as extras in a Warner Brothers film that sent several carloads of logs tumbling over a cliff and down into the Toutle River.”⁶² In Pullman, Illinois, however, the owner was criticized for beautifying his city to the extreme and being too concerned with aesthetics thereby creating a sterile atmosphere where employees felt uncomfortable as Crawford explains: “Obsessed with the town’s aesthetic unity and order, George Pullman took extreme measures to preserve it. Residents, while certifiably ‘of good character’, had little control over their rented dwellings. As a result, nobody regards Pullman as a real home.”⁶³

Employee success was also an integral part of the company towns achievements. Allen supports that many employees were able to use their company town experience as a mid-way point to buy their own home. “The benefits of the company town is seen in the fact that many employees, while spending what to them was a satisfactory career working for the company, saved enough money to purchase homes in other communities when they retired.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Carlson, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest*. p. 177.

⁶² Ibid.p.183.

⁶³ Crawford, *Building the Workingmans Paradise*. p. 40.

⁶⁴ Allen, *The Company Town in the American West*. p. 124.

In summary, historians found that the benefits of technology allowed for quicker methods of resource extraction such as band saws, steam donkeys, and other transportation methods in turn, the consumer benefited because the end products were distributed quicker and in larger amounts due to the new innovations.

Aesthetically, company towns in the later 1920's era were seen as a novelty that filmmakers, journalists and historians received inspiration.

Employees benefited from the stepping stones the company provided. For many, it was a way to come to America, gain experience, save money, and buy a house. The benefits of these towns also encouraged a community atmosphere absent in many others simply because they all worked and lived together in close proximity and in isolation.

However, starting in the 1930s many companies began to close their doors for a variety of factors and the company town era came to a close.

The Demise of the Company Town

Many factors contributed to the closure of company towns from 1920's to the 1930's: the wide use of the automobile lead to commuting, technological advancements led to demands on upgrading equipment, and the depression led investors into bankruptcy. Additionally, maintaining the assets of the company town was far more expensive than it was in the 1880's and the shift from employee housing to employee pension plans became more prevalent. Crawford finds, this was especially the case in the eastern towns where "employers replaced housing and welfare activities with other ventures that

produced more direct practical results: pension plans, personnel departments, or more importantly, employee representation schemes or company unions.”⁶⁵

The tale of company towns is about economic development in the west. In these lumber and mining industries, there were no roads or highways and transportation was limited to railroad; consequently towns sprang up. The changes in technology and increase in population created cities in the west, eliminating the need for company towns. The invention of the automobile was an indirect factor to closure, but an important one shifting from housing a dependent employee to simply providing a job for an independent commuter. Crawford explains that the automobile freed workers from their repressive lifestyle where “mobile workers gained access to a broader range of job opportunities. By connecting residents with the world outside, the automobile mitigated the repressive aspects of the company town.”⁶⁶ Garner argues that the single economy lacked economic diversity and “flexibility of mixed-economy towns, therefore, was unable to attract new business and employment.”⁶⁷

Environmental concerns also closed towns, particularly in the west. An increase in westward migration led to a demand in improved sanitation and utilities. Consequently, as Carlson finds, many company towns were not up to the new standards and were “forced out of existence because of industrial and residential wastes that threatened to contaminate metropolitan water supplies.”⁶⁸ Eastern industrial towns that stayed opened after 1930 were evaluated under the New Deal and under the Urbanism

⁶⁵ Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*. p. 201.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 201.

⁶⁷ Garner, *The Model Company Town*. p. 222.

⁶⁸ Carlson, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest*. p..202.

Committee, set up by the National Resource Planning Board, conducted and exhaustive survey of 144 planned towns, they received a clean bill of health. Crawford explains:

Based on questionnaires, interviews, and site visits, the committee analyzed the physical, social and economic development of the towns....the authors concluded that the planned company towns they had studied, in spite of economic restrictions imposed by their industrial sponsors were successful communities...free from overcrowding...their inhabitants enjoy greater efficiency, greater safety, and a more healthful and in very great measure, a more attractive environment.”⁶⁹

Mechanization and lack thereof also contributed to the failure of company towns.

Coal towns saw the invention of tools that decreased time and labor thereby reducing employee hours. Shifflet demonstrates that the use of undercutting machines was a dramatic technological improvement in 1915 but had its consequences: “Using a pick, the undercut might take up to three hours of a miner’s day. The electric cutter would cut a six-foot-deep wedge across a thirty-foot room in thirty minutes.”⁷⁰ Shifflet continues that the advancements didn’t stop with the cutting machine: “Eliminating the hand loading of coal was probably the most dramatic change. With some exceptions, machine loading swept over the industry in the late 1930s and early 1940s.”⁷¹ The results of technological change were drastic in coal mines and “between 1950 to 1970, white employment dropped from 484,000 to 128,000, or by nearly 75 percent. The effects on blacks were even more devastating. Their numbers dropped from 30,000 to 3,700, or nearly 90 percent.”⁷²

⁶⁹ Crawford, *Building the Workingman’s Paradise*. p. 205.

⁷⁰ Shifflet, *Coal Towns*. p. 203.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 203.

⁷² Ibid, p. 204.

In 1930 in Falk, California, lack of money for mechanization shut the mill down for six years until a loan was granted for an upgrade in equipment. The million dollar meta-crawlers replaced the steam donkey and the mill was in operation for one more year until its final closure in 1937. Gates described the second closure as being “inevitable due to the high operating costs and low shipping volumes.”⁷³ At the same time, the Great Depression influences the market; and companies were not able to sell volumes because no one was buying.

The closing of coal towns were underway by the 1920’s and into the 1950’s simply because of the wide use of electricity, hydrology, and new forms of fuel such as gas and oil. Coal was expensive and demand was decreased. Clyne demonstrates that petroleum derivatives replaced coal as America’s fuel.

The demand for coal from southern Colorado’s mines began to wane after World War I. To be sure, society’s transitions from coal to oil occurred gradually, and coal mining remained a significant part of southern Colorado’s economy for some time. The industry even saw a brief revival during World War II. But the general decline resumed in the post war era. In 1954, Colorado produced a total of three million tons of coal, the lowest annual amount since 1889.⁷⁴

A shift in extraction equipment, change in resource demand, and labor practices all contributed to the change and closure of company town economy. Shifflet explains that the “mechanization in the mines, unionization, and World War II were the forces of change that reshaped the company towns and ultimately caused their closing.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Gates, *Falk's Claim*. p. 135.

⁷⁴ Clyne, *Coal People*. p. 99.

⁷⁵ Shifflet, *Coal Towns*. p. 199.

Corporations also contributed to the closing of several towns, particularly in the Pacific Northwest lumber towns where the owners and accountants were located in the next biggest city with little care for the town or employees. Carlson illustrates that “many of the companies had been sold to huge corporations, for whose accountants the little town in Idaho or Oregon or Washington was just another entry balance sheet.”⁷⁶ James Allen describes a similar situation in which Georgia-Pacific took over Hammond Lumber Company in 1956 when they “soon decided to eliminate the mill in Crannell, as well as the town itself. Samoa, on the other hand was maintained, but with a changed atmosphere.”⁷⁷ After company towns closed, the question of what to do with the buildings faced every owner and the answer varied from place to place.

Company towns were unique to the era in which they were created in. Almost all of the company towns in the west were razed or became ghost towns. Many buildings were moved on skids to surrounding private land awaiting the eager buyer. Buildings were recycled and made into fences or reusable lumber. Prospectors purchased towns and made them into resorts. Samoa, California was purchased by a development agency that currently rents out the sturdy houses and plans on making the town square a tourism spot.

