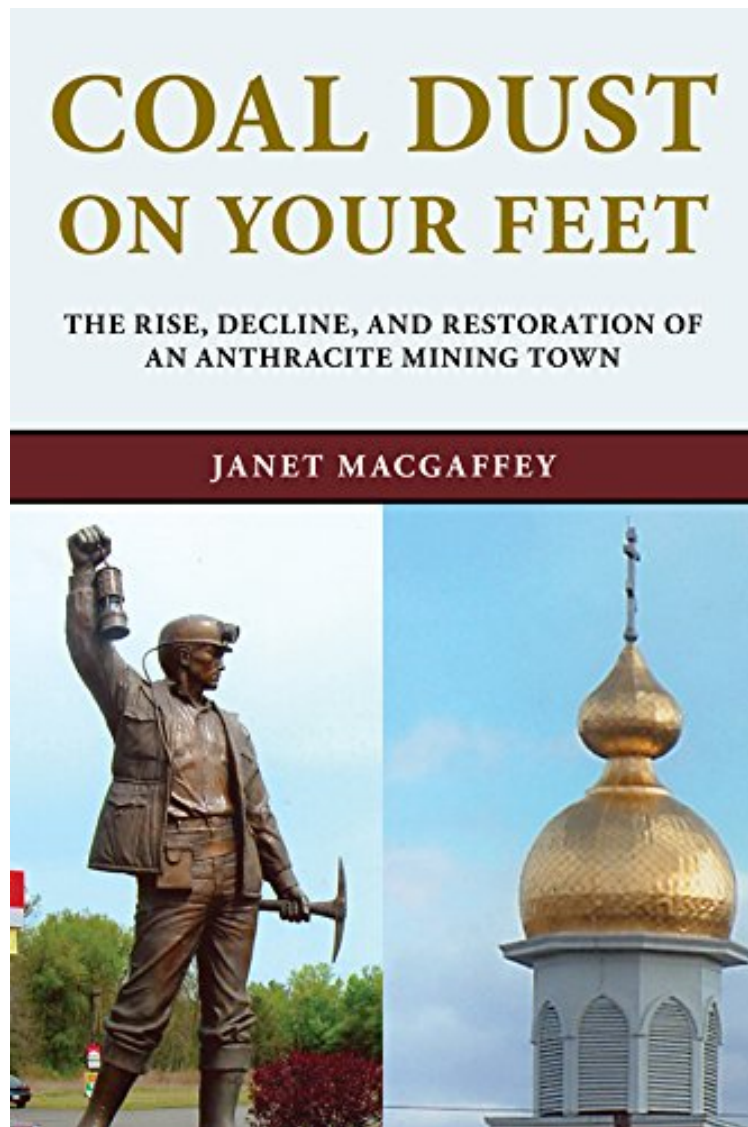


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Coal Dust on Your Feet: The Rise, Decline, and Restoration of an Anthracite Mining Town (Stories of the Susquehanna Valley)

Janet MacGaffey

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Janet MacGaffey : Coal Dust on Your Feet: The Rise, Decline, and Restoration of an Anthracite Mining Town (Stories of the Susquehanna Valley) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Coal Dust on Your Feet: The Rise, Decline, and Restoration of an Anthracite Mining Town (Stories of the Susquehanna Valley):

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Book--Coal Dust on Your FeetBy Jean BamfordFacts about my family and the dress business has too many mistakes. Many of the stories are very interesting and bring back memories of my childhood. The meeting with Mrs. MacGaffey was a great event. She is spectacular in remembering many facts. It was just a shame that the people she interviewed had the facts wrong. I think many would enjoy reading most of the book. Much time was spent researching and writing.

Coal Dust on Your Feet is a historical ethnography of Shamokin, Pennsylvania and its surrounding borough of Coal Township. This anthracite coal fueled the industrial revolution and its miners generated the rise of organized labor, both of which make the region of northeast Pennsylvania one of great economic and historic importance. The ethnographic field site of the study spans a century and a half as it looks at the history and ties to the home countries of the immigrants who established and worked the coal mines. Details of individual lives and family histories enliven accounts of industry and the struggles of the unions, means of livelihood, ethnicity, associational life and ceremonial occasions. It will be of interest to anthropologists, sociologists, scholars of urban studies and labor historians, and contributes to the canon of literature on community and sense of place. The study focuses on the rise and decline of the mining industry, on the ethnic groups that formed the towns neighborhoods, and on the changes that have taken place in ethnicity, religion, class and community. It covers the period of prosperity when the factories of the New York garment industry moved into town for the middle years of the twentieth century and made Shamokin a shopping mecca. Today, the town is decimated by economic decline and population loss, but ethnicity remains an identity option and still has economic content. The strong sense of place of the people of the town rooted in their cultural and militant heritage, has given rise to a wider community of former residents who return to visit, participate in events and buy ethnic foods and cultural items. This wider community of belonging and identity helps to boost morale, sense of community and economy, in what is now primarily a retirement town with commuters traveling to work in nearby cities.

MacGaffey's Coal Dust on Your Feet is a fascinating, readable account of the history of community life in the Pennsylvania coal regions. MacGaffey is a master anthropological ethnographer, committed to digging out a vast number of details about ethnicity, labor history, and the particular background of different towns. This not only provides an education for a coal region researcher like myself, it also gives us general theoretical understanding of ethnicity and class identity by anchoring insights in extensive, specific information about the people and the place. This is a masterful book that should be widely read by social scientists as well as by residents of the Lower Anthracite region. (Carl Milofsky, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Bucknell University)Coal Dust on Your Feet is an engaging addition to the Great American storythe story of ethnic support in easing the transition to a new society and the decline of that support as generations become more and more assimilated. In her account of the peopling of a Pennsylvania mining town, Janet MacGaffey captures the critical role heritage initially played in residents lives. But it is diluted when they overcome ethnic barriers in order to resist the economic forces that are undermining their ability to eke out a living. One of key ingredients in MacGaffey's account is the extraordinarily important part food has played in defining and perpetuating the lingering ties to peoples origins. This is a highly readable book that can be savored by a wide audience. (Sandra T. Barnes, professor of anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania)Coal Dust on Your Feet is a historical ethnography covering a century and a half, looking at the lives and struggles of the immigrants who came to work in the Pennsylvania anthracite mines. It is a historical ethnography of interest to anthropologists, sociologists, scholars of urban studies, labor historians, and the people of the coal region, enlivened by personal accounts and life histories, and contributing to the literature on community and sense of place.About the AuthorJanet MacGaffey is professor emeritus of anthropology at Bucknell University.