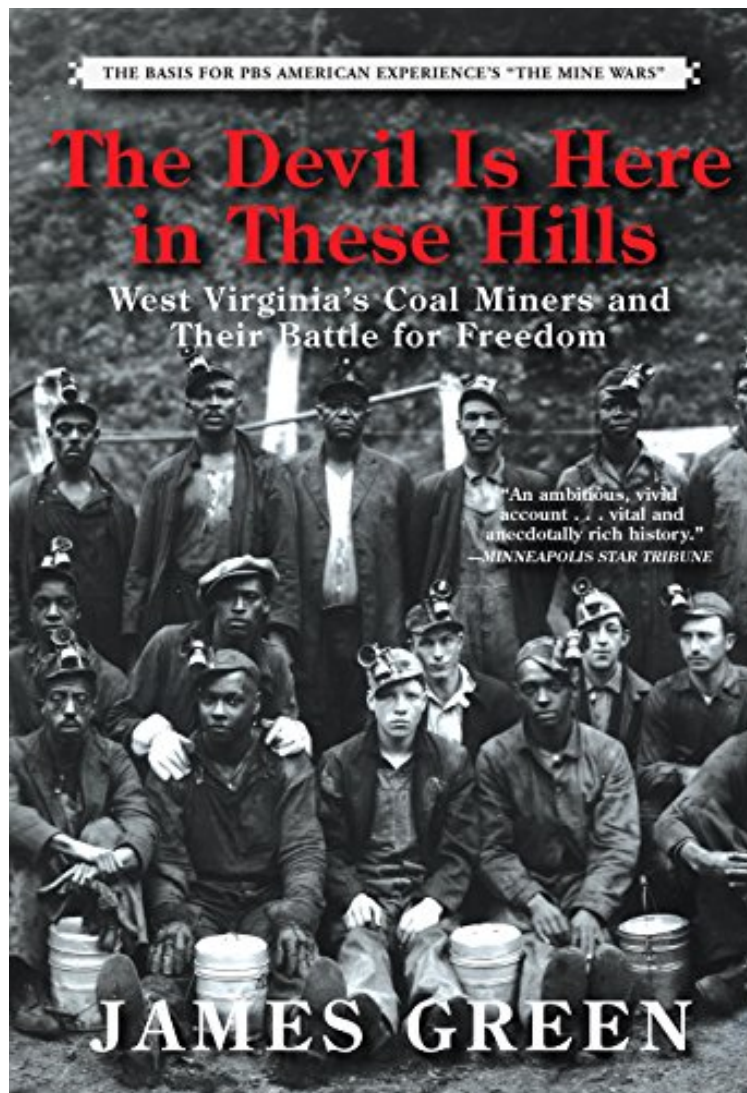


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## The Devil Is Here in These Hills: West Virginia's Coal Miners and Their Battle for Freedom

James Green

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**James Green : The Devil Is Here in These Hills: West Virginia's Coal Miners and Their Battle for Freedom** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Devil Is Here in These Hills: West Virginia's Coal Miners and Their Battle for Freedom:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Rarely told historyBy buskin4jesusI've lived in WV for the last ten years but had little awareness of the depth of danger and exploitation involved in earlier days of WV mining. I should have found out sooner,both to appreciate my adopted state's history and to further temper my belief in the merits of