The last continuously running company town is located in Scotia, California, owned by Pacific Lumber Company. However as Allen explains, it did not escape the many changes by the economic patterns and still faces uncertainty.

It is no longer an isolated community, since U.S. Highway 101 runs past the town. Other communities are within driving distance, and the company no longer finds it necessary to provide all the facilities it once did. The town’s theater has been

⁷⁶ Carlson, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest*. p. 207.

⁷⁷ Allen, *The Company Town in the American West*. p. 28.

closed, the hospital has been eliminated, and all the company-operated retail businesses have been turned over to private proprietors.⁷⁸

In Falk, Gates describes that in World War II a couple of residents set up guard for the United States. “Falk happened to lie directly beneath the lanes of travel for the west coast aircraft, and because the government feared a surprise attack on the mainland by the Japanese, it established a tight link of civilian manned airplane-spotting stations along the entire West Coast. Red and Ruth were asked to establish one of these facilities at Falk”⁷⁹

Just because the mills and the mines closed, this did not mean that the residents left entirely. The employees of the American Smelting Company in Colorado were able to buy the houses that they lived in as Clyne describes:

American Smelting sold the town to the Florence Machinery Company of Denver, which in turn put the houses up for sale, charging \$100 per room and \$50 per lot. Most of the town’s seventy-two homes were sold, at \$450 each, to the coal miners who had been tenants. Today the town appears much as it did when coal was king – a little neater maybe, but essentially still a coal town at heart.⁸⁰

Conversely, many towns disappeared without a trace, fading into the landscape when nature reclaimed. Falk is a perfect example of a town that left alone and neglected vanished. Gates visited Falk in the 1960s when he was inspired to write “Falk’s Claim.” Fourteen years later, he describes his visit to the town site:

⁷⁸ Ibid.p. 31.

⁷⁹ Gates, *Falk’s Claim.* p. 143.

⁸⁰ Clyne, *Coal People.* p. 100.

Farther along the path toward the town, more change was apparent. Several homes still clung to the steep hillside, but they were now being digested by the encroaching plant life and were barely visible. Its buildings had sunk to such a ruinous condition and contained so many hazards that in 1979, the owners had decided to destroy the town entirely.

The story of the company town came together for the same reasons as it came apart; technology and industry created a need for the towns, yet with time, the technology exceeded the necessity for the towns. Successful coal towns and lumber towns bought new equipment that precluded the need for a large workforce and consequently laid employees off. New shifts in energy technology closed towns because coal was no longer the demanded resource. Expansion of cities along with the automobile created an opportunity for employees to buy their own homes and commute. The company town essentially outgrew itself with the advancement of technology and urban growth. Once the towns were closed, they were sold to private parties, razed or sold to the federal and state government. Locally, in 1999 the Bureau of Land Management purchased the town site of Falk along with 7,500 acres called the Headwaters Forest Reserve. Employees of the BLM have dedicated themselves in telling the story of the company town and conduct regular public and school tours.

Conclusion

Company towns spread across the American landscape from 1880 until the 1930's. During this fifty year period, the towns were essential to company owners as well as the employees. The towns took many forms, ranging from the industrial town setting in the east to coal mining and lumber towns in the west. Western lumber and coal towns were often located in remote areas and in need of the same amenities any small American

town might need: cookhouse, post office, general store, church, and a saloon. The unique setting took a variety of architectural forms, dependent on how much money the companies wanted to spend. Towns like Pullman, Illinois took on a grandiose form because George Pullman wanted his employees to feel as wealthy as he felt. On the other hand, coal towns in Appalachia were designed to provide the necessities of shelter, but sometimes the dwellings had no floors, electricity, or water. Lumber towns, which were often designed to fit into narrow canyons, built housing in a location that was dependent one's position in the company; supervisors almost always resided on a hill over looking over the mill at their employees.

The quality of housing was also dependent on how "paternalistic" an owner wanted to be. Essentially, paternalism was looking after employees with their best interest at heart, viewing them as a person with needs rather than a machine, and providing necessary amenities for a homelike atmosphere. Some historians interpret paternalism as negative, oppressive, and an opportunity to entrap employees in a circle of debt at the company store knowing full well that the residents have limited opportunities else where.

At the turn of the 20th century, America was in the industrial age, and immigration was on the rise from southern European and Nordic countries. Many of these new immigrants found opportunity working in the lumber and coal towns of the west. Some lumber town owners specifically requested Nordic immigrants because of their prior lumbering skills. Coal towns in Colorado were filled with large Italian populations that would send for family from the 'old country' where they found fellow countrymen

speaking the same language. Adversely, segregation took on many forms in towns and company owners were accused of encouraging the inequality because it meant less solidarity of the work-force and unlikely strikes. African Americans and Hispanics found work in the mines, making a higher wage than that of the farm but lower earnings to their white counterparts.

Resource extraction in remote areas was possible because of the company town; workers were able to live in the isolated areas that were otherwise impossible. Consumers across the nation benefited as well, because now they could heat their houses with the coal that was extracted, ride the trains, and build their houses with fine redwood and Douglas-Fir from the Pacific Northwest. Film, radio, and historians also benefited from the company town's aesthetics that inspired such films as "Courage of Lassie" with Elizabeth Taylor. Technological advancements enabled mill towns such as Falk to cut wood at faster speeds using band saws. Coal miners graduated from a pick to an undercutting machine. These advancements, furthermore, were the reason companies closed their town doors forever.

With the accessibility of the automobile, employees no longer had to rely on company housing; they were able to commute. During the period of the Depression, owners found it difficult to maintain the town buildings and closed towns on the issue of affordability. Company towns were simply no longer needed and they faded into the landscape or were bought by employees or investors.

The story of the company town is appealing because of the unique time in which created. Many people moved out west and needed work, the frontier was opening up and

the towns gave work and shelter. At the same time, the industrial age was calling for natural resources and their extraction. The towns differed from small town settings because one owner owned everything, the houses, mill, mine and the employee. Therefore, residents found themselves in a tight community with common interest and life experience.

Presently, the company towns that have not been destroyed have been renovated by investors and historical parks. Visitors now have the opportunity to look into a time and era when the buildings housed the hard working families for generations. In this way, the history of the company towns remains a part of the historical record.

LESSON PLAN: THE SEARCH FOR THE AMERICAN DREAM HAS SHAPED OUR HISTORY

Introduction

This unit of study is built upon the historiographical analysis of company towns and as such is designed to teach students the relationship between immigration and industry into Humboldt County within the larger context of the American industrialization between the years 1880-1930. The primary theme for this unit is “The search for the American dream has shaped our history.”

The industrial revolution and migration of millions of Europeans in 1900 plays a huge part in the history of Humboldt County. Throughout the industrial revolution, the economy of Humboldt County was primarily based on selling its plentiful Douglas-fir and redwood timber and transporting it to places all over the world. Just as the rise of industry was occurring all over the United States, immigration was also on the rise. Many of the local workers who worked in the county’s company towns came from Southern and Northern Europe. Various Humboldt County residents are descendants from the large scale immigration that happened between 1900 and 1920. Many of these immigrants went to work in local lumber company towns, such as, Falk, California. The historiographical portion of this study provides teachers the history behind company towns in America. This unit will explore immigration motivations, the American dream and how it managed to shape our history.

