



# EXPLORING STEEL ENERGY AND THE WEST



NUMBER FIVE IN A SERIES OF 10

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Miners use pneumatic drill in Sunrise Mine, Sunrise, Wyoming, 1955

## COAL EXTRACTION, MINING, MINING TOWNS, EQUIPMENT

Colorado Fuel & Iron miners generally followed one of two coal mining methods: the longwall method and the room and pillar method. In the longwall method, miners removed coal from a wide coal face by working the coal face and allowing the roof to collapse behind them. This allowed for nearly 100% coal extraction. Miners could also use the room and pillar method depending on the localized geology. Miners would extract material from the coal face and leave behind pillars that supported the roof and left a large room. The pillars themselves would be mined, or as much of them as possible, to complete the process. In some instances, the longwall method was used as the final mining stage following the room and pillar method. Coal mining was an inherently dirty and dangerous job. In his book *Coal People*, author Rick Clyne writes (pg. 63): "Even if a miner was fortunate enough to retire without ever experiencing a crippling accident, he was likely permanently hunched and had chronic back problems from working in underground rooms that were sometimes less than four feet high. And it was inevitable for a miner to retire with lung damage."



Mining with new longwall equipment at the Allen Coal Mine, 1971