



Anthracite Ghosts

Walter L. Dinteman

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A photo book about an era at the end of the period of heavy industrial expansion in the United States when the northern field of the Northeastern Pennsylvania coal region was flooded by the Susquehanna River, bringing mining to an end. Walter Dinteman wandered the coal fields of northeastern Pennsylvania many weekends during 1970 through 1973, photographing what was left above ground of the anthracite coal industry. Many of these buildings have disappeared. Now all that is left is the wind whistling through some broken windows and the rusting shape of long stilled machinery. Accompanying the photos are coal miners' songs, anecdotes, interviews, and newspaper accounts along with a brief history of anthracite coal. He saw beauty amid desolation, just as when an old miner saw a slag heap "rising out of the patch like a Japanese mountain with Japanese huts below". On some days he would find "rolling mist enveloping the hilltops in clouds of greenish milkiness, drifting and shifting in the valley". Nor was this merely a matter of buildings crumbling and gone. It told a story of people, of a hard life where "down in a coal mine underneath the ground" men worked at "digging dusky diamonds all season long". And when tragedy struck, as it often did, then it was "not Irish coal nor Polish coal ... the young one's blood on the winter slate, no matter whose it is, stains red".

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