The goal of the unit is to teach students about movement of people primarily in Humboldt County beginning with the Gold Rush to present day; focused primarily on

Humboldt County history (Appendix B). Students will be able to identify push/pull factors that motivate people to move from one place to another; evaluate and discuss consequences of moving, and the types of local and national industry that would employ immigrants; and determine if their move led to the fulfillment of the American dream. The unit will be assessed by students completing a five page journal entry on an immigrant of a specific origin when they discovered from the Humboldt County Census, 1900. Students will be evaluated based on initial responses, to lecture and discussion, participation in class and activities, research on a particular group of immigrants, and thoughtful participation and completion in the creation of an “Immigrant Folder.” The final part of the assignment will be an essay about the immigrant of their choice, the backdrop of the company town atmosphere, and the search for the American dream. The unit of study covers about ten class periods lasting fifty minutes with one field trip that takes approximately three hours. The field trip will take place on the Elk River Trail in the Headwaters Forest Reserve with the Bureau of Land Management, Park Ranger who will talk specifically about the company town of Falk.

Prior Content Knowledge and Skills

In order to participate successfully in this unit of study, students must be familiar with the migration to California in 1850 during the Gold Rush and how that migration affected settlement in Humboldt County and encouraged the growth of the timber industry. The teacher should review the 8th and 11th grade standards beforehand (Appendix A) and have the students demonstrate an understanding of the physical and human geographic features that define California as well as the influence and

technological developments that affect the regions, specifically industry in Eureka. Students must also know how to use maps, charts, pictures, and must be familiar with primary documents.

Discussion of Content Hook

The hook should begin by asking the students what would motivate them to move to a different place or country where they don't know the language, and have little or no friends and family. Discuss answers and then begin to explain the push/pull factors that motivate people to move from one place to another. Write some of the push factors on the board such as lack of money, limited job opportunities, political and/or religious persecution, and revolutions. Pull factors could include, family and friends in destination place, promise of freedom, hope for a new life, land, industry and jobs. Students may also list reasons of present day movement of Mexican immigrants coming to the United States. Students will then read specific excerpts from L.K. Woods' diary on the Gregg Party Expedition from Weaverville to Humboldt Bay.⁸¹ The Gregg Party consisted of the first white settlers who discovered Humboldt Bay. It began with an overland expedition that was supposed to last 8 days but instead lasted 40 days during which the migrants nearly starving to death.

The month of October, 1849, found me on Trinity River, at a point now called Rich Bar. How I came there and from whence, over what route, by what conveyance, or for what object, it matters not; suffice it to say that I was there, and that too, without provisions, poorly clad, and, worse than all, in this condition at the commencement of a California winter.

⁸¹ Source found online: <http://www.humboldt1.com/~cbender/Carlotta/history/Wood%20narrative.html>

The company at this place numbered some forty persons, the most of whom were in much the same situation and condition as myself. Near this bar was an Indian ranch, from which, during the prevalence of the rain that was now pouring down as if in contemplation of a second flood, we received frequent visits. From them we learned that the ocean was distant from this place not more than eight days' travel, and that there was a large and beautiful bay, surrounded by fine and extensive prairie lands.

The night of the second day after leaving the river, having pitched our camp, we set about preparing a supper. I would not consume the time in detailing so minutely these unimportant items, but a portion of the material of that night's meal, although a morsel delicate and palatable in comparison with some of which we partook later in our journey, and it being the first time within my experience where necessity had reduced me to a like extremity, it made an impression upon my mind which today is as fresh as if it occurred but yesterday. Our stock of flour was exhausted; the almost continual rain, however, had so saturated our entire camp equipment -- the flour among the rest -- and there had formed on the inner surface of the sacks in which it had been carried, a kind of paste which the dampness had soured and molded.

This paste was carefully peeled off, softened with water, and equally divided among the party -- when each one, after the same had been submitted to a process of hardening before the fire, devoured his portion with an avidity that would have astonished and shocked mortals with appetites more delicate than ours. Nothing now remained of the stock of provisions that constituted our outfit flour, pork, beans -- all were gone. The night of the 13th of November we were compelled to retire to our blankets supperless. Our animals, however, had been without feed for the previous two days, but now were luxuriating in fine grass, which fact tended to render our situation the more supportable, for the preservation of our animals, next to food for ourselves, was of the highest importance, because upon them we depended for the packing of our blankets and provisions, when fortunate to find any of the latter.

At an early hour in the morning we resumed our journey with renewed spirits and courage. For three long days did we toil in these redwoods. Exhaustion and almost starvation, had reduced the animals to the last extremity. Three had just died, and the remainder were so much weakened and reduced, that it constituted no small part of our labor and annoyance in assisting them to get up when they had fallen, which happened every time they were unfortunate enough to stumble against the smallest obstacle that lay in their path, and not one single effort would they make to recover their feet, until that assistance came. At length we issued from this dismal forest prison, in which we had so long been shut up, into the open country, and at the same instant in full view of that vast

world of water -- The Pacific Ocean. Never shall I forget the thrill of joy and delight that animated me as I stood upon the sandy barrier that bounds and restrains those mighty waters.

After reading this excerpt, ask students to list the “pull” factors that encouraged the Gregg Party to come to Humboldt Bay during the gold rush period. An example could include the fame and fortune of having been the first white pioneers to have discovered the bay from an overland route. Then ask the students if they thought the Gregg party believed their journey was worth it in the end. Afterward, the teacher should review history after the Gold Rush when the timber industry became the dominant economy in Eureka.

Initially, Eureka was settled in 1850 as a mining supply town. Humboldt Bay was perfect for steam schooners to dock and unload and load merchandise. Throughout the county, mill towns were being erected just as they were in other parts of California, Washington, and Oregon. With investors and the passage of the Timber and Stone Act of 1878, people were able to buy 160 acre parcels of prime timber for \$2.50 cents an acre.⁸² Due to the isolation of the parcels, investors had to construct shelter for their employees who worked in the woods and the mill. Thereafter, company towns began to multiply and employees found work, shelter, and board with purchasing options at the company store. Owners of the towns began hiring the new wave of Southern European and Nordic

⁸² The Timber and Stone Act of 1878 in the [United States](#) sold western timberland for \$2.50 per acre (\$618/km²) in 160 acre (0.6 km²) blocks. Land that was deemed "unfit for farming" was sold to those who might want to "timber and stone" (logging and mining) upon the land. The act was used by speculators who were able to get great expanses declared "unfit for farming" allowing them to increase their land holdings at minimal expense.

immigrants because of their prior experience and willingness to start a life in a new country. Many of the migrants sent for their family and friends, who also found place to live and work in these company towns. Throughout history, people have migrated to the United States in search of the American dream. Write the definition of the American dream on the board according to Webster's online dictionary: "an American social ideal that stresses egalitarianism and especially material prosperity."⁸³ Also define what egalitarianism is on the board: "a belief in human equality especially with social, political, and economic rights and privileges"⁸⁴

At the end of this historical discussion; identify the numbers of immigrants coming into the U.S. from 1820-1950, show an overhead from the census bureau with US immigration numbers (Appendix C). Ask the students

- During which period was immigration greatest? Answer: 1880-1920.
- What caused the dramatic drop off in immigration from 1920 to 1930? Answer: The National Origins Act of 1924. The United States Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the National Origins Act or the Johnson-Reed Act, limited the number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to percent of the number of person from that country who were already living in the United States in 1890 according to the census of 1890. It superseded the 1921 Emergency Quota

⁸³ Source found at: <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/american%20dream>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Act. The law was aimed at further restricting the Southern and Eastern Europeans who had begun to enter the country in large numbers beginning in the 1890s, as well as East Asians and Asian Indians, who were prohibited from immigrating entirely. It set no limits on immigration from Latin America.

As an example of its effect, in the ten years following 1900, about 200,000 Italians immigrated every year. With the imposition of the 1924 quota, only 4,000 per year were allowed. At the same time, the annual quota for Germany was over 57,000. Eighty six percent of the 165,000 permitted entries were from the British Isles, France, Germany, and other Northern European countries. The quotas remained in place with minor alterations until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.⁸⁵ Discuss the implications of the Act and ask the class whether they thought it was designed to be immigrant selective and therefore, discriminatory. Ask the students if they thought that the government was allowing people to come in this country for the primary reason of getting cheap labor, only to shut the gates after the country no longer needed them.

