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# *Mining History Association News*

Denver, Colorado, May 1991

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P.O.Box 150300, Denver, CO 80215

Volume 2 Number 1

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## NATIONAL MINING HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM, LEADVILLE

Hand carved figurines depicting mining scenes, gold specimens from Harvard's vaults, vintage tools, and a wall of portraits dedicated to pioneers like Ed Schieffelin, one of the few, lucky prospectors, and Thomas Arthur Rickard, the prolific commentator on the turn-of-the-century mining scene. The National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum, our host for the second Mining History Association conference, is a growing treasure of mining-related exhibits and displays.

The museum is located in the historic Leadville High School, a half block from the main street, Harrison Avenue. We will be among the first groups to meet in their new conference room, which is entered at 117 West 10th Street, the rear of the museum.

Leadville is a National Historic Landmark that contains a number of attractions within walking distance of the museum. The Healy House (originally built by August Meyer) and Dexter Cabin Historic Sites are operated by the Colorado Historical Society as representatives of the homes and lifestyles of early Leadville. The rise of Horace Tabor and his fall are depicted at three sites: the Tabor Home Museum reflects the early years with wife Augusta, the Tabor Opera House Museum, and the Matchless Mine (Baby Doe Tabor Museum) reflects the fall.

Information on these and other attractions will be in the conference packet.

The Leadville, Colorado & Southern Railroad Company operates a spectacular scenic line from Leadville to above the Climax Mine for a 3 hour tour. Cost is \$16.50. Early reservations can be made by calling 719 486 3936.

For interesting reading before arriving in Leadville, see Edward Blair, Leadville, Colorado's Magic City and Duane Smith, Horace Tabor, His Life and the Legend. Both are available from Pruett Publishing Company, Boulder, Colorado or the museum gift shop. Also, Bohling Books will have rare books for sale at the conference.

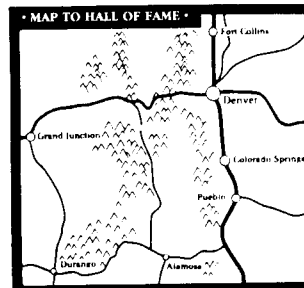
### Organization Notes:

At the Leadville meeting of the Mining History Association suggestions for officers and council members will be accepted for the election in the fall. Nominations will also be accepted by writing the association at P.O. Box 150300, Denver, Colorado. The association will have a general business meeting Friday the 5th at 4:30. An informal breakfast meeting on Saturday will discuss the International Mining History Conference planned for Denver in 1993. Other topics are open for discussion. The association will again call a breakfast meeting at the Western History Association conference in Austin on October 17, 1991.

### Thanks

Thanks to Bruce Johansing of The Mining Gallery, 122 E. 9th St., Leadville, Carl Miller, Executive Director of the National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum, and Duane Smith for their work on local arrangements.

The  
National Mining  
Hall of Fame  
& Museum



Located two blocks north of the business district in Leadville, one of the most fabulous of the glittering silver bonanza camps of the late 1870s. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Sunday.

## The President's Page

Gold is Where You Find It. Did you know that there are two manuscript collections at Park Headquarters, Grand Canyon that deal with early mining near the South Rim? Or that materials dealing with the Yogo sapphire and ruby enterprise are at the Lewistown Public Library in Montana? Or that detailed letters and records of mining on John C. Fremont's Mariposa Estate are tucked away in the thirty-four-room Park-McCullough mansion in North Bennington, Vermont? Or that there is a good sized gold nugget in the papers of engineer Eben Olcott in the New York Historical Society overlooking Central Park?

Researches in mining history are always surprised at how scattered the primary collections are and in what out-of-the way places they may be found. We expect them in the major repositories like the Huntington, the Bancroft, the Beinicke libraries, and in recent years the American Heritage Center of the University of Wyoming, which now has the most extensive accumulation of mining records in the country. We give less thought to splendid collections located off the beaten track-- for example, the Yuba Manufacturing Company and its wealth of material on building and installing dredges at California State University in Chico. We take for granted that the Rasmussen Library of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, will contain a good deal on Alaskan mining, but are hardly prepared for the massive Charles Romanowitz collection on dredge mining the world over, compiled by one who spent a lifetime in the industry and knew it intimately.