capitalism with the witness of the heartlessness that human selfishness and greed can spawn. The story is well drawn, probably a task made more difficult by sparse and scattered original sources. Definitely a worthwhile read for anyone with even the remotest interest in labor history or the earlier days of our glorious state. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Survey of a Sad Era By Joe Kinder James Green's book fleshed out in considerable detail what had been ( and still is) my superficial understanding of the coal wars in West Virginia. As a native of Fayette County who won a Golden Horseshoe in 1957 for my presumed knowledge of WV history, I can say the coal wars never came up in my education. Growing up near a coal camp (Layland) in the 50s and 60s when the mines were in decline, I was aware of many of the sociological conditions surrounding coal mining -- racial and ethnic tensions and violence, domestic violence, abject poverty, company ownership of miners homes, use of scrip in the company store, et al -- but blissfully unaware of the regional history that produced them. Green's book opened my eyes wider, and implicitly serves as a broader condemnation of the WV school system of that time. I saw the book as definitely sympathetic too the miners, and share that view, but as other reviewers have noted, it does not give sufficient attention to the outlook of the companies, beyond their odious behavior toward the miners and to the state in general. Despite such faults, the book is very well written, and I found it hard to put down; it has whetted my appetite for more. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I learned a lot By displacedoutdoorsman I really learned a lot from this book. Great stories about the people and events associated with Appalachian miners and their unionizing attempts. More people should familiarize themselves with the struggles of the unions to achieve the benefits we take for granted today.

From before the dawn of the 20th century until the arrival of the New Deal, one of the most protracted and deadly labor struggles in American history was waged in West Virginia. On one side were powerful corporations whose millions bought armed guards and political influence. On the other side were 50,000 mine workers, the nation's largest labor union, and the legendary "miners' angel," Mother Jones. The fight for unionization and civil rights sparked a political crisis verging on civil war that stretched from the creeks and hollows to the courts and the US Senate. In *The Devil is Here in These Hills*, celebrated labor historian James Green tells the story of West Virginia and coal like never before. The value of West Virginia's coalfields had been known for decades, and after rail arrived in the 1870s, industrialists pushed fast into the wilderness, digging mines and building company towns where they wielded nearly complete control over everyday life. The state's high-quality coal drove American expansion and industrialization, but for tens of thousands of laborers, including boys as young as ten, mining life showed the bitter irony of the state motto, "Mountaineers are Always Free." Attempts to unionize were met with stiff resistance. Fundamental rights were bent, then broken, and the violence evolved from bloody skirmishes to open armed conflict, as an army of miners marched to an explosive showdown. Extensively researched and told in vibrant detail, *The Devil is Here in These Hills* is the definitive book on an essential chapter in the history of American freedom.

"An ambitious, vivid account . . . A vital and anecdotally rich history of the struggle to organize coal miners in West Virginia . . . Green presents readers with a refreshingly nuanced and fuller depiction of this class of workers than previously conceived . . . *The Devil Is Here in These Hills* is ambitious in scope [and] fast-moving."—*Minneapolis Star Tribune* "The story James Green has to tell in *The Devil Is Here in These Hills* . . . is among the best and largely forgotten American stories."—*New York Times* "James Green provides what could be the best history of events in West Virginia from 1892 to 1933, especially in the coalfields."—*Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)* "The Devil is Here in These Hills provides much needed perspective on the economic, social and political issues that still confound the Mountaineer State. . . . The author's nuanced treatment . . . is the way history should be written. . . . Mr. Green's thorough research and steady analysis . . . gives this backwoods struggle between capital and labor the due it deserves. He tells a dark, often despairing story from a century ago that rings true today."—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* "Deepens our understanding of . . . well-known labor conflicts . . . *The Devil Is Here in These Hills* not only succeeds in bringing together heretofore disparate episodes in coal miners' struggles for social justice but convincingly connects these moments and movements to a central theme: 'a people's fight to exercise freedom of speech and freedom of association in the workplaces where the rights of property owners had reigned supreme.'"—*Journal of American History* "A lively and accessible history of the West Virginia mine wars and the struggle for the United Mine Workers of America union from the 1890s through the 1920s. This is the most authoritative book written on this bloody and turbulent chapter of US history since David Allan Corbin's 1981 *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*."—*Choice* "James Green has resurrected an important, searing piece of our heritage—and just the kind of thing your high school American History teacher didn't teach you. His lively and moving account of the West Virginia mine wars is a reminder of how painfully long people in this country had to fight to gain even barely decent wages and working conditions. And, as today's gap between the 1% and everyone else grows ever wider, the era of the robber barons he evokes so well doesn't seem that far away."—Adam Hochschild, author of *To End All Wars* and *King Leopold's Ghost* "In James Green's capable hands, the bloody Appalachian mine wars become an important national story