Day Two

Have the students look up the 1900 census of Humboldt County at the Humboldt County Historical website: <http://www.humboldthistory.org>. An example page can be found in (Appendix D). Because the census is too lengthy, assign each student five pages to print out. Once they have printed their pages, they will be able to find country of origin for those that were foreign born and living in Humboldt County. Each student will circle next to the names foreign country of origin. For example, if the name had Missouri next

⁸⁵ Source found on website: <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1416908/posts>.

to it, the student should not circle it, only foreign countries should be circled. Next, the teacher will create a table (Appendix E) on the chalk board with the various countries of origin and add tic marks to the corresponding country. The students will now have a data base for the immigrants in Humboldt County in 1900 and their country of origin. On a world map in the classroom, locate the top five nations of origin. As a review, use a brainstorming activity to list the factors that may have "pushed" people to the United States in the 1900s (e.g., limited job opportunities, expensive land, and religious persecution). Then, ask what may have pulled some of those people to Humboldt county (e.g., family living already living here, job opportunities, inexpensive land in rural America, and need for inexpensive labor).

Day Three

Review some of the "push" factors in Europe: a dramatic population increase, the spread of commercial agriculture, the rise of the factory system, and the inexpensive means of transportation such as steamships that made it easier to come to America. Most, however, came for economic reasons and were part of extensive migratory system that responded to changing demands in labor markets. The American economy needed both unskilled and skilled workers through much of the nineteenth century. But after the 1880s, the demand was almost exclusively for unskilled workers to fill the growing number of factory and resource extraction jobs such as timber and coal. Coinciding with this were conditions in some areas of Europe which were undergoing substantial economic changes in the 1880s. Southern and eastern Europeans dislocated from their land and possessing few skills, were attracted to the promising industries in the United

States. Coal towns in Colorado and timber towns in the Pacific Northwest were all in need of the inexpensive labor the new immigrants could provide. In 1900, many southern European immigrants came to work in this country, particularly in coal towns.

The teacher should preface the discussion by saying that coming to this country from Europe in 1900 was not an eleven hour plane ride; it was a huge individual investment of money and time. A ship ride to New York would cost a substantial amount of money and a month of traveling across the Atlantic. Therefore, immigrants usually had a predetermined employer or place to go to once they arrived in America. Several of the employers were in industrial towns, coal towns, mining towns and mill towns. The immigrant was a source of inexpensive labor for the companies but a labor opportunity for the newcomer. The difficulty was the immigrant often paid a price beyond monetary; they made many sacrifices for the search of their American dream. The students are going to learn about some of the difficulties of those who left Europe headed for the Colorado Coal mines. Coming to Colorado coal towns from Europe was an enormous individual investment of money and time. Once the immigrant stepped on solid ground, they had to find their way to Colorado coal fields where a family member or friend would be waiting for their arrival. Have the students imagine what it would be like to arrive with not being able to speak English and navigating from New York to Colorado by railroad. With that in mind, these excerpts from *Coal People* by Rick Clyne should be read out loud and discussed.

Unlike many of his fellow immigrants, Ed Tomsic did not come to America for political or financial reasons, but his sense of fear and alienation upon arriving was just as strong. “I left Europe because my folks wanted me to

become a priest, and I run away from there”, he explains. “It took me 38 days on a boat until we get to Trinidad and Engleville. I started work. I was a little over 18. Believe it or not, I cry many, many times, why did I come? My hands are full of blisters.” The only thing that kept Ed in America was his refusal to admit he had made a mistake. “They wasn’t poor folks,” he says. “[They] want to send me the money to go back, but I had too much pride to go back.”⁸⁶

What might happen to the immigrant that decided to go back to their country?

What kinds of problems would they face when they got home? Who benefited from coming to America, the immigrants themselves or their children? Have a student read a further account in *Coal People* by Richard Clyne.

After a thirty-day transatlantic voyage, the woman made her way by train to Walsenburg, Colorado, where her husband-to-be was supposed to meet her. But, explains Micek, “The fellow that told my dad when she would get here must have told him the wrong day....My mother came a day earlier than she was supposed to be here. When she gets to Walsenburg she gets off the train and nobody knows her language and she doesn’t know anyone so she sits there.” After a waiting a day, Micek’s mother was finally able to arrange a ride out to the Hezron mine, where she eventually found her fiancé. It was a nerve-racking ordeal for such a newly arrived immigrant.⁸⁷

Get the students to imagine what it was like to be on a thirty day voyage across the Atlantic, at a train station where no one speaks your language and the person you are supposed to meet is a day late or not coming at all. Ask the students if they have had any similar circumstances in their lives in which they are completely unfamiliar with their surroundings.

Once the immigrants arrived at their destinations, they often had to deal with the demographic differences of race and culture. Often times they were segregated by ethnicity and race. The African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics were usually on the

⁸⁶ Clyne, *Coal People*. p. 47.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 78.

bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy and often times they were paid less than their white counterparts. Have a student read the excerpt from Clyne's book on Japanese treatment:

Stark cultural differences fueled the fires of racism, but the Japanese aroused even more resentment because they often arrived in the southern Colorado fields as strikebreakers, and hard feelings remained long after the strikes ended. In Cokedale, the largest Japanese work force was kept completely segregated both above and below ground. Japanese workers had their own bathhouse and a separate entry into the mine; as one miner puts it, "there was just Jap people working in there and a Jap boss."⁸⁸

Company owners sometimes took advantage of the racial differences and used minorities as scabs during labor strikes. Explain that scab is a slang term for a strikebreaker. Labor strikes were often the result of employees not receiving a fair wage and working in unsafe conditions. Scabs were new employees who took the place of the previous employees. Labor laws in this country came about over many strikes in the coal mines and eastern industrial towns.

To conclude the period on immigration, ask the students what they think our policy on immigration is today. Who are the migrants coming to our country and why? Show a cartoon overhead (Appendix F) to segue into modern immigration issues. After the cartoon overhead, have students read portions of Bush's speech on his latest immigration policy. The source for the speech site is:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040107-3.html>

Key points of his speech on January 7, 2004 are as follows:

During one great period of immigration -- between 1891 and 1920 --

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 49.

our nation received some 18 million men, women and children from other nations. The hard work of these immigrants helped make our economy the largest in the world. The children of immigrants put on the uniform and helped to liberate the lands of their ancestors. One of the primary reasons America became a great power in the 20th century is because we welcomed the talent and the character and the patriotism of immigrant families.

Our reforms should be guided by a few basic principles. First, America must control its borders. Following the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, this duty of the federal government has become even more urgent. And we're fulfilling that duty.

Second, new immigration laws should serve the economic needs of our country. If an American employer is offering a job that American citizens are not willing to take, we ought to welcome into our country a person who will fill that job.

I propose a new temporary worker program that will match willing foreign workers with willing American employers, when no Americans can be found to fill the jobs. This program will offer legal status, as temporary workers, to the millions of undocumented men and women now employed in the United States, and to those in foreign countries who seek to participate in the program and have been offered employment here. This new system should be clear and efficient, so employers are able to find workers quickly and simply.

Discuss Bush's speech and what it tells us about immigration laws. Ask the students if they think the new legislation fulfills the American dream for our present day immigrants.

