



COALFIELD JEWS: An Appalachian History

Deborah R. Weiner

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The stories of vibrant eastern European Jewish communities in the Appalachian coalfields

Coalfield Jews explores the intersection of two simultaneous historic events: central Appalachia's transformative coal boom (1880s-1920), and the mass migration of eastern European Jews to America. Traveling to southern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and southwestern Virginia to investigate the coal boom's opportunities, some Jewish immigrants found success as retailers and established numerous small but flourishing Jewish communities.

Deborah R. Weiner's Coalfield Jews provides the first extended study of Jews in Appalachia, exploring where they settled, how they made their place within a surprisingly receptive dominant culture, how they competed with coal company stores, interacted with their non-Jewish neighbors, and maintained a strong Jewish identity deep in the heart of the Appalachian mountains. To tell this story, Weiner draws on a wide range of primary sources in social, cultural, religious, labor, economic, and regional history. She also includes moving personal statements, from oral histories as well as archival sources, to create a holistic portrayal of Jewish life that will challenge commonly held views of Appalachia as well as the American Jewish experience.

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