of the forces of corporate greed met with the indomitable power of the human spirit. Insightful, eloquent—The Devil is Here in These Hills will forever change the way we think of the miners’ role in early twentieth century history.—Philip Dray, author of *There is Power in a Union: The Epic Story of Labor in America* “The Devil is in These Hills is the most comprehensive and comprehensible history of the West Virginia Coal War I’ve ever read. James Green has made sense of a half century of violent confrontation.—John Sayles, writer and director of *Matewan* “Green mines the historically dark seams of the sanguinary Mountain State coal wars that raged in the early decades of the 20th century. . . . Green opens our eyes with his assiduous research and steady storytelling.—Kirkus’s (starred review) “Green . . . has assembled a gritty cast of characters in this fact-rich recounting of the West Virginia mine war . . . These events, until now with Green’s account, have been largely forgotten, in some instances suppressed. Green gives the troubling era rebirth.—Bookreporter “Green does an outstanding job here of bringing this period to life, giving readers a vivid picture of the hardscrabble Appalachian miners’ day-to-day existence and their frequent bloody skirmishes with coal company hired guns . . . A thoroughly documented and masterfully written account of a little-remembered but critical period in U.S. history, when unions scored a major victory for workers’ rights.—Booklist “There are many fine photos of the struggles in West Virginia, but Green gives us a full-length feature film, telling the fifty-year-long saga of the fight against greed and exploitation. An excellent book.—Elliott Gorn, professor of history at Loyola University Chicago and author of *Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America* “James Green’s *The Devil is Here in These Hills* brilliantly locates the West Virginia Mine Wars within the contexts of West Virginia and American history and portrays this story as a basic struggle for the freedoms Americans have always expected as their birthright. Green personifies this class struggle in a panorama of heroes, antiheroes, and the mass of ordinary people doing unordinary things to achieve a better life. This is an outstanding book which, undoubtedly, will stand for a long time to come as the best single volume on the subject.—Ronald L. Lewis, Professor of History Emeritus, West Virginia University “James Green’s astonishing book deftly depicts a multinational and interracial group of hard-bitten men, rallied by an Irish-born grandmother, who waged a war for democracy that lasted forty years. As this masterful history demonstrates, the South was often a hotbed of unionism, poor women proved feisty and enduring adversaries, and remote ‘hillbillies’ lived in one of the most industrialized regimes in the world. . . . As Americans grow increasingly concerned about global capital’s oppression of workers, we would do well to understand how and why it happened here and what it took to stop it.—Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Peter V. and C. Vann Woodward Professor of History, Yale University “Engaging and easy to follow. [Green] is a gifted storyteller who manages to weave a fascinating narrative that is both scholarly and fun to read. . . . Another strength of Green’s book is his ability to put the labor strife in broader contexts, specifically that of Appalachian culture, and the labor strife prominent in much of the U.S. . . . I would recommend *The Devil is Here in These Hills* to anyone with an interest in American history, mining, or Appalachian studies. James Green has written an enlightening, accessible tome that should become the standard history of mining unionization in America.—*Appalachian History* “A story full of pathos and amazing characters that seem invented for a novel or film and become larger than life in Green’s deft hands . . . Green . . . plumbs much of the little-known scholarly work on various aspects of these years to give us a new and compelling accessible synthesis.—*West Virginia History* “Celebrated labor historian James Green tells the story of West Virginia and coal like never before.—*Grand Forks Herald (North Dakota)* “[A] captivating new book . . . Aside from telling riveting stories of labor battles, Green also dissects how the mine wars are interpreted today . . . [A] beautifully written account.—*Truthout* “James Green brings to light a little-known labor battle that never garnered the same fame as the automotive and steel industry tussles, yet exceeds those scraps in the depths of its brutality and inhumanity . . . This engaging account mirrors many economic issues of the present day.—*Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*