We assume, quite correctly, that practically all western university libraries and historical societies contain useful and important materials for mining historians, but often they have to be identified as such: for example, in the papers of U. S. Senator Jonathan Bourne at the University of Oregon; those of industrialist Cyrus Hall McCormick in the Wisconsin History Society. Likewise, hidden away in the vast recesses of the manuscript division of the Library of Congress are excellent pockets of correspondence pertaining to mine activities in New Mexico and California in the letters of the "Great Agnostic," Robert Ingersoll or Massachusetts congressman and Civil War general, Benjamin "Beast" Butler.

Given that it came to be owned and operated for a time by Harvard University, it is not surprising that the records of a pioneering Montana gold dredging outfit, the Conrey Placer Mining Company, are at the Harvard School of Business. What is unexpected is that a fine

collection of photographs documenting the construction and operation of Conrey's half dozen dredges over nearly a quarter of a century belong to the Gilman family in Ruby, Montana, while technical specifications and delivery data are available in the files of the Marion Power Shovel Division of Dresser Industries, successor of the Marion Steam Shovel Company, dredge-builders in Marion, Ohio.

This points up the fact that much important material is still in private hands. Only recently, thanks to Richard Graeme, then vice president of Sharon Steel, have the archives of the U. S. Smelting, Refining and Mining Company come to light, with tremendous holdings on this important firm's activities in mining (and in railroads) in Mexico, Alaska and the West dating back into the nineteenth century. Included are the archives of Alaska Gold Company in Fairbanks, the corporate heir of USSR&M, which conducted the most important gold dredge operations in Alaska from the 1920's down to the present and which constitute a meticulous, detailed accounting of day-by-day operations, including land acquisition, the building of the 90-odd mile Davidson ditch, clearing, thawing and actual dredging.

Clark C. Spence  
Champaign, Illinois

## Newsletter Submissions

The editor wishes to thank Gene Gressley and Charles Hughes for their submissions to the newsletter. They tie in well with Clark Spence's comments. Also, thanks to Otis Young, Ed Hunter, Donald Hardesty, Bill Greever, and Roger Burt for sending notes and articles. Anyone wishing to submit comments or articles are welcome, no, encouraged to do so. Write to the following:

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The Mining History Association  
Newsletter  
Denver, Colorado

Distributed to association members; membership is open to all interested in the history of the mining past.  
Dues \$10 per year

Please send dues to MHA, P.O. Box 150300, Denver, CO 80215.  
Submissions for publication in the newsletter are welcome.  
Write:

Robert L. Spude  
editor

## Notes from the Archives

The Mining Collection in the American Heritage Center, The University of Wyoming

That day was a sunny one in April of 1968, as my cab pulled up to 270 Park Avenue. I rang the doorbell of a second floor apartment. An elderly housekeeper opened the door, smiled and let me in with a little comment, but pointed to the dining room. There, on all fours, was a legend in the mining industry: a gentleman of tall, gaunt appearance, who was pouring over a geologic map of Spain. As I peered over his shoulder, Thayer Lindsley, snorted, "Gressley, if you are going to see anything get down here on a level with me." Gressley did as he was told.

On that day began the pursuit of the two tons of Lindsley archive, an archive representing the records of one of the great mining men of the twentieth century. A decade later, after Thayer was gone, the boxes of his life's work poured into the Center. They joined, eventually, over two hundred mining engineers, geologists and company records (if one adds the petroleum collection of comparable number, one has an economic geology collection of over 400 individuals and company collections).

It is, of course, impossible to describe the resource potential of this enormous collection in a couple of pages. We can, though, mention a very few of the collections which we hope will stimulate interest in the reader to visit the Center and investigate some of the one cubic foot brown square cartons, or gray document boxes.