Day Four

A recent PBS video titled “The New Americans” follows four years in the lives of a diverse group of contemporary immigrants and refugees as they journey to start new lives in America.⁸⁹ It follows an Indian couple to Silicon Valley through the dot-com boom and bust. A Mexican meatpacker struggles to reunite his family in rural Kansas. Two families of Nigerian refugees (including the sister of slain Ogoni activist, Ken Saro-

⁸⁹ Ordering information: <http://www.shoppbs.org/sm-pbs-the-new-americans-vhs--pi-1792421.html>.

Wiwa) escape government persecution. Two Los Angeles Dodgers prospects follow their big dreams of escaping the barrios of the Dominican Republic. A Palestinian woman who marries into a new life in Chicago only to discover in the wake of September 11, she cannot leave behind the pain of her homeland's conflict. The length of the video is an hour, but playing a half hour of the video for the students to get a sense of contemporary immigration issues should be sufficient. For an in class assignment, have them write a paragraph about contemporary immigrants versus the 1900 immigrants from Coal town, the American dream and whether it came true in the lives of those immigrants

Day Five

Students should now have an understanding about the sizable immigration into the United States from 1890 to 1920, where they migrated from, the chase for the American dream, and the problems they faced when they got here. The second part of the lesson plan focuses on the 1900 local immigrant employer, company mill towns. To begin a discussion on what company towns were and are, have the students alternate reading the article from the *Eureka Reporter* on Pacific Lumber selling off company housing to private parties in Scotia. Scotia is last company town in America. Refer to the article which will promote a discussion of company town environment and physical settings.⁹⁰

At the end of the article, a resident has reservations about buying the house he lives in because the land may still be owned by the company. What kind of problems would he have if that were true? Review the history of company towns by explaining that

⁹⁰ For full article go to: <http://www.eurekareporter.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?ArticleID=9146>

everything in the town was owned by the company. In the article, everything was owned by Pacific Lumber. The towns were generally owned by investors who owned the employees houses, controlled the industrial workplace, and owned the stores in which they shopped. On the one hand, these towns offered new opportunities for the newly arrived migrants. On the other hand, many company town owners were accused of exploiting their workers. A popular song called “Sixteen Tons” written by Merle Travis and sung by Tennessee Ernie Ford describes the reality of coal town life “owing your soul to the company store”⁹¹. Pass out the song lyric handout and play the music (Appendix G). After the song is over, discuss each stanza and have an overhead of questions to discuss (Appendix H). This is an ideal segue into the treatment of employees in company towns, particularly immigrants.

Day Six

A Park Ranger from the Bureau of Land Management is going to give a presentation on the local company town of Falk that no longer exists. He or she will give a power point that will last the entire period. The teacher will hand out questions related to the slide show (Appendix I). Appendix J includes the slides while the narrative that accompanies each slide follows:

Slide1: A big part of people’s fascination with history is being a historical detective. In working with the Bureau of Land Management there is great opportunity and encouragement to study the company town of Falk. Over the years, there has been numerous stories uncovered and now they can be shared with you.

Slide 2: Headwaters Forest Reserve is located 10 miles south of Eureka and the previous site of Falk is located one mile from the existing Headwaters parking lot.

⁹¹ Travis, Merle. *Sixteen Tons*. Capitol Studios, Hollywood, CA, Aug 8, 1946.

Slide 3: Company towns existed in a unique period of our local history, they were different from small towns in that one owner owned all the houses, the buildings and was the supervisor to all the employees that worked at the mill or mine. The ingredients that go into a company town and make it successful are the investors, the work force and technology. Investors buy the land, build the cookhouse, general store and homes for the employees. The employees in local mill towns were local people or newly arrived immigrants primarily from Scandinavia, Italy, and Canada. Logging technology and transportation are a must in the timber industry because getting the logs out of the woods and then, transporting them by railroad to schooners in the bay was essential. All of these ingredients make up the company town.

Slide 4: Review: What was going on in California in 1849? What moved people in mass quantities over the Sierra Nevada's and into unknown territory? The Gold Rush!!! Noah Falk was like millions of other men who thought they could get rich quick with gold. He left Ohio with a bit of money in his pocket, and came out to California the hard way. In 1854, the transcontinental railroad was not complete, so Noah had to go around South America in a boat trip that took a month to San Francisco.

Slide 5: Noah got as far as the Isthmus in Panama where he boarded a smaller boat through the Chagres River and then he walked overland 18 miles through the jungle with the help of native people. He then boarded a side wheel steam boat to San Francisco. The other alternative would have been to travel all the way around South Americas horn.

Slide 6: Noah finally got to San Francisco and was told that mining for gold may not be as profitable as “redwood gold” and he traveled north to Albion just south of Mendocino.

Slide 7: In 1853 a man by the name of Richardson built, in the middle of this tract, a home and sawmill alongside a narrow river estuary. He named the spot Albion, after the ancient name for his homeland. Richardson's sawmill was the first to begin operation along the Redwood Coast. It was powered by a tide-driven water wheel, which would operate whether the tide was coming in or going out. Noah went to work at the Albion sawmill in 1854. The mill was claimed by the ocean and rebuilt the next year, but Richardson lost title to the land by because he couldn't verify his ownership.

Slide 8: Noah gained about 30 years of experience working in the mills of northern California. He saved his money and he and Issac Minor purchased two mills in Arcata: the Dolly Varden and the Jolly Giant. The purchase was aided by the Timber and Stone Act of 1878 which encouraged investors to purchase large areas of timber lands for \$2.50 and acre. He then focused his eyes on the Elk River Valley and incorporated the Elk River Lumber Company was incorporated in November 1882. The principle shareholders were Noah Falk, C.G. Stafford, and J.C. Hawley of San Francisco. Because of the isolated location of the proposed mill, the project required more than just building a mill.

It required the building of houses, a cookhouse, post office, and general store. A railroad track was also needed to transport the milled wood to Humboldt Bay.

Slide 9: Noah's brother Elijah came out from Ohio to help him build the mill in which the beams were hand hewed, 24 inches square and 60 to 80 feet in length. In 1886, the first loads of lumber were hauled to Bucksport, on the south side of Eureka where the Bayshore mall is today.

Slide 10: To cut a tree down required a rudimentary piece of logging equipment known as a "misery whip" or cross cut saw. Notches were cut into the tree about 10 feet from the base. Boards were placed in the notches and men could stand on the makeshift platform called a spring board. They had no chainsaws but a cross cut saw that had two handles, one on each side for each logger to hold. It might take a day or as long as a week to cut down a redwood tree. For this service, they received an average of \$2.50 a day for their 10 hours of work.

Slide 11: Previous logging technology was undeveloped resulting in oxen pulling out logs once the logs were cut. The oxen were stubborn, had to be fed, required a lot of space, and were expensive to keep.

Slide 12: Just as Noah Falk sold his first load of lumber, the Dolbeer steam donkey was invented to pull the heavy logs out of the woods. Basically, the steam donkey was a winch on skids. It has a large fireplace that boiled water and made steam, which created the energy to pull the logs to a location for further transport. This was a major invention in logging technology; the oxen were no longer needed and logs could be pulled out of the woods at greater efficiency.

Slide 13: Noah Falk purchased the first successful log band saw in the country was for the Jolly Giant Mill near Arcata in 1877. Noah was the first one to use this bit of logging technology. The band saw was 58 continuous feet and 8 inches wide, rotated in a circular fashion around a table. The mills that Noah managed used the latest logging technology, producing 40,000 board feet daily.

Slide 14: The railroad lines were the life blood for Falk. Transportation of wood, supplies, and workers were essential for the success of the Elk River Timber Company. One day Noah missed the last train going into Eureka. He decided to use the "velocipede" (a hand crank railroad car) for his transportation. While crossing the trestle, Noah reached down to adjust the bar so it would not catch on the bridge but lost his balance and he fell 28 feet in the river. The picture on the top is The Falk #1, also known as 'The Gypsy'; it was used to haul logs around the mill site. The Elk River Railroad brought the logs from Falk to Bucksport.

