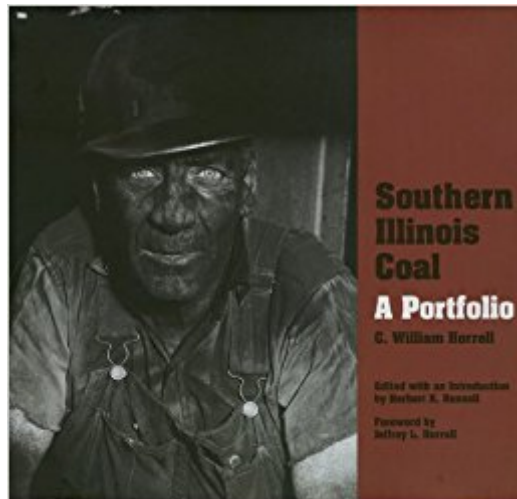




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Southern Illinois Coal: A Portfolio (Shawnee Books)



Synopsis

The coal mining photographs of C. William Horrell, taken across the southern Illinois Coal Belt over a twenty-year period from 1966 to 1986, are extraordinary examples of documentary photography—so stark and striking that captions seem superfluous. Horrell's photographs, reproduced in fine duotone lithography, capture the varied phenomena of twentieth-century coal mining technology: the awesome scale of surface mining machines and their impact on the land; massive machines forced into narrow passageways with inches to spare as they carry coal from the face to conveyor belts; and, more significantly, the advent of continuous miners, machines that dominated underground or "deep" mines during the mid-1960s. Horrell was also intrigued by the related activities of mining, including coal's processing, cleaning, and transportation, as well as the daily, behind-the-scenes operations that keep mines and miners working. His photographs reflect the beauty of the commonplace—the clothes of the miners, their dinner pails, and their tools—and reveal the picturesque remnants of closed mines: the weathered boards of company houses, the imposing iron beauty of an ancient tippie, the grassy sidewalks of an old coal town, and an abandoned building against the lowering sky of an approaching storm. Finally, his portraits of coal miners, such as the widely published Black-Faced Miner, show the strength, dignity, and enduring spirit of the men and women who work the southern Illinois coal mines.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

C. William Horrell (1918-89) was widely recognized as an outstanding social-documentary photographer and taught at Southern Illinois University's Department of Cinema and Photography. His stomping grounds, the bottom portion of Illinois, is commonly known as Little Egypt--and is also known for its coal mines. That industry, particularly the men who toiled in it, held fascination for Horrell, and this album of his mine photographs, taken between 1966 and 1986, shows a Walker Evans-like sensitivity and artfulness in capturing ordinary folks wearing their problems and their individuality on their faces. In addition to the miners, Horrell trained his camera on mining equipment, which, of course, has grown in sophistication since the days of the pickax, and on the towns and houses miners lived in. Exceptional photography and social commentary that transcends regional interest. Brad Hooper

¶In cool documentary style, Horrell's photos detail the miners, the methods, and the artifacts of Illinois coal. From giant sur- face shovels to self propelled underground extractors, processing equipment, and abandoned mines, Horrell covered the coal fields. ¶St. Louis Post Dispatch

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