On the Center's shelves are the files of Eliot Blackwelder, long-time chairman of the Department of Geology, Stanford University; Henry Carlisle, a major executive in the mining industry, who as a retirement project interviewed some twenty other executives, engineers and geologists the world over. In a sense, Carlisle was a latter day T. A. Rickard. John B. Farish, whose consulting business included a Who's Who of American Business: John Gates, Isaac Ellwood, William Rockefeller, H. H. Rogers, on and on. Henen Jennings, whose activity with the Conrey Company, Clark Spence has so beautifully recorded. Jennings also played a major role in South African mining. Ross Hoffman, one of the small cadre of American mining engineers, who investigated gold mining in Siberia in 1917. (His collection came from a dank cellar in Monterey, CA.) Eben Olcott, a secretary of AIME in the 1880's, and a pioneer in American investment in Central America. H. W. C. Prommel, who accompanied John Littlepage to USSR in the

1930's. Forbes Wilson, who discovered the largest copper deposit, Ertsberg (on Western New Guinea), in the world. Heath Steele, who as Vice-President of American Metal made his company a force in Canada, Mexico and South African mining. Ira Joralemon, like Lindsley, another legend in twentieth century mining. Indeed, had Joralemon done nothing else than discover the United Verde Extension, his name would have been secure in the annals of world mining. As it was, Joralemon roamed the world for more than sixty years, finally giving up going underground at the age of 89. Frank Crampton, whose autobiography, Deep Enough: a Working Stiff in Western Camp Mines, is a classic; like many other mining engineer, Crampton's career ranged from China, to the American West to South America.

The piece de resistance of the Center's collection is the 52 ton Anaconda collection, which was acquired for the University through the efforts of many individuals including three Governors of Wyoming, the Wyoming Congressional delegation, representatives of the Wyoming legislature, on and on. A prime organizer of the effort was John Simons, a noted mining engineer of Cheyenne. The value of the Anaconda collection, from an historical vantage point, is still unknown. Historians have yet to probe this incredibly vast collection. However, its use by economic geologists is enormous.

Anyone familiar with mining history and lore could move down the Center's shelves remarking about first one set of papers and then another. As indeed historians of mining have and will well into the 21st century. One can not even give the tip of the iceberg in so brief a review. However, as brief as this is, we can not conclude this description without giving tribute to Dr. Clark C. Spence, recently retired from the University of Illinois. Clark provided the leads to collections, with unfailing good humor educated the undersigned, sent graduate students to use the material and in sum was the "Godfather" to the mining section of the American Heritage Center. Without his guidance, grace and knowledge of the mining collection would simply not exist as it does today. We thank you and salute you!

If the reader desires further information about the resources of the mining archive on the plains of Laramie, please do not hesitate to write the undersigned at P. O. Box 3943, University Station, Laramie, WY 82071; or phone 307-766-6310.

Gene M. Gressley  
Laramie, Wyoming

## More from the Archives

### United States Smelting, Refining and Mining Company Papers

Work is currently being done to preserve the company records of the United States Smelting, Refining and Mining Company. These records detail the company history from its earliest beginning near the turn of the century. The amount of material is staggering, one estimate is over 50 tons. These documents record USSR&M as well as all the companies that USSR&M acquired over the years (some well before 1900). Material is available from Alaska, Colorado, Utah, California, and other states throughout the west. Material from Mexico and Canada is also available. I will try to have an inventory available at the annual meeting in Leadville this summer (it should be over 100 pages long). If you would like more information about this inventory and information regarding access, please call or write to: Charles E. Hughes, Timpanogos Research Associates, 5228 S. Morning Crest Dr., Salt Lake City, Utah, 84123, (801) 261-1956.

Charles Hughes  
Midvale, Utah

## Historic Sites

### Ropes Gold Mine

It is usually assumed that the upper Mid-West has no gold, apart from some placer colors found at the base of glacial moraines. An exception is the Ropes Gold Mine, an active producer owned now by the Callahan Mining Co. of Phoenix, AZ. It is located outside Ishpening, Michigan: a locale which might never be expected to have gold, of all minerals, more especially since it was once the site of a major hematite deposit. What is a pyritic gold orebody doing, cheek-by-jowl with a major sedimentary iron deposit? This is a marvel.

The Ropes was prospected in the 1880's, the upper high-grade ore horizons worked out, was abandoned, acquired by the Calumet & Hecla, thoroughly explored, and abandoned again. It did not pay, so long as gold was pegged at \$35 an ounce. About 1972, coincidentally with the freeing of gold prices, the Ropes was acquired by Callahan. It reopened the workings bought the abandoned hematite concentrate of the Old Cleveland Cliffs Co. to convert into a cyanide plant, and re-explored the orebody. The latter was money wasted, for the C&H had done such a good job that the new maps were no better than

the old. The yearly output of the Ropes is about 43,000 oz., no small figure for a gold mine any where.