Slide 15: Schooners were waiting in the Humboldt bay ready to transport the milled lumber from the various mills in Eureka. After the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, orders for redwood lumber was on the rise due to the unfortunate rebuilding of the city.

Slide 16: Aside from Falk having a post office, it had a one room school house called Jones Prairie; it is now a residence located just outside of the Headwaters parking lot. The school had one teacher and six grades, K-5. By the time you were in fifth grade, you were proficient in teaching K-4 because the teacher needed your help. What do you think kids did after school? Think about 1887, and the technology available; you're living in a lumber town with no electricity. What kinds of things would you be doing after school to help with family?

Slide 17: In many company towns, women, minorities and various ethnicities suffered discrimination. My friend Paul Mazzuchi, who was of Italian descent worked in Falk and was routinely called 'Dego', a derogatory slang word against Italian people.

Slide 18: Women were often at home taking care of their family or working in the cookhouses as waitresses or cooks. Maggie Bjord was the camp cook in Falk for many years. Her main camp was rightfully called 'Camp Maggie' about two miles from where the Falk town site was located. She and her crew fed 100 men daily. She didn't want her staff to be lazy so she had them carry everything by hand and not use cart. On one occasion, a Falk investor came into the cookhouse and lifted up a lid on one of Maggie's pots. She came roaring into the kitchen and told him to get out and he told her he was an investor. She said 'I don't care who you are, I'm the cook!' She was highly respected and revered by the men who ate at her cookhouse.

Slide 19: Workman's compensation is part of our daily life but back in the 1920's, you might just get fired if you claimed it. Lloyd and Evan Rushing grew up in Falk and went to work in the woods. Evan Rushing was with his brother when a cable used for pulling a log snapped and caught his foot. He did not file for workman's compensation but the state demanded that the company pay Evan over \$1,000. The next season, Jim Copeland hired Evan back until the owner of the company demanded that Evan be fired. He had his last meal with his friends at Camp Maggie and departed the Elk River valley.

Slide 20: In 1910, the Elk River Mill in Falk, California was at its financial peak. The technological advancements of the steam donkey and the band saw made cutting redwood easier and production quicker. Falk was one of several company towns in the county and was just as successful. Investors had done well; the mill workers weren't able to produce the many orders of redwood it was receiving. 400 people were employed and most of them living in the town of Falk when this picture was taken.

Slide 21: Paul Mazzuchi and Wayne Miller have known each other since 1918. They went to the Jones Prairie School together when they were 10 years old and have known

each other for 80 plus years. In uncovering the history behind Falk we took them out to the Falk site and had them reminisce about working and living in the town of Falk. Wayne's father worked as a blacksmith at the turn of the 20th century while Wayne enjoyed growing up in Falk until he was old enough to work. He shared with me a photo of his father, top right and his mother with he and his sister. Paul is now 98 years old and Wayne passed away at the age of 97 in 2005.

Slide 22: Falk sold the Elk River Company in 1920 to J.R. Hanify who resided in San Francisco. Shortly after buying the mill, Hanify drowned in a boating accident in San Francisco Bay. Another San Francisco resident by the name of Reed purchased the Elk River mill. At the time of his retirement, Noah Falk had been living in Arcata for 30 years and was a prominent citizen during that time. He was the director of both the Arcata Bank and Humboldt County Bank and owned a partial interest in the Arcata Hotel. When he was 91, he was hit by a car in Arcata and never fully recovered. His mansion was in the same location that Wildberries is today.

Slide 23: After Noah Falk sold his property, it wasn't the same. The buildings were approaching 40 years of age and the logging equipment was out of date. Paul Mazzuchi said that the milled wood was coming out wedge shaped and no one wanted to buy it. An outside investor running the mill from San Francisco was not ideal either. America was also entering the Great Depression in 1930 when the company towns started to shut their doors forever.

Slide 24: In 1930, the company still had steam donkeys taking out the large logs to landings. Tractor logging was the new technological advancement and other companies were using them, surpassing the Elk River Timber Company. The company applied for a loan in 1936 after being shut down for six years. The government gave the company a one million dollar loan to upgrade from donkeys to metal-tracked crawler for tractor logging.

Slide 25: When the automobile became more affordable, many company town employees began to commute. Therefore, it was no longer necessary to live in the company towns. The houses soon became vacant and in need of repair.

Slide 26: Falk had no electricity and was competing with mills such as the Pacific Lumber mill that had the up to date technology. Pacific Lumber was able to mill the wood at a faster rate and produce a high quality product.

Slide 27: Technological advances like the steam donkey and the band saw made company towns like Falk succeed. Years later it was the technological advances of electricity and transportation that caused the company mill town to close their doors. Elk River Mill did not have the money during the depression to upgrade and electricity was not an option.

Slide 28: The mill was open in 1936, one year after it purchased the logging equipment. The mills operating costs caused it to shut its doors in 1937 for the last time and never to re-open.

Slide 29: All of the components that it took to make the Falk company work helped bring about its demise. The depression made the Elk River Lumber company impossible to make the necessary upgrades to keep up with other lumber companies. To upgrade, the lumber company would have to run electricity out to the site, an expensive endeavor. The equipment along with transportation would have to be upgraded.

Slide 30: For 40 years, the Falk mill site remained a ghost town. It was as if time stopped the day they closed down; books were still in the book shelves, inventory in the company store, and the piano in the dance hall remained untouched. Some say that Disney was interested in rebuilding Falk for a tourist attraction.

Slide 31: Falk became a popular area for bottle hunters and curious locals who hunted for antiques and artifacts. The buildings were in such disarray after 40 years with no one living in them that the buildings were deemed dangerous for trespassers.

Slide 32: During the 1960s and 70s, Charlie and Loleta Webb were hired as caretakers. Charlie was known to carry a shot gun filled with rock salt. Some say he had eyes in the back of his head and when he found the trespassers, he would ask them to leave and drop all artifacts. Some people snuck around on the old trestles parallel to the road on which Charlie lived. By 1979, Charlie and Loleta moved out and the company decided that the buildings were unsafe and in need of bulldozing and burning.

Slide 33: Today, a Craftsman house that the Olsons and the Millers lived in is still standing but desperately in need of repair. The Bureau of Land Management is looking into restoring it, but the building is collapsing as we speak. This house was probably built in the 1920s.

Slide 34: The train barn located across the river is one of the last train barns in California. It has weathered well and is definitely going to be repaired in 2006-2007. A trail will be built to it, so that visitors may see the structure.

Slide 35: The Falk #1 is located at Fort Humboldt in the Logging museum. It is fully restored and looks better than it did when it was running. Students from local schools every year visit the museum and have an opportunity to ride the train.

Slide 36: In 1910, the Elk River Mill in Falk, California was at its financial peak. The technological advancements of the steam donkey and the band saw made cutting redwood easier and production quicker. Falk was one of several company towns in the county and was just as successful. Investors had done well; the mill workers weren't able to produce

the many orders of redwood it was receiving. 400 people were employed and most of them living in the town of Falk when this picture was taken.

Slide 37: Except for the buildings I described, Falk is now forest ground. Although most of the buildings are gone, the stories are still alive and an important part of our community history. An average of 20 visitors per day walk past this empty field and are missing the full story. I want to invite you to help me put together a self-guided brochure that will be used by visitors describing the sites along the trail.

Slide 35: Credits: Special thanks to Paul Mazzuchi, Wayne Miller, Humboldt Room @ HSU, the Humboldt Historical Society and Jon Gates.

