

Taconite: New Life for Minnesota's Iron Range may be purchased through the St. Louis County Historical Society website at thehistorypeople.org.

Access to oral histories and other digitized materials gathered for the Erie Mining project are available through the *News and Resources* tab on the website.

Casey said. “We took the strikes in stride.”

The company created two towns, Hoyt Lakes and Taconite Harbor, for workers to live with their families. Early residents—such as Casey and Michels’ parents, who arrived in 1959—were known as “mudders” because of the rudimentary conditions and “packsackers” because of their newcomer status.

“You’d come out here, and they would give you 20 keys,” Casey said of mining company officials. Workers went from house to house and picked one they liked.

The company and workers alike strived to make the towns vibrant places with amenities like a golf course, ski slopes and a beach at a man-made lake. Workers also had winter carnivals, picnics and bus trips.

Hein said visitors remarked on the dedication that managers and workers brought to their jobs. Looking back, he believes a spirit of community in Hoyt Lakes and Taconite Harbor helped to foster a mindset of “let’s make this work.”

Hein’s team brings this narrative to life in the 352-page book, filled with charts, diagrams, personal narratives and old photos, and in an exhibit planned for the Duluth Depot, a museum the historical society operates in a former train station.

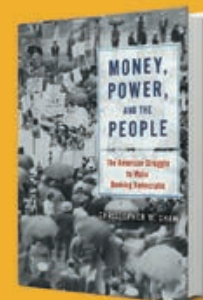
But the retirees didn’t set out merely to celebrate their accomplishments. They want to build public appreciation for the important role Iron Range mining still plays in America’s economy and showcase the industry’s vital future, despite environmental criticism.

“Mining is not a dirty word,” stressed JoAnne Coombe, historical society executive director, who’s worked closely with the retirees.

The book devotes an entire chapter to future mining potential, and the museum exhibit will include features like “Building the Mine of Tomorrow.” The retirees also offer scholarships each year to high school students who write essays on why Minnesota’s mineral industry remains “essential to modern life.”

“It’s good for these kids to know,” Casey said.

AUTHOR CALLS ON WORKERS TO CHALLENGE FINANCIAL POWER STRUCTURE



Labor unions are among the last institutions in the United States that give everyday Americans the power to directly challenge the financial and political power of corporations, big banks and Wall Street.

In his book, *Money, Power and the People*, historian Christopher Shaw reminds Americans that 100 years ago working people put that power to good use, standing up and demanding that the U.S. financial system pay attention to the interests of working people along with their own bottom lines.

That history, Shaw writes, provides a road map for workers in the 21st century can repeat their efforts to demand reforms to level the playing field for workers.

“In recent decades, working people took their eye off the ball, stopped being a watchdog on banking issues, and the cost has been very high,” Shaw told *USW@Work*.

Unions must once again play a key watchdog role on corporate and banking forces, Shaw said, to prevent a repeat of the financial crisis that crashed the global economy in 2008.

“How many USW members lost their jobs because bankers crashed the economy in 2008,” Shaw asked. “How many USW workplaces have shut down after a bank decided it was more profitable in the short-term to dismember and auction off a company? There are serious real life consequences when Americans don’t keep a watchful eye on Wall Street.”

Ensuring that there’s a powerful balance to out-of-control financial interests could provide workers with a path to restoring the status they enjoyed in the 1940s and 1950s when one-third of workers belonged to a labor union.

“Today, the importance of unions as a counterweight to predatory bankers is more important than ever,” Shaw said.