The solution to the puzzle is geological, of course. The Ropes ore body is an ancient granites, quite typical of the Laurentian shield. A little while afterward, in the late pre-Cambrian, the Keewanew rift opened up, spewing lava all over the place - lava which is the source of the hematite iron ranges and, of course, Keewanew native copper. Most of the exposed Laurentian granites are north of the rift line; south of this axis, if they exist at all, they are covered kilometers-deep by lava, sandstone, what not. Except, of course, at Ishpening, where a small "lost-leg" of shield granite is exposed, and so ... The moral is: you never know what might crop up where least expected.

Thanks to Mr. Al Walkup, mining director of Callahan, for making a few points clear.

Otis E. Young Jr.  
Tempe, Arizona

## Book News by Duane Smith

Coal mining has long been a major force in American mining, but only recently has it attracted the interest of scholars. In the past two years several significant books have appeared that Association members should be aware of for their research and reading.

A. Dudley Gardner and Verla R. Flores in, Forgotten Frontier: A History of Wyoming Coal Mining (Boulder: Westview, 1989) have made a major contribution to the understanding of Wyoming and an industry which came with the railroad when settlement was started. The book traces the coal mining from the 1860s into the 1980s. It is a fast-paced, well-written narrative, based on diligent research. Forgotten Frontier will become a standard work for students of the Rocky Mountain coal industry and the history of Wyoming.

Regulating Danger: The Struggle for Mine Safety in the Rocky Mountain Coal Industry (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1990) by James Whiteside is a broader based history. Coal mining is dangerous and this volume tells why and what has been done about it down to the 1980s. It is not a pretty story, but it needed to be told and it needs to be comprehended by scholars and general readers. Whiteside has written a book that will stand the test of time, a milestone in the future examination of Rocky Mountain coal mining.

### Touring Colorado

I have debated long with an academic friend about which has more tourist traps per mile, the Mother Lode country of California or the highways connecting Central City, Idaho Springs, Georgetown, Breckenridge, and Leadville, Colorado. But the more pointed debate is whether road trips to such sites have value; I firmly believe they do, especially to the informed traveler. With that in mind I offer a travelogue for association members who may be traveling by car to Leadville. What follows is an incomplete, subjective listing of recommended tour stops. They are more reflective of my odd tastes rather than the quality of the museum or site. Still, I have enjoyed them all.

#### Traveling north on I-25 from the southern Border of Colorado to Trinidad, Colorado Springs and then via US 24 into Leadville.

Entering the state from the south via I-25, over Raton Pass with its coal mine ruins, your first stop should be at the Colorado State Visitor Information Center in Trinidad. Grab a map and all the brochures you can carry, but you have to ask for the Ludlow Memorial brochure, your first stop, a few miles north and a mile off the interstate. The best time to see the lonely U.M.W.A. monument at Ludlow is at day break, a somber moment for reflections with Mother Jones and the other ghosts. If you have time take Colorado 12, "the Scenic Highway of Legends" for views of the once prosperous coal region. If hurried, at least take a break (i.e., get off the freeway) at the small Walsenburg Mining Museum (101 E. 5th St., Walsenburg, CO 81089) for artifacts and exhibits on coal mining in southcentral Colorado.

Approximately one hour north of Walsenburg you enter Pueblo and pass the mostly quiet Colorado Fuel and Iron Company's historic works. Unfortunately, the plant is not open for tours, but downtown Pueblo is a delight of historic architecture, especially the Union Street Historic District near the railroad depot. Pueblo was the main railroad route into the Leadville mining district via the Arkansas River Valley. To follow this historic, scenic route, take highway US 50 to US 285 to US 24 into Leadville.

However, I would recommend staying on I-25 north from Pueblo to Colorado Springs then over to Leadville via US 24 with a side trip to Cripple Creek. A must diversion is a visit to the Western Museum of Mining and Industry, (1025 North Gate Road, Colorado Springs, CO 80921; take I-25 exit 156-A and then go east) a few miles north of Colorado Springs. This exceptional museum has operating equipment, such as a Corliss Steam Engine, air drills and a fabulous ten stamp mill. The mill alone is worth the visit – the only thing missing in this operating plant is the mercury on the plates, a courtesy to modern environmental concerns.