After the slide-show, the ranger relates some questions to think about:

- Falk is no longer a company town, the buildings are gone, the field is empty now, for fifty years, hundreds of people lived and worked there. Why continue to tell the story?
- Who cares? It's just an empty field, out of sight, out of mind. The visitors won't notice what they are missing because there are no more landmarks to see. Why continue to tell the story?

Day Seven

Begin with some review of the power point and discussion on the importance of local history. The Park Ranger will discuss with the class the use of primary sources, particularly oral history. Explain that in this particular case, the ranger began researching the town of Falk, she found *Falk's Claim* written by John Humboldt Gates and some information in the library.⁹² However, the most valuable source of information came from a man named Paul Mazzuchi who was born in 1908. Paul lives approximately 1 ½ miles from Falk and has lived in the Elk River Valley for 88 years. He also worked in Falk and

⁹² Gates, *Falk's Claim, The Life and Death of a Redwood Lumber Town.*(Eureka: Pioneer Graphics, 1983)

is familiar with the families that lived there from 1918 into present time. He is able to clearly tell the ranger his memories of the town and what it was like to work there. Paul also fills in missing links of information when secondary sources such as books fail to provide.

The book *Falk's Claim* mentions in a small section that the Wrigley family came out from Canada to work in Falk, but that is all it says about migrant workers being 'pulled' to Falk for work. However, because Paul Mazzuchi is still alive and a primary source, he is able to recount the many immigrants who came to this area specifically for work in the company towns of Humboldt County. He was born in Eureka in 1918 but his parents came here 5 years previous from Italy. His family was part of the Southern European migration at the turn of the 20th century and his father found work in the lumber industry in Humboldt County. Why is this important? Because the industrial revolution and the mass immigration didn't happen as an isolated event, it happened here at home, Humboldt County. The search for the American dream has shaped our history. Paul tells the ranger stories about the Protestant and Catholic Irish fighting over the pope on a train headed for Scotia during the 1920s. He reiterates stories of many accents from various origins being spoke in the lumber camps. He is a valuable source to the ranger because he is able to share his memories on our local history. The ranger will show the class a short video of Paul talking about Falk and the immigrants that worked there. Students will understand that oral history is not the same as reading history books; it is listening to the past with a human being that was part of our past. Oral histories link

ordinary people like Paul who often did amazing things to larger historical trends and events like the industrial revolution and immigration and bring history home.

Students should then be given a homework assignment: Select the chapter “Cornerstone Arrivals” from *Falk’s Claim* and hand it out to the students. Give them these questions related to the chapter.

- Where did many of the newcomers come from in 1870?
- Why did George Wrigley come out to California from New Brunswick?
- What pulled the rest of his family out to Falk?
- Where did Herbert Christie come from?
- How did the newcomers arrive to Humboldt County?
- After Hiram Frost was killed in the woods in 1897, what kind of sacrifices did the family make to get by?
- What was considered high living?
- After reading the chapter, do you think that the Wrigley’s, Christie’s, and Frost’s American dream came true?

Day Eight

The Park Ranger will take them on a two mile round-trip hike in the Headwaters Forest Reserve. The ranger will begin the story at a cherry tree orchard, describing the resident’s isolation and their canning methods. The students will walk past the Webb’s residence. Loleta and Charlie were the caretakers during the ghost town period of Falk. Half way down the trail, the students will stop at an old-growth stump that was cut with a cross cut saw; the guide will go over logging history with them. One mile in, the students

will see the empty field where Elk River mill and the company town of Falk once stood. At the last stop the ranger will speak about a man who lived in a hallowed out stump who worked in the mill. She will end the presentation by explaining that even though the town of Falk and its residents are gone; it has shaped our local history by providing an industry and a home for the many people that migrated to this area for work between 1880 and 1930. Now the area is a habitat for a variety of species and public land for us all to be stewards of.

Day Nine

The students then learn about their assignment to make an immigrant folder. They pick a foreign country that many of the immigrants came from in 1900 to Humboldt County. Refer to the table compiled in Appendix E. After they have picked their country, they are going to create a folder of information regarding that country. The folder must include articles such as the nation's flag, map of the country, popular foods, main industry, customs such as religious beliefs and holidays, and examples of the group's language. Research can be done during this class time at the library or on the internet.

Day Ten

Work in class and finish immigrant folders. Compile all previous days work including power point presentation questions and answers, field trip questions and answers, Falk's Claim questions and answers, definition of the American Dream according to Webster's dictionary, any class notes. Students place all school work into the immigrant folder for the final evaluation.

EVALUATION

Students will use their immigrant folders for background knowledge on writing an essay that will answer specific questions related to the last ten days of classroom work. The essay is going to be written in first person from the country they chose, and should be at least five pages in length. Students will reflect and answer from the questions that will be put on the board. Describe your own culture and identity including your religious and political beliefs. Include the year and the place you migrated to. The place must be a coal or mill company town between the years 1880 to 1930 to be historically accurate. In their immigrant's voice, they must answer the following.

- What were some of the factors that pushed you from your country and pulled you to America?
- What did you do in the company town?
- What are some of the challenges you faced?
- Would you encourage family members from your native country to join you?
- According to the Webster's dictionary definition, did your American dream come true?
- Do you think that your children's American dream will come true?

The student's essay must be in narrative first person format that answers the specific questions on the board by reflecting on the ten days of classroom instruction, and contain the content of the immigrant folders such as maps, religious beliefs, photos and foods. Their essays will vary in subject matter but should be specific in answering

push/pull factors in coming to America, knowledge of the company town atmosphere, challenges that immigrants faced and the concept of the American dream.

APPENDIX A STANDARDS

8.6 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced, with emphasis on the Northeast.

8.6.1 Discuss the influence of industrialization and technological development on the region, including how modification of the landscape and how physical geography shaped human actions (e.g., growth of cities, deforestation, farming, mineral extraction).

11.2 Students analyze the relationship among the rise of industrialization, large-scale rural-to-urban and massive immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe.

11.2.6 Trace the economic development of the United States and its emergence as a major industrial power, its gains from trade and the advantages of its physical geography.

APPENDIX B:
CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH CARTOON



Independent Gold Hunter on His Way to California.

New York: Kelloggs and Comstock; Buffalo: Ensign & Thayer, c. 1850.
Hand-tinted lithograph. 12 x 8 in.

The gold hunter is loaded down with every conceivable appliance much of which would be useless in California. The prospector wryly states: "I am sorry I did not follow the advice of Granny and go around the Horn, through the Straights, or by Chagres [Panama].

APPENDIX C
UNITED STATES IMMIGRATION CHART

Number of Immigrants	
1820	8,385
1830	23,322
1840	84,066
1850	369,980
1860	153,640
1870	387,203
1880	457,257
1890	455,302
1900	448,572
1910	1,041,570
1920	430,001
1930	241,700
1940	70,756
1950	249,187

United States Immigration Chart

Questions to think about:

1. During which period was immigration greatest? 1880-1920
2. What caused the dramatic drop off in immigration from 1920 to 1930? There were limited pull factors because the great depression made jobs scarce and limited to those who were already living here.

APPENDIX D:
EXAMPLE OF HUMBOLDT COUNTY CENSUS 1900

MADSEN...Continued...

