Until now, the story of our local miners’ tribulation and triumph in producing the strategic mineral fluorspar has been untold. Herbert K. Russell’s *Fluorspar Mining* is a captivating visual essay of the vital role these great men played in winning two world wars.

—Ed Clement, director, Ben E. Clement Mineral Museum

*Fluorspar Mining: Photos from Illinois and Kentucky, 1905–1995* is an excellent pictorial history of one of the most important fluorspar mining regions in the world. The historical photographs and complementary text will be of interest to anyone seeking information about the mining practices or people of the Illinois-Kentucky Fluorspar District.

—F. Brett Denny, associate economic geologist, Illinois State Geological Survey

At last, author Herbert K. Russell provides a long overdue look at the former mining of fluorspar along the Ohio River in Illinois and Kentucky, a largely forgotten industry. The brave miners and the machines that brought the colorful mineral to the surface come to life in the book’s splendid collection of historic photos. Russell clearly illustrates that coal extraction was not the only show in Illinois’s mining world.

—Taylor Pensoneau, author of *Reporting on Life—and People along the Way*
The rich history of a once-vital industry

Overshadowed by the region’s coal, fluorspar was actively mined along the Ohio River in Illinois and Kentucky for over a century. The sparkling, highly adaptable mineral is valued both by collectors and in industry, where it is used in a multitude of ways essential to modern life, from strengthening steel to preventing tooth decay.

This first-ever pictorial record of the men and methods of the Illinois-Kentucky Fluorspar District from the early 1900s to the 1990s covers early and modern methods of extracting, hoisting, processing, and transporting the mineral from mine mouth to end user. Eighty-six images carefully selected by author Herbert K. Russell show early pick-and-shovel extraction and open-flame lighting as well as primitive drilling methods and transportation by barrels, buckets, barges, mule teams, and trams, in addition to modern equipment and sophisticated refinement procedures such as froth flotation.

Besides illustrating fluorspar’s beauty and appeal to collectors, Russell provides an overview of its many industrial uses, from metal work by ancient Romans to the processing of uranium by scientists seeking to perfect the atomic bomb. Illinois made fluorspar its state mineral in 1965, but there was little federal effort to protect the industry from foreign imports. Fluorspar mining ended in Kentucky in 1985 and in Illinois in 1995, though the district still contains substantial reserves. Preserving what is known about the industry by miners, managers, and museums, this detailed and fascinating pictorial history looks both above and below ground at fluorspar mining.