Colorado Springs was the mill town for Cripple Creek. Nothing remains of these massive plants but foundations and the stack of the Golden Cycle mill, visible from highway 24 as you head west from the interstate. Cripple Creek is worth the side trip. Incredible, wood headframes and other mine structures stand near Victor. The towns have museums, the Molly Kathleen underground mine tour and the Cripple Creek and Victor railroad. Member Ed Hunter, a resident of Victor, wrote a lengthy description of Cripple Creek, unfortunately too long to include here. Anyone wishing a copy can write the association and we will mail it to you.

The Bureau of Land Management has worked with local entities to preserve and interpret the history along the Scenic Byways around Cripple Creek. The guide to the "Gold Belt Tour" is available from the BLM, Royal Gorge Resource Area, P. O. Box 2200, Canon City, CO 81215-2200. The scenic byways follow well-graded dirt roads rich with history.

To continue on to Leadville return to US highway 24 west.

#### Traveling west from Denver via the mining country to Leadville

Denver is a major destination with many attractions. The Denver visitor center (225 W. Colfax, Denver, CO 80202) can supply information, maps, and a guide. Those interested in mining sites should include the Colorado History Museum at Broadway and 13th Avenue. It is superb. The museum includes a collection of mining machinery, besides good interpretive exhibits that place the history of mining in the context of the region's past two centuries. Across the street is the Denver Public Library. Its Western History collection is superb. The "Unsinkable Molly" Brown house is a few blocks east at 1340 Pennsylvania and is open for tours by Historic Denver, Inc. The Browns made their fortune in Leadville. Before heading out of town, do lunch at one of the cafes on Larimer Square, the heart of Denver at the start of the Leadville boom.

From Denver take highway 6 into the Clear Creek Canyon then state 119 to Black Hawk and Central City, mountain mining towns that retain much of their nineteenth century character. Central City has a railroad, museum, underground mine tours and home tours, as well as much evidence of mining. A tip of the hat should be made at the Gregory Monument, site of the 1859 gold discovery. At Central City the usual marketing of history a la the Wild West will soon be replaced by gambling halls, which will be legal in October. Expect a different city next year.

A side trip via dirt road to Nevadaville will get you into the mining region as will a trip over the "Oh My Gawd" highway, a well-graded, dirt road that leads from Central City to Idaho Springs. Ask the friendly folks at the museum for directions. The scenery is among the Rocky Mountain's best. The former mining camp of Russelville is on the route. If you wish to avoid dirt roads, back track to highway 6 and take it to Interstate 70, Idaho Springs and the Argo Mill, a 1913 cyanide mill that is open for tours. The mill is worth the stop. Behind city hall is a path to the Jackson Monument and a reconstructed waterwheel; both commemorate the gold strike of 1859.

From Idaho Springs take I-70 into Georgetown. Georgetown was a gold camp turned silver camp; today it is a major tourist destination because of its setting, victorian architecture, and the Georgetown Loop Historic Mining and Railroad Park (P.O. Box 781, Georgetown, CO, 80444). The park is a property of the Colorado Historical Society. The railroad ride takes you to the 1870s Lebanon Silver Mine for an underground tour. The exquisite Hamill House was the home of a British Mining Engineer; it is open for tours. My favorite lunch stop is under the trees in front of the museum (old school house) at Silver Plume, the camp adjacent to Georgetown.

Continuing West on I-70 you cross the Continental Divide. There are many former mining communities in the region between Central City and Leadville (you may wish to buy a "ghost town" book or two – there are many – and explore on your own). One of my favorite is Montezuma and the mine camps above it. A dirt road from highway 6 at the Continental Divide takes you into the forgotten boom town of the 1870s, a stark contrast to the other former mining camps turned ski resorts in Summit County, the county between the Continental Divide and Leadville.

The Summit Historical Society (Box 747, Dillon, Colorado) operates two historic mining sites. Both are south of I-70, near State Route 9 at Breckenridge, Colorado: The Washington Gold Mine and the Lomax Placer mine exhibit. I recommend you stop at the Breckenridge visitor center on Main Street for directions and hours. Also ask for directions to the remains of the gold dredges that once operated along Swan River.