Flossie, Nov 1891, Calif (Grandau) Eureka City 71B
Frode, June 1873, **Denmark** (Head) Port Kenyon 166A
Julius, June 1874, **Denmark** (Boarer) Table Bluff 237A
Peter F., Aug 1849, **Norway**; Mary E., Feb 1849, Norway Eureka City 72B

MAGER

Frank, April 1876, Calif (Son) Union 272A
Fred, April 1872, Calif (Son) Union 272A
Joseph, April 1844, **Germany**; Mary, June 1852, Germany Union 272A

MAGGINI

Charles, June 1871, **Swit**; Cecelia, Aug 1873, Switzerland Ferndale 193A

MAGGIE

(Female) (Low Klamath tribe) About 1812, Calif (Moth-in-law) Hoopa 319B

MAGHI

Louise, Oct 1860, **Finland** (Cook) Eureka City 33B

MAGUIRE

Bertha, Sep 1878, Calif (Dau) Eureka City 55B
Charles, Jan 1839, Canada; Mary H., May 1849, Canada Arcata 259B
Herbert C., July 1878, Calif (Son) Arcata 260A
John, March 1840, **Ireland** (Head) Trinidad 252B
John A., June 1885, Calif (Son) Arcata 260A
Lottie M., March 1880, Calif (Dau) Arcata 260A
William, May 1848, **Canada**; Rena, Dec 1844, Canada Eureka City 55B

MAHAFFEY

Albert L., May 1846, Ohio; Elizabeth J., April 1848, Ohio Hoopa 294A

MAHAN

Elijah, July 1882, Calif (Brother) Eureka City 61A
James, Aug 1868, Calif (Head) Eureka City 61A
John, Sep 1848, **Canada**; Emma S., April 1860, Calif Hydesville 110B
Lawrence, May 1871, Calif (Brother) Eureka City 61A
Nellie, June 1866, Calif (Sister) Eureka City 61A
Rebecca, July 1875, Calif (Sister) Eureka City 61A
William, July 1856, **Illinois**; Margaret, Nov 1872, Calif Mad River 133B
William, Oct 1868, **Canada** (Partner) Trinidad 253A
William, Sr., Sep 1853, **Canada**; Bridget, Aug 1863, Canada-Eureka City 46A

APPENDIX E:
HUMBOLDT COUNTY IMMIGRATION TABLE

Sweden

Norway

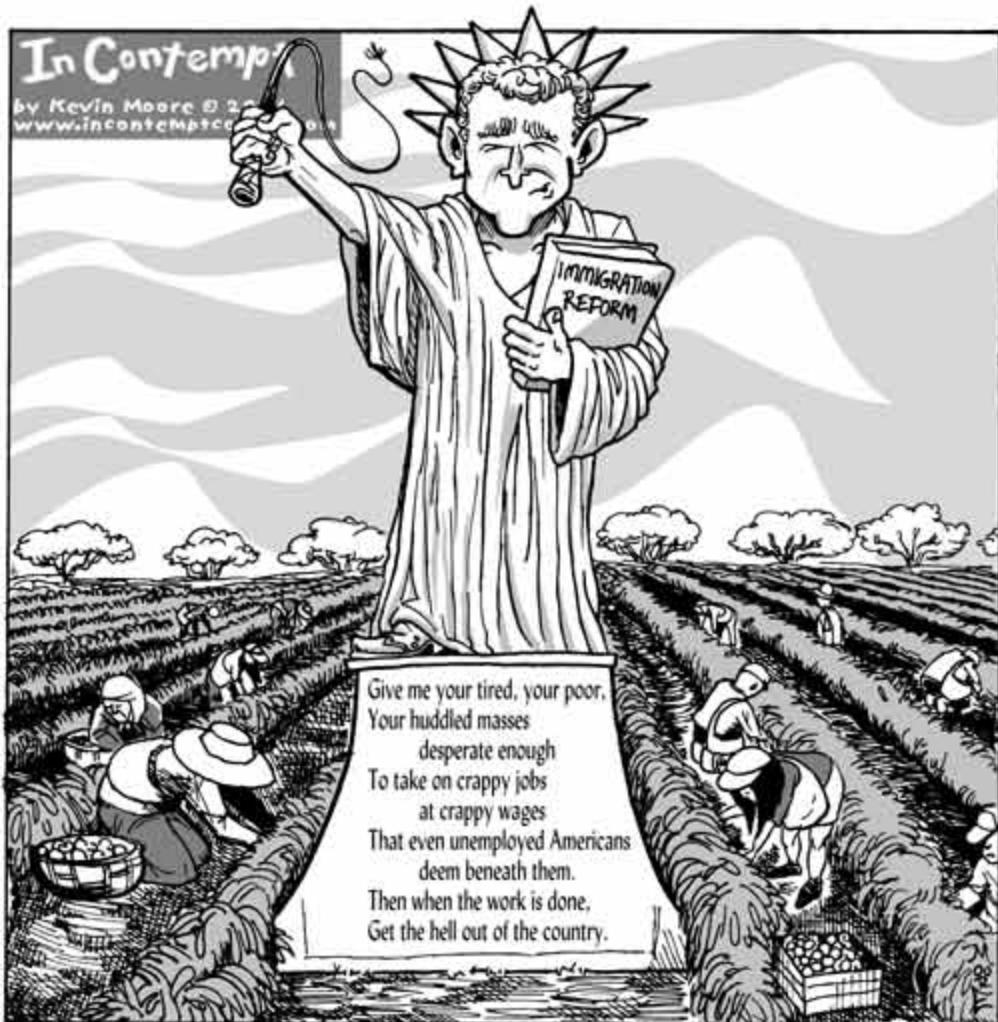
Canada

Italy

Switzerland

Germany

APPENDIX F:
POLITICAL CARTOON ON CURRENT IMMIGRATION



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APPENDIX G: SIXTEEN TONS SONG LYRICS

Now some people say a man's made out of mud,
But a poor man's made out of muscle and blood,
Muscle and blood and skin and bones,
A mind that's weak and a back that's strong.
You load sixteen tons and what do you get?
You get another day older and deeper in debt.
Saint Peter, don't you call me cause I can't go.
I owe my soul to the company store.

I was born one morning when the sun didn't shine,
I picked up my shovel and I walked to the mine,
I loaded sixteen tons of number nine coal,
And the straw boss hollered, "Well, bless my soul!"
You load sixteen tons and what do you get?
You get another day older and deeper in debt.
Saint Peter, don't you call me cause I can't go.
I owe my soul to the company store.

I was born one morning in the drizzling rain.
Fighting and trouble is my middle name.
I was raised in the bottoms by a mama hound,
I'm mean as a dog but I'm gentle as a lamb.
You load sixteen tons and what do you get?
You get another day older and deeper in debt.
Saint Peter, don't you call me cause I can't go.
I owe my soul to the company store.

If you see me coming you better step aside,
A lot of men didn't and a lot of men died.
I got a fist of iron and a fist of steel,
If the right one don't get you, then the left one will.
You load sixteen tons and what do you get?
You get another day older and deeper in debt.
Saint Peter, don't you call me cause I can't go.
I owe my soul to the company store.

-Merle Travis

APPENDIX H:
QUESTIONS ABOUT “SIXTEEN TONS”

What is the emotion behind the lyrics?

Where do you think this person worked?

What kind of job is a straw boss?

A straw boss is a member of a work crew, as in a factory or logging camp, who acts as a boss; assistant foreman.

What does it mean to own one’s soul to the company store?

Is the singer optimistic about his situation?

Do you think his American dream is being fulfilled?

APPENDIX I:
QUESTION HANDOUT DURING RANGER'S
POWER POINT PRESENTATION

1. Why did Noah Falk come to California?
2. What year did he build the Elk River Mill.
3. List the three main ingredients that is needed for a company town?
4. What kind of technology did Noah take advantage of that led to company success?
5. Name some of the buildings that Falk and crew built.
6. Was there discrimination in the town of Falk?
7. In 1930 what caused the company town to close its' doors?
8. How long did it sit as a ghost town?
9. Who were the Falk caretakers in the 1970's and what did they do?
10. What happened to all of the buildings?
11. Who are the caretakers now?

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