If you are adventurous and have four wheel drive continue south from Breckenridge on State Highway 9 to the Mosquito Pass (13,186 ft) road. Snow may still block the pass so check locally. This road enters through the mines of Leadville. The rest of us can back track to I-70 and drive west to State Highway 91 into Leadville. Along the way you will pass Climax, site of the Climax molybdenum mine, a major operation, the world's leading producer of molybdenum and lifeblood of Leadville until a few years ago.

Traveling through Durango and the mining region of Southwest Colorado to US 50 and US 24, with side trips, into Leadville

Southwest Colorado offers three alternate routes through the San Juan Mountains to US 50 east. A summer could be spent in the San Juan Mountains, but a quick stop along any of these routes will give you the flavor of the country. If you have the time and a four wheel drive vehicle, the San Juan Mountains have many historic mines and camps worth visiting.

Alternate Route One (via US 160 and US 550) leads from Cortez through Durango, Silverton and Ouray to Montrose. This route follows the Durango and Silverton narrow gauge railroad, a popular excursion, and crosses the breathtaking million dollar highway. Your first stop should be at the Durango visitor center, on the highway east of downtown. All the communities along the route have museums, but I especially like Silverton's and Ouray's. The million dollar highway – US 550 from Silverton to Ouray – is in the heart of the mining region and much of the former works can be seen. I highly recommend spending time in Silverton, a well preserved mining camp. Dirt side rides lead to smaller mine camps in the mountains. If you have time, drive State 110 east past active operations to the site of Eureka, a good picnic spot among ruins and artifacts. At Ouray, a dirt road leads to Thomas Walsh's fabled Camp Bird mine. To go beyond the mine, a four wheel drive jeep is needed; jeep rentals abound in Ouray. An hour long scenic drive on US 550 along the Uncompahgre River Valley leads to Montrose and US 50 east.

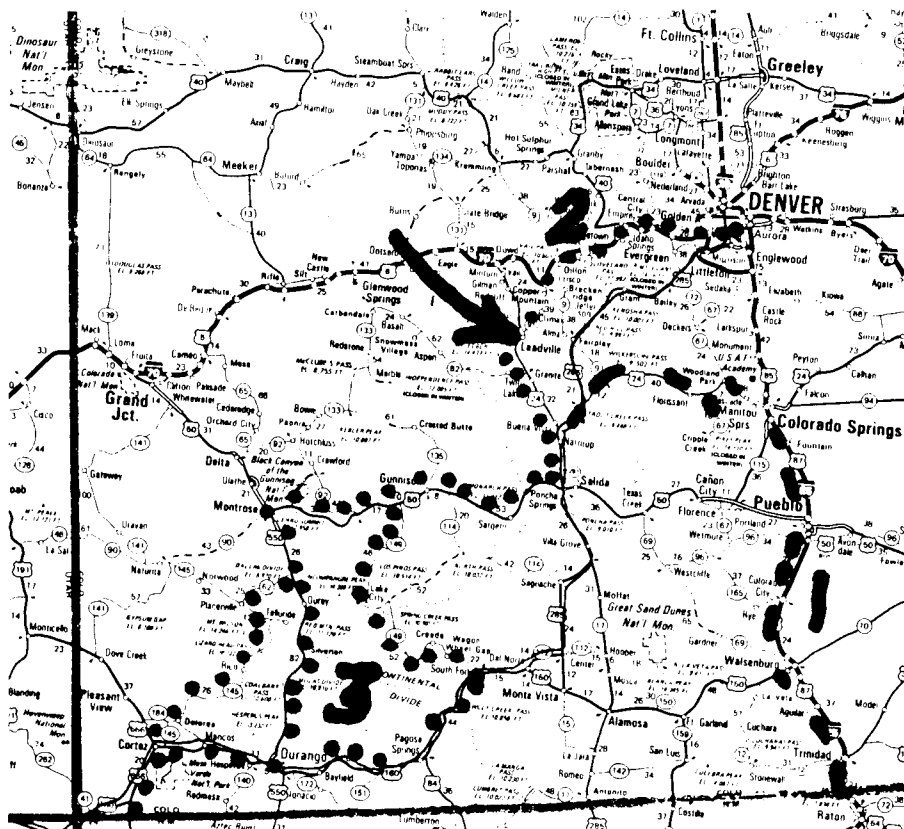
Alternate Route Two follows state 145 from Cortez to the quiet mining town of Rico, then Telluride and north vis State 62 and US 550 to Montrose. Rico is reminiscent of the San Juan mountain towns before rampant, commercial tourism took over. At Ophir, a mill and mine tour is offered seasonally. The major attraction on this route is Telluride, a mining camp converted to Ski resort.

Alternate Route Three follows US 160 from Cortez, Durango, Pagaso Springs, across Wolf Creek Pass (10,850 ft.) to State Route 149, which turns north through Creede and Lake City to US50 sixty-five miles east of Montrose. Lake City was the first major mining region and Creede the last in the San Juans. Both communities still retain their mining camp charm. Creede has an exceptional auto tour through the spectacular ruins of its mines. Lake City has a calmer pace and is an enjoyable stop. Both towns have museums and victorian architecture. If you have the time, rent a jeep at Lake City and head west over Engineer and other passes along narrow dirt roads above timberline to view the empty mining camps and silent operations that stand from Lake City to Telluride. The mountain roads crosscut the paved, north-south routes of travel. Maps can be purchased at visitor centers or at jeep rental shops. This is a trek only for the hearty.

Highway 50 follows the Gunnison River before crossing the Continental Divide at Monarch Pass (11,312). The highway joins US 24 at Poncha Springs. US 24 leads to Leadville up the Arkansas River Valley. There are numerous former mining camps several miles off this highway. Half day side trips are recommended to Crested Butte or Tin Cup or St. Elmo, the latter two via dirt road. Crested Butte is a well known ski resort today, while Tin Cup and St. Elmo have the look of quintessential ghost towns, but are lively summer communities (if you buy a post card labeled "typical Colorado ghost town" it is probably St. Elmo).

Colorado's mining country is extensive and offers many other attractions. I have detailed only three major routes to Leadville - from the South, Southwest and East. You may wish to explore on your own. Visitor Centers built near the border along all Interstate Routes have reams of literature about attractions. I have omitted some favorite places because of space. The area around Aspen, the one time heir apparent to Leadville as Colorado's leading silver camp, is a grand place to tour. Boulder County near Denver has a host of attractive, little mountain towns. I especially enjoy Eldora and Gold Hill. Those individuals interested in collapsed mining regions of a more recent vintage could tour Rifle and Parachute in Western Colorado along I-70. Both were home to the oil shale boom of the 1980s. And out there still, more old, unexplored camps beckon.

Robert Spude  
Denver, Colorado



On the Road to Austin, Nevada:  
A Brit's View on American Mining History

In October last, I had the pleasure of attending the first Mining History Association meeting, staged at the WHA conference in Reno, Nevada. It provided the expected opportunity to renew acquaintances and make new friends and, in social and intellectual terms, more than justified the cost and effort of getting there. There was, however, one additional and enormously valuable bonus - the opportunity to drive through and see first-hand a number of the major mining districts of California and Nevada. I have long been convinced that you cannot ever really know or understand a place unless you have been there, and the chance to visit was a chance to turn a shadow of the imagination into a tangible and knowable thing.

On previous visits to the U.S. I had travelled to the Keweenaw, the Tri-State district and the lead and copper mines of the mountain west, from Idaho, through Montana, Colorado and Utah to Arizona, but I had never succeeded in getting any further. I must confess here that this previous oversight was not simply the result of a lack of opportunity, but also of prejudice. As an Englishman brought up in the long tradition of tin, lead and copper mining, I had never really regarded gold and silver as proper "useful" metals. Colorful tales of bonanzas, rushes, wild camps of washers and workers seemed like good meat for Hollywood but not for sober academics - particularly those laboring under the heavy label of economic historian. Anyway, those aspects of American mining history already seem to have attracted more than their fair share of attention, while the more mundane, but overall more valuable non-precious metals, had gone relatively unnoticed.

Experience has now revealed the error of these prejudices - or at least some of them. A myriad of impressions and insights resulted from a few days around Virginia City, an eastward drive into deepest Nevada, and a homeward detour via Sutters Creek and the Mother Lode. Most are not worth elaborating, but three general observations might withstand general consideration. They are essentially comparisons of the different ways that mining history has been studied and presented in Europe and America, and how the different traditions might cross-fertilize each other with ideas for future activity and development.

The first and most obvious difference in approach can be seen in the different levels of attention given to what could be classified as mining archeology on the one hand and mining

settlement or urban remains on the other. Generally speaking, in Europe, and particularly in Britain, there has been a very heavy concentration on the former, with relatively little interest in the social or urban history of mining communities. By contrast, in the U.S. the emphasis seems to be heavily in the other direction. My frustration in the bookshops of Virginia City looking for material interpreting the detailed surface and underground remains of the Comstock lode would undoubtedly be echoed by an American mining historian in Wales or Northern England looking for material on metal mining communities and town development.

A probable explanation for this differing emphasis can be found in the different relationships between mining history and local history in the British and American traditions. In America the two subjects appear to remain intimately bound up - most mining history being produced, promoted and taught by regional historians. In Britain, by contrast, the subjects have become widely separated, with different practitioners, publications, readership, etc. Although the basis of British mining history remains regional, it has become very much a specialized subject, providing both its strengths and weaknesses. For example, the technological history of mining can be debated in greater detail and with possibly greater comparative understanding than could be easily approached in the U.S., while the interactions of mining with other aspects of local and regional economic and social development - well accounted for in the American tradition - have largely been lost sight of.

Thirdly, and to draw attention to one particular area where the comparative approach to U.S. and European mining history would be particularly profitable, I was greatly impressed during my travels by the wealth of evidence available in California for the crucial "placer-to-underground" mining transition. This fundamental change in the method of extracting minerals transformed the industry in terms of technology, capital requirements, labor contracts and its whole relationship with the host community. In the south west of England these changes took place somewhere between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and to trace their history now is a shadowy and inconclusive affair. To draw on the literature examining that same process in mid-nineteenth century California - a more recent and much better documented period - might well help focus attention on the principal issues in the British experience and provide a more informed framework for reconsidering it. To end, I would like to make

one short comment on the long ride on Route 50 to Austin, Nevada - in fact, we took the less busy backroad via Eastgate. "Never-to-be-forgotten" is an understatement - but it was certainly a very pleasurable experience. I count Austin as one of the places I would most like to go back to, and the prospect of spending some real time sorting out the mines of the area is a pleasant mental diversion when sitting on the London subway in the rush hour. Those Nevada mines are certainly a tribute to the human psyche; that it can withstand the claustrophobia of cramped underground places immediately juxtaposed to unimaginable agoraphobia. There's certainly nothing like it in Cornwall.

Roger Burt  
Exeter

### Museum and Preservation News

Thanks to the Alabama Mining Museum for copies of their coloring book. The museum is dedicated to the display and preservation of information about the deep South's "black diamond" industry. For copies of the coloring book and information about the museum write them at P.O. Box 457, Dora, Alabama 35062.

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Mining History Association  
PO Box 150300  
Denver, CO 80215

Congratulations to the Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum, which has opened a long planned new exhibit, "Bisbee, Urban Outpost on the Frontier." It includes photo murals, a miner's shack, a mock-up of Brewery Gulch, and a section devoted to the 1917 Deportation. A catalog is available from the museum, 5 Copper Queen Plaza, P. O. Box 14, Bisbee, Arizona 85603.

Kudos to Phelps Dodge and a dedicated group of enthusiasts which retrieved three, century-old locomotives abandoned at the top of the Coronado Mine incline near Morenci, Arizona. The "baby gauge" locomotive number 5 has been restored and placed on display in the town plaza.

A committee has been organized to look at options for the preservation of the historic gold camp of Virginia City, Montana. Bovey Restorations, under the leadership of Charles and Sue, preserved much of the town and offered visitor attractions. Since the death of the Boveys, the company has plans to dispose of the property. A strong organization is needed to assume the responsibilities of management and preservation of this exceptional resource. For more information write Marcella Sherfy, State Historic Preservation Officer, 225 North Roberts, Helena, Montana 59620.

